

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
DECEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION  
MARCH 2002

# York College Training Services



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

### **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- ◆ education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### **Grading**

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

## SUMMARY

The original inspection of York College Training Services was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in a less than satisfactory grade being awarded for management of training. This area has been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The section of the original report dealing with management of training has been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website ([www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**York College Training Services offers good training in manufacturing and hair and beauty. Training in the college covers a wide range of work-based learning and is well resourced. Training in construction, engineering, business administration and hospitality is satisfactory. The college has comprehensive equal opportunities policies and their effectiveness is evaluated regularly. College staff give learners plenty of support and do all they can to meet their individual needs. During their progress reviews, however, learners are not set clear targets. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Management of training is now satisfactory. Considerable progress has been made in rectifying the weaknesses in management of training identified during the original inspection. Learners' workplaces are now monitored carefully and checks are made on employers' health and safety procedures. On- and off-the-job training are co-ordinated effectively. Learners in some occupational areas, however, do not receive enough assessment in the workplace. The college now maintains good communications with employers. Staff benefit from well-designed training programmes. There is effective monitoring of the promotion of equal opportunities in the workplace. Staff from all parts of the college are engaged in a wide range of quality assurance activities. As a result of the reinspection of management of training, it was found that quality assurance systems now cover all activities in the workplace.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Manufacturing	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- ◆ varied and challenging opportunities for workplace learning
- ◆ additional training opportunities enhancing the employability of learners
- ◆ effective and well-resourced off-the-job training in most areas
- ◆ supportive and enthusiastic employers
- ◆ high levels of additional support for learners
- ◆ good internal and external communications
- ◆ wide range of quality improvement activity

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ inadequate assessment in the workplace on construction and engineering programmes
- ◆ failure to provide key skills training from the outset of programmes
- ◆ failure to set learners clear targets during progress reviews

## INTRODUCTION

1. York College Training Services is one of the largest providers of work based learning in North Yorkshire, funded through the North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It offers training in construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, accounting, travel, hospitality, hair and beauty, and care. Learners are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2, 3 or 4. At the time of the original inspection, there were 181 modern apprentices, 236 national trainees and 144 learners on other youth training programmes, known locally as NVQ Options. Learners on NVQ options do not receive training in key skills. A further four learners were working towards qualifications on the full-time education and training option of New Deal. At the time of the reinspection, there were 222 advanced modern apprentices, 253 foundation modern apprentices, and 53 learners on other training programmes.

2. Since the original inspection, the college has established a new senior management structure and this became operational from September 2001. It has also reorganised its work into five distinct areas comprising, education for learners aged 16 to 19, higher education, lifelong learning, work-based learning, and international. The college has established its own training company, Pure Business Solutions. This company provides work-based learning within the college and training for external clients on a commercial basis. An assistant principal has overall responsibility for work-based learning, managing the contract with the North Yorkshire LSC, and developing business links with local employers. Pure Business Solutions is led by a business services manager, supported by a project developer and a small administration team. The business services manager is the college co-ordinator for work-based learning. A deputy principal from the directorate of teaching and learning is responsible for the work-based learning curriculum. The occupational training programmes and on- and off-the-job training are managed by curriculum leaders from each of the four faculties. The off-the-job training usually takes place in the college. Work-placement officers and work experience assessors have a wide range of duties including, maintaining effective links, and overseeing the drawing up of agreements between learners and employers, assessing learners, monitoring health and safety practices, and carrying out reviews of learners' progress. Placement officers and work experience assessors are accountable to leaders of curriculum areas and they work closely with the relevant course tutors.

3. York College Training Services is also subcontracted by other organisations to carry out training for their learners. At the time of the original inspection, the college provided training on a subcontracted basis for 246 learners. At the time of the reinspection, the college was providing training as a subcontractor for 118 learners, 90 per cent of whom were working towards qualifications in construction. York College subcontracts the training and assessment of three of its own learners to other providers in the region.

4. Since the time of the original inspection, the population of York has increased slightly to 180,000. The main industries in York are rail, engineering, food manufacturing and construction. In recent years, there has been considerable growth in employment in the city in the tourism, science, and finance industries. At the time of the original inspection, the unemployment rate in the York Unitary Authority in October 2000 stood at 2.1 per cent. This was lower than the national average of 3.4 per cent and the regional average of 4.2 per cent. At the time of the reinspection, the unemployment rate for the city was 1.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.9 per cent in September 2001.

5. In York, just 1 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups. This proportion is lower than that for the region, of 4.4 per cent, and the national average of 6.2 per cent, based on the 1991 census data. At the time of the original inspection in 2000, 52.6 per cent of 16 year old pupils in York gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. At the time of the reinspection, this proportion had risen to 54.2 per cent, compared with the national average in 2001 of 47.9 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. York College Training Services produced a self-assessment report in the summer of 2000. Curriculum and team leaders received training on the self-assessment process. In November 2000, the self-assessment report was updated, prior to the original inspection. Teams drew up action plans to build on strengths and rectify weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and progress in implementing these was reviewed through the college's quality assurance process. Inspectors agreed with all but two of the grades given in the self-assessment report. They awarded a higher grade for manufacturing, and a lower grade for business administration than the college did. During the summer of 2001, the college carried out a full self-assessment of all its work and activities, including work-based learning.

7. The original inspection was carried out by a team of 10 inspectors who spent a total of 42 days at York College Training Services in December 2000. They inspected the occupational areas of construction, engineering, manufacturing, business administration, hospitality and hair and beauty. The other occupational areas were not inspected because each had fewer than 10 learners. Inspectors interviewed 103 learners, 47 supervisors in the workplace and 68 college staff, including course tutors and the college's managers. They visited 48 workplaces. Inspectors observed off-the-job training sessions, assessments and progress reviews both in the college and in the workplace. They looked at records of learners' work, training and assessment, and course documents.

8. Two inspectors spent eight days at York College Training Services in March 2002 and carried out the reinspection of management of training. Inspectors interviewed 27 learners, 14 employers in the workplace and 25 staff, including tutors and college managers. Inspectors observed off-the-job training sessions, assessments and progress reviews both in the college and in the workplace. They looked at 10 learners' portfolios of evidence and documents relating to the overall management of training and assessment. Three instruction sessions were observed and graded 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

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Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	2		1			3
Engineering	1	1	3	1	1	7
Manufacturing		2				2
Business administration		2	1			3
Hospitality			2			2
Hair & beauty			3			3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

