

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
NOVEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION JUNE
2002

Milton Keynes College



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 Milton Keynes College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for engineering, business administration, equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance. These areas have 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 sections of the original report dealing with engineering, business administration, equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance have 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).

At the original inspection, Milton Keynes College provided satisfactory training in the areas of construction, hospitality, and hair and beauty. Engineering and business administration, equal opportunities, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. At reinspection, business administration is satisfactory but engineering is poor. Business administration learners are showing satisfactory progress with good integration of key skills. Employers are effectively involved in training through the progress reviews. Equal opportunities and trainee support are now satisfactory with effective use of data and good policies and procedures but equal opportunities is not monitored effectively in the workplace. Learners receive good learning and pastoral support. Management of training and quality assurance remain unsatisfactory. The college does not adequately monitor the training and staff are unclear about the college's performance against its contractual requirements. The college's quality assurance arrangements do not provide a consistently satisfactory experience for work-based learners. The college is completing its merger with two training providers and has not yet developed a uniform quality assurance system for work-based learning. Achievement rates remain poor across all areas of learning but there are signs of improvement in retention rates.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	4
Business administration	4
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	3

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

REINSPECTION	
Engineering	5
Business administration	3

REINSPECTION	
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training across most occupational areas
- ◆ good management of on- and off-the-job training in hairdressing
- ◆ good learning and pastoral support for learners
- ◆ good equal opportunities policy and procedures
- ◆ systematic observation of training sessions

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates
- ◆ poor training in engineering
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of equal opportunities for learners in the workplace
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of work-based learning
- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements for work-based learning
- ◆ insufficient use of statistical data to improve work-based learning

INTRODUCTION

1. Milton Keynes College (the college) is a medium-sized general further education college. It was formed in 1982 when the two further education colleges at Wolverton and Bletchley merged. The college operates from its main site in Milton Keynes and two other sites at Bletchley and Bletchley Park. The college had 8,000 students at the time of the original inspection, and 13,500 at reinspection. Seventy-five per cent of them come from the Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire area. At reinspection, the college was merging its work-based learning with that of the two training providers it owns. This process is due for completion in September 2002. The college has been asked by the local Learning and Skills Council to take responsibility for 80 learners from another local provider which recently went into liquidation.

2. At the original inspection, the college contracted with Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE) to provide work-based learning. At reinspection, the college contracts with Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Northamptonshire LSC. At the original inspection, the contract was managed by a member of staff of a subsidiary company of the college. The work-based learning was managed through the curriculum areas and the recruitment and selection of learners was subcontracted to the subsidiary company. At reinspection, work-based learning is part of three directorates within the college which cover campus-based learning, as well as community-based and work-based learning. The work-based area is led by a director of the college with two training managers. One training manager is responsible for the service sector in business administration, hospitality, hairdressing, information and communications technology (ICT), retailing and customer service, and the other manager is responsible for construction and engineering. The recruitment and selection process is managed by the work-based team. There are eight senior training advisers who are responsible for the trainers/assessors. At the original inspection, learners were based with local employers and attended the college for off-the-job training for one day each week. At reinspection, the college has revised its strategy for work-based learning so that most of the training takes place at the employers' premises and learners attend college for key skills training and portfolio production, as appropriate.

3. The borough of Milton Keynes has one of the fastest growing populations in the United Kingdom. The area had a population of 206,000 in 1999 and 210,000 in 2001. It has a higher percentage of young people under 16 than the national average. In 2000, the number of young people achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 41 per cent, which was below the national average of 49.2 per cent. In 2001, this figure had increased to 42.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups, at 5.8 per cent, is

slightly higher than the proportion for the Southeast as a whole, which is 4.4 per cent. The proportion of minority ethnic groups is increasing as asylum seekers are moving into the area.

4. Employment is buoyant in the Milton Keynes area. The unemployment rate was only 1.5 per cent in October 2000, compared with the national rate of 3.4 per cent. This figure remained the same in 2001, compared with a slight decrease in the national average to 3.3 per cent. There are unfilled job vacancies in the area and a growing skills shortage. Fifty-five per cent of the 7,091 companies in Milton Keynes employ fewer than 20 people. The local economy is dominated by the service sector but there is also a significant number of manufacturing companies. There is great competition in Milton Keynes for employing young people who tend to change jobs frequently as this results in their salaries increasing.