### Grade 3

9. York College Training Services has 226 trainees working towards NVQs in brickwork, wood occupations, painting and decorating, stone masonry, plumbing and electrical installation. There are 84 national trainees, 70 modern apprentices and 72 trainees on other government-funded youth training programmes, who are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Following initial assessment and an induction programme, which usually takes place in the college, off-the-job training is provided for most trainees at the college on a day-release basis. Electrical installation trainees also attend college for week-long training programmes linked to their NVQs. Most assessment takes place in the college, although some assessment in the workplace is carried out with plumbing and electrical installation trainees. One full-time and one part-time placement officer visit trainees in the workplace to conduct progress reviews and to provide them with ongoing support. Trainees are employed in a wide range of local firms. The self-assessment report for this area did not give a clear picture of training taking place. Inspectors identified further strengths and weaknesses during the inspection and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*One employer implements a carefully structured on-the-job training programme. Here, trainees spend alternate periods of time in the joiner's shop and on site, and are moved around different sites with selected supervisors working in teams on particular types of work. With this employer, trainees' experience is recorded and performance both on and off the job is regularly appraised.*

#### **STRENGTHS**

- ◆ varied and challenging on-the-job experience
- ◆ good quality off-the-job training
- ◆ high levels of retention and achievement in most areas

#### **WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ lack of awareness by employers of NVQ programmes
- ◆ slow progress made by some trainees

10. Good relationships exist between York College Training Services, trainees and employers. Most trainees have already found employment with their firms before enrolling on their programmes at the college. The college's staff help those trainees without employment to secure work. Relationships with firms in the electrical installation sector are particularly good. In this area most employers recruit trainees with assistance from the college, which helps to promote further good, long term working relationships. Employers are supportive and committed to training. Trainees are enthusiastic about their training and value the efforts made on their behalf by their employers and the college. Trainees benefit from experience in the workplace, which is both varied and challenging. Trainees are often given significant responsibilities on site. Most training in the workplace is driven by the immediate needs of the company. This sometimes results in trainees undertaking tasks which have little relevance to their NVQs. Trainees regularly use their

experience at work as evidence towards their NVQ qualifications. Where electrical installation trainees have obtained sufficient evidence in specific areas and can demonstrate to tutors that they can satisfy competence requirements, they are not required to repeat the work in college. This practice does not take place in all areas of construction.

11. Off-the-job training is well planned and effective. Teaching classrooms are spacious, well lit and well equipped, providing a good learning environment. Tutors make good use of teaching aids and materials, and work to detailed lesson plans. Trainees are attentive in theory sessions, respond well to prompts by the tutor and participate in the learning process. With some exceptions, workshops are well equipped and instruction is well planned and effective. Painting and decorating facilities are particularly good. Well-designed, realistic working conditions are created. A wide range of materials and techniques are used, and a simulated 'client/contractor' relationship is developed with staff from another college department, which helps to reinforce the importance of commercial considerations. Trainees have good portfolios and are given regular and comprehensive feedback on work that they submit for marking. Practical work is good and trainees' work often features in prize-giving ceremonies and competitions at both local and national level. Retention and achievement levels are high. Over 90 per cent of trainees in this area remained on the programme in 1999-2000, with an average of 75 per cent of trainees achieving their NVQ targets. Electrical installation results are exceptionally high, with 97 per cent achieving Part I and 89 per cent achieving Part II of their qualification.

12. Only trainees working towards qualifications in electrical installation and plumbing are assessed in the workplace, Other trainees are assessed in the college in a simulated environment. Employers are not involved in the assessment process in any way. Valuable and extensive opportunities to assess competence in the workplace are lost. While most employers confirm having received a training agreement and other documents relating to training from the college, most have not read the material and cannot identify its contents. Most employers are unaware of NVQ requirements and terminology and are either unwilling or unable to contribute to trainees' progress towards their qualifications. Often, employers are unaware of assessment requirements and are unable to distinguish between progress reviews and assessments. Employers are unable to check or evaluate trainees' off-the-job training and progress. Many employers do not fully appreciate their role and responsibilities in the training process. Progress reviews are undertaken in a systematic and methodical way, with occupationally competent placement officers checking and reinforcing trainees' claims of experience in specific activities. However, these reviews lack rigour regarding target-setting and while trainees and employers receive a copy of the review, this information is not shared with tutors at the college.

13. Progress and achievement in plumbing has been severely held back by the inability of the college to provide training and assessment in the use of gas for part of the programme in accordance with external requirements. Trainees who otherwise would have completed their training in July 2000 were unable to

complete their level 2 NVQ and have had to return in the autumn term of 2000-01 for training and assessment with an external company. Similarly, trainees who would have progressed to level 3 NVQs at the beginning of the autumn term have been delayed in starting their programme pending the resolution of this issue.

## Engineering

## Grade 3

14. One hundred and seventy-four trainees are working towards NVQs in engineering at levels 2 or 3 in motor vehicle, mechanical engineering, fabrication and welding, aeronautical or electrical/electronic engineering. There are 80 modern apprentices, 67 national trainees and 27 other youth trainees who are receiving government funding. Over 150 employers or work-placement providers are used for work-based training in this sector. Trainees who are working towards NVQs at level 2 attend college on a full-time basis for one academic year or on day release over a period of two years. Trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 attend college on a day-release basis. During their time in college trainees attend theory and practical training sessions. The college's staff assess level 2 trainees during the off-the-job training sessions. Most assessment of level 3 trainees is conducted in the workplace, by either work-placement officers or the college's trainers. Some assessment of level 3 NVQ motor vehicle trainees is carried out in the college's workshop. Work-placement officers review trainees' progress towards their NVQs every 10 weeks. The grade awarded by inspectors for this occupational area is the same as that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

The table below shows the distribution of trainees within engineering training.

NVQ level	NVQ	Number in Training			Totals
		Youth	NT	MA	
Level 2	Engineering manufacture (foundation)	11	48	24	83
Level 3	Engineering manufacture	1		5	6
Level 3	Engineering production	3	0	11	14
Level 3	Engineering maintenance			11	11
Level 2	Aeronautical engineering			5	5
Level 3	Aeronautical engineering			5	5
Level 3	Motor vehicle refurbishment			2	2
Level 2	Motor vehicle mechanical & electrical systems			7	7
Level 3	Motor vehicle mechanical & electrical systems	9	19	4	32
Level 3/4	Academic related courses	3	0	6	9
	Total	27	67	80	174

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of workplace learning opportunities
- ◆ enhanced opportunities for career progression
- ◆ high retention rates

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ little use of work-based evidence for key skills competence

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*The timetable for the delivery of aeronautical engineering classes has been re-arranged. This has enabled specialist aeronautical engineers to teach the evening sessions. Trainees therefore gain up-to-date knowledge, from an expert engineer with specific knowledge of the industry.*

15. The range of training opportunities offered by employers takes in all engineering disciplines and offers training on up-to-date industrial plant or commercial equipment. Employers range from large internationally recognised manufacturing companies to a specialist aeronautical engineering organisation. They also include many commercial vehicle garages and certified vehicle-testing stations. Within every organisation, and in each vocational area, the scope of experience offered varies from basic operations to complex tasks. Employers in larger companies plan training so that trainees gain experience within various sections of a company. Training is not, however, directed to achieving the NVQ. Within smaller organisations training is determined by the tasks being undertaken at that particular time. Trainees are under the supervision of experienced tradespeople, who have vast practical and technical knowledge. Trainees progress to more demanding tasks as they gain experience and most are treated as junior employees rather than trainees.

16. The college has training workshops which adequately cover NVQ basic engineering training. Staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Most are accredited NVQ assessors. However, out of seven classroom sessions observed, one lesson was found to be poor and another less than satisfactory.

17. Trainees have the opportunity to gain additional qualifications and experiences that will enhance their careers. Trainee aeronautical engineers are employed as civilians in a military environment. They have the opportunity to gain air-licensing qualifications on aircraft servicing. Other trainees are working towards a second national certificate qualification. In addition there are many other examples where trainees undergo additional NVQ unit certification at level 2 in engineering manufacture foundation training.

18. Very few trainees leave their programmes early. The figures indicate that over the period 1997-2000 there was an intake of 187 trainees. Thirteen trainees left early, a remarkably small number considering the total of motor vehicle trainees. It is not unusual for motor vehicle engineering programmes to have low retention rates. During the 1997 to 1999 period, figures for level 2 NVQ engineering foundation training indicate that of 61 trainees who started on the programme 58 achieved their qualification. Thirty-five per cent of trainees are on this programme, which represents an achievement rate of 95 per cent. Achievement data regarding other areas of training were not available.

19. The motor vehicle workshop uses its own fleet of vehicles for training and assessment purposes. The average age of vehicles exceeds ten years. The college supplements this activity by offering a repair and service facility for staff and local residents to enable trainees to gain experience on more modern vehicles. This is done on a commercial basis. Assessment from these activities is mainly done when a trainee cannot acquire a sufficient range of evidence from the workplace, for example in the repair of electric window mechanisms and advanced braking systems. However, college assessors have not been to the workplace for assessment purposes for the past five months and plans to do so will not be discussed until the month after the inspection. In the meantime, trainees supply job cards from their workplace to show the tasks they have carried out. However, this, combined with insufficient visits to the workplace by assessors, leads to an over-reliance on witness testimonies.

20. Considerable effort has been made to cross-reference the requirements for key skills to activities in the academic programme. Minimal evidence is used from work-based training activities. Full-time trainees who are working towards level 2 NVQs in engineering manufacture normally complete key skills before they enter the workplace for their next stage of training at level 3. There are missed opportunities for using evidence that has been collected for trainees' NVQ portfolios or from that which is generated by activities in a realistic working environment. A new review form for work-based training is being tested. On this form there is a specific reference to the progress made in gathering key skills evidence a work-based perspective. It is too early to measure the impact of the new form.

21. There are some instances where off-the-job training is linked to on-the-job training. This occurs at higher certificate level where assignments focus on the use of commercial equipment. In general, however, employers are not aware of the college's schemes of work for off-the-job training and consequently cannot integrate and supplement practical training in the workplace with current academic and practical work being undertaken at the college.

## **Manufacturing**

## **Grade 2**

22. There are 13 trainees working towards qualifications in the manufacturing sector. Four are modern apprentices and nine are on youth training programmes. Seven trainees are working towards NVQs at level 1 or 2 in producing handcrafted furniture and five are working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in laboratory and associated techniques. One trainee is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in laboratory techniques, as well as an advanced general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in science. All trainees are employed and attend off-the-job training for one day each week at the college and four days a week in the workplace. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were descriptive accounts of procedures. Inspectors identified strengths and weaknesses

which the college had not identified and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective off-the-job training
- ◆ well-equipped modern laboratories
- ◆ wide range of work-based learning opportunities
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor assessment practice in furniture
- ◆ no provision of materials for some trainees

23. Training programmes follow set patterns, but good flexibility allows trainees to proceed at their own pace throughout the entire programme and to benefit from additional time and instruction where needed. A good ratio of tutors to trainees allows for ample one-to-one instruction. There is a good working relationship between trainees and staff, with clear mutual respect. College tutors are well qualified. Teaching is of a high standard with sound instruction, clear explanations and practical demonstrations. Monitoring of trainees' progress is clear, although the monitoring systems can record completion only of full units of NVQs. Trainees demonstrate high levels of skills and knowledge and both they and their employers value the off-the-job training. Attendance is good and the college maintains good records of attendance and timekeeping.

24. The college laboratories are newly built and are light, airy, quiet and well equipped. Work placements offer wide-ranging training opportunities, which extend well beyond the range and standards required to achieve level 3 NVQs. Supervisors in the work placements have appropriate vocational experience and are well qualified and experienced in their trade and professional areas. Retention rates are high, with over 80 per cent of trainees remaining on their programmes. At the time of inspection it was difficult to obtain detailed or accurate data concerning retention and achievement within the different training programmes in this occupational area.

25. Assessments for laboratory occupations take place in the workplace, but none are carried out in the workplace for furniture, although witness statements about trainees' performance are routinely used for portfolio-building. All furniture assessments are simulations. Assessment is not always carried out in consultation with the trainees and trainees are sometimes unaware that they are being assessed. The assessment procedures in laboratory operations are clear, sound, and represent best practice, but those in furniture are less clear, less thorough and are difficult to understand. Most trainees in furniture have a poor understanding of the assessment process. Best practice in assessment is not shared between all the off-the-job training staff.

26. The college's policy is for trainees to provide their own materials for furniture. Some employers provide their trainees with suitable materials, but others provide sub-standard materials, or none at all. Some trainees have to purchase materials themselves in order to carry out their exercises, sometimes resulting in poor-quality materials being used. Some of the tools provided for furniture trainees are blunt, saws in particular, and trainees experience difficulty in cutting and so have lowered expectations of being able to produce good-quality work.

27. Most training plans have no short-term targets and lack information against which to measure progress, although some training staff set short-term targets for individual trainees to achieve during their on-the-job training. Intermediate target-setting with milestones is not undertaken. Whilst there is some liaison between off-the-job trainers and the work placements there is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and some employers are unaware of how their trainees are progressing at college. The work experience is not sufficiently controlled, being largely determined by the employer. The training in the workplace is not formally pre-planned, although some work-placement providers do offer a systematic range of activities for the trainees.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

28. York College Training Services offers NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 in accounting, levels 1, 2 and 3 in administration, and levels 2 and 3 in information technology. There are 32 trainees working towards qualifications in this occupational area. Fifteen are modern apprentices, 15 national trainees, and two are on other youth training programmes. Of the modern apprentices, 10 are registered for programmes in accounting, and five in administration. There are six national trainees in accounting, eight in administration and one in information technology. The two youth trainees are working towards NVQs in administration. Three staff in the business, management and professional studies curriculum area provide the off-the-job training and assessment for the trainees in accounting. Four staff from the information technology and office skills curriculum area provide the training and assessment for the trainees in administration and information technology. All trainees attend weekly off-the-job training sessions on a day-release basis. A work-experience assessor carries out progress review visits for all trainees every 10 weeks and assists with assessment of administration trainees. Two members of staff act as internal verifiers. Trainees are employed in 30 different organisations in the private and voluntary sectors in manufacturing, leisure, media, professional services, retailing and travel. The college recruits some trainees and then arranges their employment. Other trainees are already in employment and are sent to the college as part of their employers' staff development arrangements.