5. At the original inspection, the college provided work-based learning for 226 young people. At reinspection, the college has 203 learners as advanced modern apprentices, national learners/foundation modern apprentices and learners on NVQ programmes. Learners are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in the areas of motor vehicle, electrical installation, administration, information technology (IT), hospitality, hairdressing, engineering and customer service.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The college produced the first self-assessment report on its work-based learning in 1999. A second report was produced in the summer of 2000 for the Training Standards Council (TSC) inspection. The college had a clear process for producing the self-assessment report, based upon an annual cycle. Working groups in curriculum areas met in the December of each year to identify strengths and weaknesses, which were then approved in the spring of the following year by a self-assessment review group. Action plans, which are produced for each occupational section of the report, were then reviewed and updated. The college's quality and development board approved the report and action plan. A meeting was then held with local CCE officers to review both the self-assessment report and the action plan. During the summer, a small working party reviewed the self-assessment report and examined the provisional grades which had been internally awarded. The grades were subsequently agreed using additional data and information gathered from the college's internal quality assurance procedures in August of each year. The self-assessment report was updated before the start of the first inspection. In preparation for reinspection, the head of work-based learning produced an interim self-assessment report in February 2001. This described the progress on the action plan following the original inspection. The college produced a college-wide self-assessment report in May 2001 which followed the process previously adopted by the college. This report included work-based learning and was more descriptive than evaluative.

7. At the original inspection, a team of seven inspectors spent a total of 27 days at Milton Keynes College in October and November 2000. They held 34 interviews with college staff and interviewed 67 learners and 15 workplace supervisors. They visited 22 employers and work placements. They conducted six interviews with staff from the college's subcontractor and interviewed an officer from the local CCE and a college governor. They examined a wide range of documents, including strategic and operational plans, internal and external verification reports, learners' records and individual learning plans, learners' portfolios, lesson plans and learning schedules. The inspection coincided with that of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and, where it was appropriate, evidence gathered by FEFC inspectors was taken into account. Inspectors observed 16 instruction sessions and the grades are shown in the first table below.

8. The reinspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors who spent a total of 20 days with the provider. Inspectors interviewed 33 learners, which represented 16 per cent per cent of the total, visited 14 employers, carried out 37 interviews with staff and observed three teaching sessions, as most of the training took place in the workplace. Inspectors reviewed a variety of evidence including 13 NVQ portfolios. The grades for the observations are shown in the second table below.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection:

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		1	1			2
Engineering		1	1			2
Business administration	1	2	4	1		8
Hospitality			2			2
Hair & beauty	1	1				2
Total	2	5	8	1	0	16

Grades awarded to instruction at the reinspection:

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	GRADE 6	GRADE 7	TOTAL
Engineering				1	1			2
Business administration				1				1
Total	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

9. There are 29 electrical installation trainees comprising 15 advanced modern apprentices, 11 national trainees/foundation modern apprentices and three trainees on other training programmes. Advanced modern apprentices take an NVQ at level 2 in installing electrotechnical systems and an NVQ at level 3 in installing and commissioning electrotechnical systems and equipment, together with specified theoretical and practical competencies and specified key skills. Foundation modern apprentices take an NVQ at level 2 plus specified theoretical, practical and key skills components. Trainees on other training programmes are working towards an NVQ at level 2 and some will take an NVQ at level 3. The advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks have recently been revised with the result that there are trainees working within both the original and new frameworks. The national training organisation for the industry does not specify a length of time for the apprenticeship. Advanced modern apprentices ranged from those who are in the first to those that are in the fifth year of their programme. Trainees are employed in 23 general electrical contracting businesses across north Buckinghamshire and the Milton Keynes area. The trainees attend the college's Bletchley Park campus for day release or a combination of day and