29. In 1997-98 25 per cent of accountancy trainees completed their awards. This proportion rose to 83 per cent in 1998-99, but then fell to 33 per cent in 1999-2000. In 1997-98, 88 per cent of administration trainees completed their awards. In 1998-

99 this proportion rose to 100 per cent. There was no achievement in 1999-2000 but all the trainees recruited in that academic year are still in training. The self-assessment report failed to identify some of the weaknesses concerned with the lack of involvement by employers in the programmes. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective and well-resourced off-the-job training
- ◆ relevant additional qualifications gained by administration trainees
- ◆ supportive and enthusiastic employers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of involvement by employers in NVQ and modern apprenticeship
- ◆ missing opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ incomplete integration of key skills

30. Off-the-job training in accounting and administration is good. In some cases training is given to groups of trainees working towards the same qualification, in others to mixed groups of trainees and college students. Lecturers prepare detailed schemes of work and lesson plans, which are supported by good teaching materials and tasks for trainees to carry out. The use a variety of effective techniques to present material and keep the interest and concentration of their trainees. Trainees work diligently at their own pace on the tasks which they are set and are supported by one-to-one coaching to identify and rectify any problems. Trainees appreciate the good quality of the off-the-job training and the support they receive from the curriculum staff and the work experience assessor.

31. The college's teaching and learning resources are good. The curriculum staff who give off-the-job training are well qualified and have good teaching and occupational experience. Trainees use industry-standard hardware and software, and classrooms are well furnished. The college has set up a business bureau, which provides business services to staff, students and external customers. This bureau is used by some trainees to give them realistic experience for those parts of the NVQ which are not covered by their workplace. Trainees have access to a good learning-resource centre, which provides a well-stocked library, educational technology facilities and an extensive information technology suite with connections to the Internet.

32. Most administration trainees work towards additional qualifications. Examples include qualifications in audio typing, integrated business technology, and word processing. The schemes of work and lesson plans for the NVQ off-the-job training have been designed to minimise the additional work required by the trainee to meet the requirements of these other awards.

33. The motivation and enthusiasm of the administration trainees is further reinforced by the quality of the off-the-job learning opportunities and the

supportive workplace supervisors provided by the sponsoring employers. The trainees' employment is highly relevant to their training programme, and they have access to good work-based resources. These employment conditions provide all trainees with extensive sources of naturally occurring evidence. This is used well by administration trainees but not by accounting trainees. All trainees show high levels of occupational competence and they are very keen to take on additional responsibilities in the workplace when opportunities present themselves. Workplace supervisors encourage this increased responsibility. They are particularly influential in developing the trainees' confidence and interpersonal skills.

34. Despite the employers' enthusiasm and support for trainees, they have a low awareness of their responsibilities within the modern apprenticeship frameworks and little knowledge of the content and requirements of the NVQ. Within recent weeks the college has provided employers with a guide which provides a good background to the modern apprenticeship and NVQ and the employers' role. Previously, the college provided little information and did not systematically reinforce these issues at the trainees' progress review meetings. Employers are not involved in the training undertaken by trainees for their NVQ. The college does not provide employers with a copy of the trainee's off-the-job training plan or scheme of work. Employers are not asked to provide the college with a copy of their trainees' on-the-job training plans. The employers and the college do not systematically map workplace activities against the trainees' overall training requirements. Employers do not systematically structure on-the job training. On- and off-the job training is not well planned or co-ordinated.

35. There is insufficient assessment by observation in the workplace. There are no work-based assessors. The college's staff assess administration trainees in the workplace once every eight weeks. They are unable to respond to situations that can provide assessment opportunities at any other time. There is no work-based assessment for accounting trainees, although accounting staff have plans to introduce some work-based assessment in the near future. There is no assessment-planning process which involves employers and takes account of good off- and on-the-job learning opportunities.

36. Although college staff in administration and accounting are planning to teach key skills alongside the NVQs these structures are not yet fully established. Trainees have little knowledge of key skills and do not understand the role of key skills in their training programme. Employers have little awareness of key skills. Most trainees and their employers regard key skills as an imposition and irrelevant to their workplace. The relationships between key skills and NVQ units are not clear to trainees and they are not collecting evidence to satisfy both the NVQ and key skills requirements. None of the curriculum staff have or are working towards the key skills practitioners' award. Very few modern apprentices or national trainees have completed their awards.

## Hospitality

## Grade 3

37. There are 40 trainees working towards qualifications in this area. Twelve are modern apprentices, 14 are national trainees and 14 are on other youth training programmes. Twelve national trainees are aiming for level 2 NVQs in food preparation and cooking and two trainees are on level 2 NVQ food and drink service programmes. All the trainees on other youth programmes are aiming for food preparation and cooking qualifications at levels 1, 2 or 3. During their programme, the modern apprentices and national trainees are expected to achieve basic food hygiene and basic health and safety qualifications in line with their framework requirements. These qualifications are available to the other trainees and are taught by the college on a regular basis. All trainees also achieve a certificate in customer care. College staff provide trainees with an induction at the beginning of their programme, which for most trainees is at the start of the college's academic year. Trainees who start after this date are given a shortened version of the full induction. There is regular updating of induction information during the programme. Trainees receive separate induction from their employers when they start work.

38. Most trainees work in hotels of various sizes, which are either run by national chains or are independently owned. Other trainees are in restaurants, bistros, public houses and nursing-home catering operations. Trainees attend college one day each week for off-the-job training. Training is also delivered in the workplace by the trainee's supervisor. All assessment occurs in the college's restaurant and kitchen, which is recognised by the awarding body as a realistic working environment. The college's staff, who undertake assessment and verification work, are occupationally qualified and hold the relevant assessor and verifier awards.

39. At the time of the inspection it was difficult to obtain detailed or accurate data concerning retention and achievement within the different training programmes in hospitality. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, although some were no more than normal practice. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ responsive and flexible training programme
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good occupational skills development

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of planning of on-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ slow progress towards achievement of key skills

40. The college has developed a programme which is sensitive to the needs and capabilities of the trainees. Care is taken to place trainees on the right level of programme. Good use is made of the optional units within a target qualification to reflect the experience gained in the workplace. Off-the-job training is structured flexibly. Trainees alter the date if they cannot attend college on their usual day. The groups are made up of a combination of level 1, 2 and 3 trainees and the mix of abilities within the group is well managed by tutors. Level 3 trainees are encouraged to assist and supervise level 1 and 2 trainees. This mix also brings a greater maturity to the off-the-job training sessions. Trainees are able to share experiences and learn from each other. There are good opportunities for one-to-one coaching during the off-the-job training days. There is a good ratio of tutors to trainees. Additional qualifications are made available to trainees. Some trainees complete first aid courses, some attend intermediate level food hygiene qualifications and others progress to level 4 NVQs as an addition to their modern apprentice framework, once they have achieved level 3.

41. Trainees are well matched to their placements. They are placed to ensure that their career aspirations and individual needs are met. While most of the trainees are already employed when they join the programme, there are occasions when a change of placement becomes necessary. This may occur because of a change in the trainee's personal circumstances or because their current place of work is no longer able to offer them the experience they need to aid their continued development. The college has good links with a wide variety of employers throughout the local area. One of the ways it uses these links is to ensure that trainees are in the most appropriate work environment. Some trainees join the programme from school and good assistance is given to these young people regarding suitable placements. All trainees are employed and the college emphasises this with employers when they are arranging placements. There is a part-time placement officer who liaises with work placement providers and teaching staff each day as well as carrying out the progress reviews in the workplace. The placements offer varied menus and in most cases there is a good range of equipment, all of which assists the trainees' development. Supervisors are experienced industry professionals and take an active interest in the development of the trainees.

**POOR PRACTICE**

*During the off-the-job training session a number of trainees were seen eating the food they had produced while still in the food production area. In order to test if an item of food was fully cooked another trainee used fingers to sample the food. Teaching staff were slow to respond to this behaviour, which is clearly in contravention of good food hygiene practice.*

42. Trainees develop good practical skills during off-the-job training sessions, which are then reinforced in appropriate work placements. The off-the-job training is given in the college's restaurant kitchen. The college continues to update the equipment in this kitchen. Work-based trainees are given the opportunity to participate in the full range of activities undertaken by the college, which include attending York Food Festival when the college provides catering in the form of a street café, as well as carrying out catering demonstrations. Some trainees have also won catering awards in England and mainland Europe. There is a positive approach to the development of the trainees by college staff and their workplace supervisors and the level of support available from both parties is acknowledged and valued by the trainees.

43. Training in the workplace is not planned in sufficient detail. Some of the trainees are working for companies which have produced detailed training manuals and procedures, but this is not the case for all trainees. Many trainees do not have written plans showing the training they will undertake in the workplace. In these cases training is coincidental with working demands. A scheme of work shows the areas to be covered on each of the off-the-job training days and a rota outlines which section of the kitchen trainees will attend on a given day. Employers do not have a copy of this and generally rely on the trainees to tell them what has been covered at college. This makes it difficult for employers to do any preparatory work with trainees. There is little integration of on- and off-the-job training. The individual training plans in the trainees' files are poor. They only show a target date for the completion of a full qualification. There are no targets set for achievement of the individual units at the outset of the programme. New individual training plans are drawn up at the start of each academic year. However, they do not always show achievements from the previous period. Many trainees are unclear exactly how their programme will develop.

44. Most assessment takes place in the college during the off-the-job sessions. Assessment planning is carried out with the trainees when they first arrive at college for an off-the-job session. Trainees are allocated tasks and then link this to potential evidence for their NVQ units. Observation is undertaken by college staff, who give feedback at the end of the session. The feedback is recorded on the assessment-planning document. The college's staff occasionally undertake observation at a trainee's workplace, but many opportunities for relevant workplace assessment are missed. Insufficient use is made of workplace supervisors who hold relevant assessor awards. Little emphasis has been placed on developing more workplace supervisors as assessors. The use of witness testimony is underdeveloped. Trainees complete evidence diary sheets but these are little more than a record of what has been completed in the workplace and are of limited value in the assessment process. This approach to assessment can delay trainee progress.

45. Many trainees have yet to show any significant progress towards key skills achievement. Key skills requirements are discussed during induction and an introduction to key skills is included in the early part of the training programme. However, many trainees consider this to be an additional aspect of their programme and further work is needed to integrate key skills with occupational achievement. The college has produced generic material for some of the key skills units and the catering staff are developing additional support for trainees, but this work is not yet complete and is not having an impact on achievement in this area.

## **Hair & beauty**

## **Grade 2**

46. York College Training Services has 57 young people working towards NVQs in hairdressing at levels 2 and 3. There are 54 national trainees, two modern

apprentices and one youth trainee. All trainees are in permanent employment and spend four days each week working in commercial salons and one day in the college's training salon, where they receive a structured programme of training. Most assessment takes place within the college's training salon, but some assessment is available in the workplace through an appointment system. During 1999-2000, 70 per cent of all level 2 candidates who completed their training programme achieved their qualification. The only level 3 trainee also completed her programme and achieved her award. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-resourced training salon
- ◆ well-integrated key skills
- ◆ relevant additional courses available to trainees
- ◆ clear system for monitoring trainees' progress in the college's salon

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient opportunities for work-based assessment

47. The hairdressing salon in the college is run on a commercial basis, and is well equipped. It provides a realistic training environment where trainees are able to develop their skills for commercial practice. There is a good range of current commercial hairdressing products, and up-to-date equipment for trainees to use. The college invites manufacturers of hairdressing products to demonstrate to trainees any new ranges that are being launched. The demonstrations are run by the professional technicians, who advise trainees on the effects that can be achieved and new techniques to complement the product and achieve fashionable results. Trainees are given the opportunity to use the products on models. Practical training sessions are well structured and planned. All trainees are entered for local hairdressing competitions. Those who are successful are entered for regional and national competitions. Key skills are integrated well into the hairdressing NVQ. They are assessed as part of the planned NVQ assessments. Key skills are promoted to the trainees as an important and relevant part of their training programme. The trainees are able to see the relevance and importance of key skills through their occupational focus. Trainees work toward five key skills in line with framework requirements.

48. The college offers additional courses to all trainees. These include basic barbering, cosmetic makeup certificate, waxing certificate, manicure certificate, introduction to aromatherapy, and Indian head massage. A barbering specialist teaches the barbering course. This course give trainees the opportunity to apply a more unconventional cutting style, which helps train the eye to check weight and balance and improves dexterity. The skills that trainees learn in the additional courses complement the technical skills developed on their hairdressing programme. Trainees develop a range of skills, which increase their employment

opportunities in a very competitive industry.

49. There is a clear system for monitoring trainees' practical activities within the college's training sessions. The system gives an overview of tasks carried out during their time in the college's salon. It clearly identifies all tasks completed each week, including duty on reception. Tasks are logged and dated against a trainee's name. Tutors can see at a glance which trainee is doing more than one task or is falling behind. This system enables tutors to ensure that models are allocated fairly and trainees requiring a particular activity for assessment are allowed to work on an appropriate model.