evening classes each week for practical and theoretical training. They work towards a nationally recognised qualification in electrical installation competences. NVQ assessment at level 2 is based on a combination of practical assignments in the college and evidence from the workplace. The NVQ at level 3 in installing and commissioning electrotechnical systems and equipment is recognised by the industry as the standard qualification for electricians. Advanced modern apprentices also work towards the achievement measurement 2 (AM2) standard, and qualify for membership of a national register of qualified electricians. Achievement is difficult to quantify year-on-year. No trainees have completed their individual training plan over the past three years. The proportion of advanced modern apprentices achieving their level 2 NVQ and the nationally recognised qualification in electrical installation competences was 67 per cent in 1996-97, 100 per cent in 1997-98 and 78 per cent in 1998-99. The figures reflect the retention for the first two years, with the rate falling to 67 per cent in 1999-2000. The proportion of national trainees remaining on programme is 80 per cent for 1999-2000 and it is 100 per cent for those on other training. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses cited in the self-assessment report but also identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-structured off-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ additional qualifications provided for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress by trainees towards achieving NVQs
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ poor target-setting and progress reviews
- ◆ some overcrowding of classrooms and workshops

10. Trainees have the choice of attending day or evening classes, or a combination of the two for their off-the-job training. The training sessions include both practical and theoretical elements. The training is well planned and learning schedules clearly specify what the training will consist of and which skills will be practised each week. The training schedule includes details of the dates and times of examinations and practical competence tests. The structure of the training ensures that there is a good balance of practical and theoretical learning during each day in college. Trainers adopt a flexible approach to ensure that individual trainees practise their skills at their own pace. Theoretical and practical training is given in adjacent rooms, giving good opportunities for trainers to reinforce theoretical learning with practical demonstrations. As well as gaining skills in electrical installation, trainees learn to use an industry-standard software package

to design electrical distribution systems. Trainers also make use of a robotics training facility on the college campus to demonstrate electrical distribution practice in industrial installations. Trainees are given comprehensive information packs to support them in their learning. There are appropriately detailed sections to supplement their theoretical learning, a section containing practical tasks, and a section on relevant health and safety legislation and practice. While the learning schedules identify the overall objective of each week's sessions, there are insufficient individual session plans. Trainees are not given copies of the learning schedules and are only told at the end of each training session what they will be studying the following week.

11. All trainees are employed. Trainees work for small businesses, mainly electrical installation and/or maintenance contractors. A few tend to specialise in, for example, the installation and maintenance of alarm systems. Employers offer the opportunity to learn and practise a wide range of electrical installation skills in a variety of contexts which are well matched to the NVQ standards. Employers support and encourage their trainees effectively, recognising the need to avoid giving them repetitive work which requires low levels of skill. Most employers allow trainees time for portfolio-building in addition to the time for their off-the-job training.

12. When they are approaching the end of their programme advanced modern apprentices are encouraged to attend additional training sessions leading to a certificate in testing and commissioning electrical systems, and to take the qualification for the 16th edition of the wiring regulations through an examination. Apprentices are also encouraged to apply for membership of a national register of qualified electricians.

13. Trainees make slow progress towards achieving their NVQs. Trainees are not introduced to the structure and requirements of their NVQs at an early stage of their training. The college regards the completion of NVQs as milestones to mark the end of the apprenticeship rather than trainees achieving them as soon as they can demonstrate the required competence. The college does not encourage trainees to achieve individual units of their NVQ as they progress. There are two modern apprentices who have reached the fifth year of their programmes without completing their frameworks. Their NVQ portfolios have been assessed and internally verified, but they still have to complete their key skills. While progress towards achieving NVQs is slow, retention rates are good and the rate of achievement of NVQs at level 2 is good, though it has declined over the last year.

14. The evidence put together for NVQ assessments is largely made up of material generated at college during off-the-job training sessions. Trainees are not told about the practice of collecting evidence in their workplace until late in their programmes. Witness testimony is provided by trainees' supervisors who, while they are occupationally competent, are not familiar with the NVQ standards. Assessment is not systematically planned. Opportunities for using evidence produced in the workplace are missed. There is insufficient assessment through

the observation of trainees' performance in the workplace. This was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Trainees are not effectively coached in the practice of cross-referencing their evidence to the NVQ standards. In many cases, assessors carry out this work without explaining the process to the trainees. Trainees are not encouraged to put forward different types of evidence for assessment. Trainees are given information packs, which cover the process of putting together an NVQ portfolio, but they are uncertain how to use the materials effectively.