50. Most assessment takes place within the college's training salon. Assessors also visit the work placement during specified times. However, there are very few work-based assessors. Many trainees cannot be assessed when opportunities arise naturally in the workplace, because the opportunities do not coincide with a visit by the college's assessor. Trainees have to wait until they attend college in the hope that an appropriate model will be available, or arrange for the college's assessor to visit at an arranged time and date in the hope of finding an appropriate client in the workplace. Trainees are unable to progress at their own pace in the workplace. Trainees who are capable of moving quickly through the qualification are being held back. This is particularly evident when trainees do not attend college on a regular weekly basis. Employers are not informed about the detailed structure of the training programme provided by the college on a weekly basis. Few links are made between training carried out in the workplace by the employers and the structured training sessions in the college's training salon.

51. All level 2 trainees were required to complete a level 1 qualification, which took approximately six months, prior to embarking on the level 2 award. The college has now dropped this requirement, but it has significantly delayed the progress of many of the college's current national trainees. In some cases, trainees' evidence has not been reviewed and signed off by the assessors as units have been completed. The college is aware of these issues and over the past six months has taken steps to address them.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

52. York College has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which covers those trainees recruited through York College Training Services. Responsibility for regularly reviewing and monitoring this policy lies with the college's equal opportunities committee. There is a charter, which indicates what trainees can expect from the college and what the college will expect from trainees across a range of areas including equal opportunities. Commitments made in the charter are systematically monitored and reviewed on an annual basis. Notes from the group which monitors the charter are reported to the governors' quality assurance committee. The college operates an open recruitment policy and in all college

documents it is made clear that no forms of discrimination are tolerated. Inspectors agreed with the grade awarded for equal opportunities by the college in its self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policies
- ◆ regular monitoring and evaluation of policies and procedures
- ◆ influencing of change by equal opportunities action plans

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*An engineering company has removed all offensive calendars from the workplace. They have also contacted the manufacturer and requested that no more be sent to them.*

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities with employers
- ◆ insufficient awareness of equality of opportunity among trainees

53. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy, reinforced by a series of procedures to ensure that the policy is consistently applied across all areas of the college. All are clearly linked to the college's strategic plans, its mission statement and charter. The charter is detailed in the trainees' guide to the college and a diary, which are given to all trainees at the beginning of their training programmes. The charter explains what trainees can expect from the college, in a range of key areas including equality of opportunity. The charter also stresses trainees' responsibility in terms of behaviour and commitment to learning. There is a formal complaints procedure, which indicates stage by stage what a trainee should do if things go wrong, and they feel they need to make a formal complaint. All complaints are recorded with a guarantee of action within three working days. Actions have been promptly taken to address any complaints made to date. The college has an inclusive learning policy, which extends across all programme areas. The policy aims to ensure that training opportunities are available to meet the learning needs of all trainees.

54. The equal opportunities policies are monitored and evaluated by an equal opportunities committee, which is chaired by a deputy principal, with representatives from the human resources department, students and trainees' body, teaching staff, business support staff and college managers. The committee produces an annual implementation plan for the equal opportunities policy. A representative from the committee is also a key member of the college's training and development committee, with responsibility for ensuring that all equal opportunities issues related to training and development for staff and trainees are identified and dealt with. The committee undergoes a self-assessment process. The process identifies key strengths and weaknesses concerning equal opportunities within the college and any changes which need to be made to improve equality of opportunity. Findings are recorded on an action plan. Progress made and issues arising from the plan are reported to the college governors. The action plan influences changes, from fairly small issues such as adjusting paving stones and improving access for wheelchair users, to major changes such as alterations to recruitment procedures and staff training. In response to needs identified in the action plan, a video has recently been purchased which shows different scenarios

of bullying and harassment. This video has been used throughout the college, to raise trainees' awareness of equal opportunities. The video also forms part of the induction. The video is accompanied by a questionnaire, which helps to check trainees understanding of the issues raised. A need for staff training in equal opportunities has also been identified through the action plan. Training has recently started, focusing on trainees' rights and responsibilities.

55. There is no formal monitoring of equal opportunities with employers in the workplace. College staff have not recognised that they have a responsibility to check employers' policies, or to assist them in developing policies where none currently exist. They do not see it as their responsibility to ensure that employers are made aware of their moral and legal duty in relation to the equality of opportunity afforded to trainees. The college does not inform employers of any changes to legislation which may have an impact on their trainees. There is no monitoring in the workplace to ensure that employers keep policies up to date. Where concerns are raised with the college by trainees, however, action is taken swiftly.

56. Trainees have a very limited understanding of equality of opportunity. They also lack knowledge and understanding of their legal rights within the workplace. They are unaware of the legislation protecting young people at work. Trainees who are experiencing discrimination within the workplace do not realise that they can register a complaint about matters not directly connected with training. Trainees are aware of the college's grievance and disciplinary procedures, but many are unsure of the NVQ appeals procedure.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 2**

57. All work-based trainees are given full access to a comprehensive range of support services. These include learning support, careers guidance, personal counselling and specialist advice. All trainees complete a basic skills test to assess their need for any additional support. The student services and learning support teams jointly manage additional support for trainees. An initial health and safety inspection is carried out on all employers' premises. This initial vetting is supplemented by frequent monitoring visits. All trainees receive an induction to the college and their relevant vocational area. Reviews of trainees' progress in the workplace are frequently carried out. Work-placement-monitoring staff, the trainee and workplace supervisors are part of the process. Inspectors identified additional significant strengths to those outlined in the self-assessment report and awarded a grade higher than that given by the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-planned advice and guidance for trainees
- ◆ good links with a wide variety of outside agencies

- ◆ high level of additional learning support

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of clear target-setting at reviews
- ◆ some poorly completed individual training plans

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*Education care officers work discreetly with vocational staff to provide learning support. They take part in practical and theoretical sessions, working with a group of trainees, without identifying individuals who require additional support. This allows trainees to receive assistance without embarrassment or stigma.*

58. The student support team works closely with a large number of local schools to provide impartial advice and guidance for prospective trainees. Presentations are given to parents and students, with work-based training offered as an option alongside full-time college courses. The college runs taster days and NVQ options evenings and produces NVQ options leaflets, which are issued to schools and careers services. Positive case studies of trainees following work-based training programmes are also published in the local press. There is a wide range of publications that give advice and information on the support services provided by the college. This guidance is also included in student diaries and handbooks. These handbooks are available in large print and Braille, to assist trainees who are visually impaired. The student support team also acts as an advocate for any trainee who may wish to change programme. The team will provide information and arrange changes to funding to assist the trainee with this process.

59. The college has established strong links with a wide variety of external support agencies. These include social services, the probation service, housing advisory service, and drug and alcohol awareness groups. Where staff within the college are unable to offer support to trainees, they use a comprehensive network of referral agencies. Support offered is often of a highly practical nature.

60. Where needs are identified, there is a high standard of additional support for trainees. This support has led to improvements in retention and achievement across all curriculum areas. Strategies to offer support are devised in response to individual needs. For example, a trainee who lacks the confidence to enter the workplace is able to attend the college for most of the week and spend a short time with an employer. The learning support team and employer work closely together to help the trainee to build confidence, return to full-time work and complete the target qualification. Another trainee, who was disaffected at school and felt unable to attend college, is able to receive supported, full-time training in the workplace. The learning support team is gradually introducing the trainee to off-the-job training to help break down his fear of the college environment. Support for trainees is tactfully delivered in a highly constructive manner. Learning support staff work in partnership with the vocational teams to identify suitable learning strategies to meet the individual needs of trainees. In addition, many vocational staff are qualified basic skills trainers, which allows them to continue to provide support throughout a trainee's programme.

61. There are clear, comprehensive guidelines for trainees' induction. Vocational staff are trained in suitable techniques for giving induction and are provided with checklists that describe the recommended content of induction. The induction is reinforced after a four-week interval to aid trainees' understanding. Trainees'

progress reviews in the workplace take place every 10 weeks. In most areas they do not effectively set short-term targets for achievement. Future objectives are not expressed in terms of achievement of an element or unit of an NVQ and do not reflect activities which occur naturally in the trainees' on-the-job training programmes. In some areas, such as hospitality, there is very little action-planning at all. The personal effectiveness of trainees is not systematically assessed. Trainees and their workplace supervisors are asked to assess areas such as attendance, attitude to work and initiative against a numerical scale. There are no clear grading criteria for this assessment and most trainees are unable to explain the self-assessment decisions they have made. An exception is hairdressing, where reviews accurately record work activities and set goals for attainment.

62. Initial assessment consists of both a basic skills and key skills diagnostic test. The college has a procedure for vocational aptitude testing, but as most trainees joining the college are already employees this is not systematically applied. The individual training plans are not used as working documents. All contain similar, generic targets and are not regularly brought up to date. Achievements are often not added and amendments to the training programme are not always recorded.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

63. Overall responsibility for work-based learning provided under contract rests with the college's training company, Pure Business Solutions. An assistant principal of the college is responsible for the management of Pure Business Solutions. The business services manager directs its day-to-day operation, supported by a work-based learning project developer and a small administration team. All work-based learning staff meet regularly. There is regular and informal contact between the curriculum areas and Pure Business Solutions. Curriculum leaders manage the learners' occupational training programmes. The off-the-job training takes place in the college with tutors from the curriculum areas. Work-placement officers and work experience assessors are responsible for maintaining links between learners and their employers in the workplace and for carrying out assessments and progress reviews. Work-placement officers and work experience assessors work closely with the learners' tutors and report to the curriculum leaders.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of working environments
- ◆ lack of readily available data upon which to base management decisions

64. There has been a major restructuring of the college since the original inspection. One of the aims of the restructuring was to improve the overall management of work-based learning. The job roles and responsibilities of senior managers have been redefined. New staff have been recruited to the college

company. The college has an effective process for identifying the training needs of staff. In 2001, the college was successfully reaccredited with the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Following its restructuring, the college drew up an effective action plan to rectify the weaknesses identified at the time of the original inspection. There is now thorough monitoring of the observation of health and safety regulations in the college and in learners' workplaces. The college has developed its management information system to provide the necessary information to senior managers and to curriculum area staff. Some progress has been made in improving the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-managed improvements to work-based learning
- ◆ good internal and external communication
- ◆ effective professional development programme for staff

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient monitoring and control of some training processes
- ◆ inadequate work-based assessment in some areas
- ◆ failure to provide key skills training from the outset of the programmes

65. Considerable improvements have been made in the management of work-based learning since the original inspection. Senior managers have worked hard to ensure that all staff across the college recognise the importance of work-based learning. At the original inspection, those responsible for work-based learning and those responsible for the college's curriculum areas did not communicate with one another often enough. Staff in the college training unit had little knowledge of the content of learning programmes and did not know the extent of learners' progress towards reaching their targets. Teaching staff did not understand fully the needs of work-based learners. Following the original inspection, a comprehensive set of documents and systems for work-based learning has been developed and introduced. Job descriptions of staff across the college have been amended to take account of responsibilities relating to the management and implementation of work-based learning. All staff involved with work-based learning now work together effectively as a team with the aim of helping work-based learners to succeed. New and thorough systems for monitoring learners' progress have been introduced. The college has developed a management information system but this does not yet provide adequate analysis of trends in retention and achievement rates. The college's equal opportunities policy and quality and assurance system have been modified to take account of the needs of work-based learners.

66. Internal communications are good. Staff hold well-planned meetings at which they are kept informed of strategic and operational developments, particularly those associated with work-based learning. The college also has good communications with employers. There are meetings of curriculum leaders, work-based assessors and curriculum area teams, at which all aspects of training and

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*The college has produced a comprehensive set of procedures, with supporting paperwork, charting the life cycle of a typical learner at York College Training Services. Each stage of learning is carefully described, along with the contributions made by assessors, tutors and other staff. This gives learners a good insight into various stages of the learning process.*

assessment are discussed. Issues relating to retention and achievement rates and contractual compliance are discussed at meetings of the business performance management group, the work-based learning management group and staff from Pure Business Solutions. Minutes of meetings are recorded and circulated, and these set out action points clearly. There are good working relationships between Pure Business Solutions and the college's teaching faculties. Staff in Pure Business Solutions strengthen their teamworking skills through informal daily networking and at regular meetings when they share good practice and plan new initiatives. Communications between employers, work-based assessors, work-placement officers and the college's tutors are sound. Employers are supportive of work-based learning and provide good training for learners in the workplace. Several workplace supervisors have previously undertaken apprenticeship training at the college and have long-standing relationships with staff. Issues which might affect a learner's programme are discussed promptly by workplace supervisors and staff. The college holds regular events at which learners receive awards from employers. The college has strong strategic links with local learning partnerships.

67. There is an effective staff training programme. Personnel policies and procedures are clear and comprehensive. These are well understood by staff. The implementation of the policies on equality of opportunity and health and safety are well managed. New staff are given guidance and support and a well-planned induction programme. They are allocated a mentor and devise their own personal development plan. Staff receive a professional development interview every term at which their training needs are identified. Records of staff training and development are held centrally by the college's training and development adviser and by curriculum leaders. Before agreeing that a member of staff may undertake training, line managers check that the training concerned meets the needs of the individual, and of the organisation. Staff are required to evaluate the effectiveness of the training they receive.

68. In some instances, there is insufficient monitoring and control of some training, assessment and progress reviews carried out in the workplace. In a few occupational areas, learners receive insufficient training in the workplace. In some instances, action was planned following the original inspection to ensure that employers provided on-the-job training, but this was not carried out.

69. Most learners are recruited directly by employers from local schools, colleges and through the careers service. The college is successful in securing alternative full-time employment for learners who lose their jobs. The college has a good reputation with employers and is the preferred training provider for most. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of the extent to which employers carry out their responsibility to provide learners with the training they need. Not all employers understand the importance of the individual learning plan and other essential training documents. Some do not monitor learners' progress towards their qualifications effectively. In some occupational areas, where the on-the-job training programme is largely determined by the employer, training in the workplace is not planned adequately. Many reviews of learners' progress are carried out well. In some instances, however, learners are not set clear targets

during their reviews. Employers are not always involved in the reviews. Some learners and their employers do not fully understand the importance of progress reviews and target-setting. The findings from progress reviews are not always passed on to employers and some records of reviews are insufficiently detailed.