15. Trainees have regular reviews with their assessor. Recently, assessors have carried out these reviews more frequently in the workplace than in the college, which is a significant improvement in policy. While reviews are regular, they are not always used effectively. Trainees' action plans do not always specify clear objectives and, when they are reviewed at the next session, assessors do not always record what has been achieved. Successive action plans specify the same targets, with no reasons given for them being carried over. Action-planning practice is sometimes poor. Some action plans are linked to NVQ standards, while others are not.

16. There have been significant recent changes in personnel. The team leader left in August and new staff have recently been recruited. Some of the weaknesses outlined above have been recognised by the college, and efforts are being made to eliminate long-standing poor practice. Action planning with trainees is now being undertaken in the workplace instead of at the college. Assessors are now planning assessments more effectively and identifying opportunities for carrying out observation in the workplace. Assessors are responding at short notice to opportunities of capturing naturally occurring evidence through workplace observations.

17. Employers respect the trainer/assessors for their knowledge and experience, and their work with the trainees. They have regular discussions with the trainer/assessors at the quarterly reviews and the action planning visits. These meetings are not always used to exchange information which could improve the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Some employers have little knowledge of their trainee's NVQ programme. Trainees sometimes spend unnecessary time in the college learning practical skills which they have already developed to the required competence in the workplace. Trainer/assessors miss opportunities to influence the type of work undertaken in the workplace and to provide supplementary college-based practical learning to fill any identified gaps. This is another area, however, where the staff changes have had a positive benefit, with new staff discussing training needs more frequently with employers.

18. The workshop and training room are overcrowded. They were each designed for 12 trainees and the groups using them, which include both trainees and college students, are as large as 18.

Engineering

Grade 5

19. There are currently 58 learners on motor vehicle programmes. There are 14 advanced modern apprentices, 28 foundation modern apprentices and 16 learners on other NVQ programmes. Learners are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in vehicle maintenance, repair and unit replacement. Learners on apprenticeship programmes are working towards an additional five key skills units. All learners are employed in local motor vehicle companies ranging from main dealerships to small garages. All learners attend college on a day-release basis for the technical theory training. The learners' training and development of practical skills are undertaken wholly at their workplaces. There are two workplace assessors who visit learners to review progress and assess their engineering competence. The college has four full-time motor vehicle teaching staff. Staff have occupational experience and appropriate qualifications. Two staff have NVQ assessor qualifications, two are working towards assessors' qualifications and one is qualified as an internal verifier.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor target-setting and action-planning
- ◆ unplanned on-the-job training
- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates

20. At reinspection, none of the weaknesses had improved. The weakness of unplanned training, particularly on the job, now extends to include unplanned off-the-job training. Three additional weaknesses were identified. The self-assessment report was mostly descriptive rather than evaluative. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessed grade for engineering and awarded a lower grade.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ highly committed employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates
- ◆ poorly planned training, on and off the job
- ◆ inappropriate internal verification practice
- ◆ insufficient integration of key skills with learning in the workplace
- ◆ poor management of health and safety in the college's motor vehicle workshop
- ◆ poor-quality resources in the college's workshop

21. Employers are highly committed to the learner's development. Learners have good support from their employers and receive training from experienced and skilled workplace supervisors. Workplace supervisors are actively involved in

reviewing learners' progress with college staff. They respond positively to requests from assessors to give learners specific engineering tasks. Learners value the opportunity to develop and acquire a range of skills.

22. Retention and achievement rates in motor vehicle engineering are poor. Over a three-year period from 1998-99 to 2000-01, 35 per cent of learners were retained and only 22 per cent of those learners who had started an advanced modern apprenticeship completed their programmes. No foundation modern apprentices completed their programme within the agreed training plan. Of those learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships, only 16 per cent remained in training. The current learners are progressing slowly.

23. The training, both on and off the job, is poorly planned. There is insufficient structure in the learners' programme of work and the work placements are not analysed to identify the range of engineering opportunities available. Most employers used cannot provide the full range of activities required by the qualification. Employers are not routinely informed of their responsibilities for training. There are no effective links made between theories taught at college and practical work-based learning. Opportunities to gather suitable work-based evidence are regularly missed. The standard of evidence produced by learners is of poor quality. College staff fail to effectively manage the learners' skills development. Insufficient account is made of the learners' work experience when planning off-the-job training. Off-the-job training is poorly delivered. The standard of training sessions is inconsistent, and some are uninspiring and dull. Lesson plans, when available, are not of an adequate standard. The lesson's objectives are not clear to learners and key learning points are not emphasized. Learners' understanding is not systematically checked. Learners are not actively engaged during teaching sessions and are easily distracted. Work-based learners have no scheduled access to the motor-vehicle workshop when attending college. No practical demonstrations are used to clarify and expand on theories taught.