70. Work-based assessment is inadequate in some occupational areas. Since the original inspection, the college has recruited additional workplace assessors in most areas of learning. In some areas, such as construction, vacancies for work-based assessors have not yet been filled. Many learners on electrical installation and hairdressing programmes are assessed in the workplace. In some occupational areas, however, work-based assessment is not an established feature of learning programmes. In some instances, learners are assessed in a large group in the college as they carry out tasks under simulated workplace conditions. Some employers have qualified assessors who are responsible for assessing learners in the workplace. Others have developed work-based recorders. Several employers, however, are insufficiently involved in the assessment process. Some learners and their employers cannot tell the difference between visits college staff make to the workplace in order to carry out assessment, and those for the purpose of giving learners training in key skills or reviewing their progress.

71. In some occupational areas, considerable effort has been made to show learners how they can cross-reference evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences to the key skills units. In other areas, however, key skills training has not been carried out from the outset of programmes. In some occupational areas, learners have little understanding of key skills and of the key skills element in their training programme. In others, learners still have insufficient knowledge of key skills and do not understand the key skills element of their training programme. In addition, their employers have insufficient understanding of key skills. Some learners are not collecting sufficient evidence to satisfy the requirements for obtaining the NVQ and key skills certification. Most learners and their employers regard key skills training as an imposition and irrelevant to their workplace activities. In some areas, learners do not cross-reference evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences, where appropriate, to key skills units. They also gather little evidence of their acquisition of key skills through training activities in the workplace, or activities carried out under simulated work conditions. Measures to give greater priority to key skills training on learning programmes have not yet been entirely effective. However, the college has appointed a key skills co-ordinator and key skills advisers in each faculty. The college has also attempted to promote better understanding of key skills through brochures that are distributed to learners and employers.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

72. York College has a written quality assurance system which covers the activity of York College Training Services. The quality assurance manual contains reference to the college's policy for quality, the guidelines for self-assessment and

monitoring of teaching practices. The college's management structure includes an executive committee for dealing with policy development and systems development. There are a number of additional sub-committees concerned with curriculum and service quality. Defined responsibilities for each of the quality assurance review groups are contained within the quality assurance manual. There is a dedicated quality standards manager post within the staffing structure. Staff have defined responsibilities for quality assurance within their job descriptions.

73. York College meets the external quality assurance requirements of its awarding bodies and the local TEC. There are a number of trained internal verifiers within the full- and part-time staff who contribute to the college's internal quality assurance system for NVQs. Each curriculum area manages its own internal verification process. This process includes sampling of portfolios and observation of assessment in the workplace. The college's self-assessment report was not sufficiently self-critical. Many strengths identified in the report were no more than normal practice. Action plans have been developed to tackle issues raised in the self-assessment. They address strategic and specific curriculum development and improvement needs. In several areas progress had been made against these plans by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grade given by the college for this area in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ wide range of quality improvement activity
- ◆ systematic gathering and use of trainees' feedback
- ◆ comprehensive action-planning resulting from self-assessment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ incomplete application of quality assurance system to work-based activities
- ◆ insufficient use of data to initiate improvement

74. There is a clear focus upon continuous improvement that goes across all areas in the college. Within the college's quality management structure there are a number of review groups. Senior and curriculum managers carry out strategic management reviews. These groups work to formal agendas and review the improvement of staff and employers' handbooks and key skills development. They provide a forum for the review of external verifiers' reports and give senior staff the chance to monitor progress made against targets set in college policy documents. Occupational working groups meet each month and focus upon developments within each sector. There are further meetings to review quality assurance, where specific weaknesses or strengths identified during the monthly meetings are discussed at length. All full- and part-time work-based assessors attend these meetings. Representatives from each occupational area subsequently meet to share the observations and ideas generated. Ideas where college-wide improvement may result are then discussed. Action plans are generated at each level of review and are frequently monitored.

75. Internal verification of assessment practice is satisfactorily managed and is carried out by occupationally competent and qualified staff. Sampling plans are available and are used to manage the programme of internal verification. Perceived weaknesses are targeted for additional internal verification, for example within the plumbing training. Assessors receive feedback and support after internal verification has been completed. There is monitoring of teaching practice within the college. A range of practical and theory training sessions are included in the planned observations, which are carried out by staff who have been formally trained in the required techniques. There is little evidence yet of improved standards in training as a result of the observation process. Inspectors observed a considerable variation in the standard of training and assessment during the inspection.

76. There are established mechanisms for gathering feedback from trainees. Information gathered from trainees is carefully analysed and used to influence developments within the college. Trainees are issued with questionnaires. The 'first impression' questionnaires ask for feedback on initial recruitment, induction and college resources. The 'on programme' questionnaires gather feedback on lesson structure, programming and teaching activities. The support given by work-based assessors is also reviewed. 'End of programme' questionnaires consider overall learning experience, including tutorial support, college facilities and access to learning resources.

77. Comprehensive action plans have been developed following self-assessment. All training staff have contributed to the review of training within their occupational area. Guidelines on the methods for effective self-assessment are issued to all staff. Targets and defined responsibilities are recorded on the action plans. In some instances, actions and targets have been achieved ahead of schedule. For example, slow achievement for trainees on level 2 NVQ programmes in construction was identified. Training and assessment within the college in the use of gas were found to be inadequate. The college subcontracted the training to an outside training provider and improvements were made ahead of the planned dates.

78. Quality assurance procedures are issued to all staff. These procedures relate to both policy objectives and also to the training processes, covering areas such as induction, recruitment, assessment practice and internal verification. Copies of the procedures are contained within staff handbooks, but staff understanding of these procedures has not been checked. There are variations in how the guidelines are applied. For example, during inspection there were significant variations in the quality of review and feedback given to trainees both following assessment and as part of their periodic review of progress. The quality assurance system does not fully extend to work-based training activities. Work-based assessors do not understand the documented systems and in several instances were not aware of the existence of guidelines they were to follow.

79. There is insufficient use of data to initiate improvement. There are particular difficulties in obtaining and interpreting achievement and retention data within

occupational areas. Performance statistics which are specific to TEC-funded trainees are not reviewed or used to identify areas in need of improvement. Employers' feedback is sought on an annual basis. However, little analysis of the information received has occurred. This has limited the opportunities for identifying key weaknesses and developing action plans, linked to meeting employers' needs. It also contrasts with the analysis and use made of feedback from trainees. Quality assurance teams do not routinely use statistical data to identify key areas of concern when planning initiatives for improvement. When external auditors make observations the tendency is for the college to take corrective, rather than preventative, action.