24. Internal verification does not comply with the awarding body's requirements. Internal verification is not carried out systematically to an agreed schedule. Unqualified members of staff are verifying assessments. This poor practice was not identified either during self-assessment or by the college's internal audit system. There is insufficient verification of assessment through observation. Learners' work-based evidence is of a poor standard and contains little additional supporting evidence other than job cards. These weaknesses were not identified during internal verification.

25. There is insufficient integration of key skills with learning in the workplace. College staff do not make key skills training and assessment part of learners' work-based learning. Key skills are taught separately from engineering subjects and learners see little relationship of key skills with their daily work activities. Learners attend key skills workshops at college where they complete worksheets and agree on assignments. They receive little information or guidance on how to obtain evidence of key skills from the workplace. Inadequate use is made of

POOR PRACTICE

A tutor was observed providing instruction to a learner while working underneath a vehicle which was raised on a vehicle ramp. Although the learner was observed to be wearing eye protectors in the correct manner, the tutor was not.

naturally occurring evidence from the workplace. Workplace supervisors have no understanding of the key skills evidence required by learners.

26. There is poor management of health and safety in the college's motor vehicle workshop. Testing equipment is not suitably controlled. A tyre changer and wheel-balancing machine used by learners was not secured to the workshop floor. There is uncontrolled access to the vehicle battery-charging area and there is inappropriate storage of chemicals. When notified, the college took prompt action to deal with the identified problems and a full risk assessment was completed.

27. The quality of resources available to learners within the motor-vehicle workshop is poor. Electrical demonstration boards are not functional and relate to obsolete vehicle technology. College workshop vehicles are old and do not provide learners with enough opportunity to gain practical experience on the required range of modern vehicles. Although the workshop is equipped with a number of computers which are used for accessing online technical manuals, none are of modern industry standard.

Business administration

Grade 3

28. There are 22 learners, of whom seven are foundation modern apprentices, 10 advanced modern apprentices, and five NVQ learners working towards business administration NVQs at levels 2 and 3. All learners are employed in a range of small and medium-sized companies in the Milton Keynes area. Most learners are already employed when they come on to the programme. All learners receive an initial assessment to identify their learning needs and if any specialist support is required. Near the beginning of the programme, learners attend a one-day induction. If it is not possible for the learner to attend college for the assessment or induction, this is carried out in the workplace.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were

- ◆ lack of employers' involvement in training
- ◆ some poor assessment practice
- ◆ poor action-planning and target-setting for accounting trainees
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

29. At reinspection, three of the weaknesses have improved. The college has rectified the poor assessment practice, and, as part of this process, it has improved short-term target-setting; which has increased the involvement of employers. Poor achievement rates remains a weakness. The self-assessment report was descriptive rather than evaluative. Several of the strengths the college identified were considered no more than satisfactory by inspectors. Inspectors agreed with the proposed grade in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough assessment and internal verification
- ◆ good key skills development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor completion rates of full apprenticeship
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of on-the-job training

30. Thorough assessment and internal verification procedures have improved the progress that learners are making towards their qualification. Assessors visit learners in the workplace at least once every three weeks. This is increased if learners need extra support and guidance to achieve their qualifications. Effective use is made of the assessment plans at each visit. Action that should have been taken is monitored, planned observations and assessments take place and short-term targets are set for the next visit. Regular opportunities for gaining IT qualifications are provided once a week at the main college. Assessors sometimes liaise with the lecturer and arrange for learners to carry out key skills work and word-process evidence during these sessions. This work is monitored through action plans but these do not have target dates on them. Employers have increased their involvement since the original inspection and all participate in quarterly reviews. They have good awareness of the NVQ process and their responsibilities to provide assessment opportunities.

31. Internal verification arrangements are good. Detailed feedback is given to learners on the quality of their work and action points are identified. This process has highlighted some areas for improvement, which have now been made. Regular observations of assessment take place during the year as part of the internal verification process. Regular standardisation meetings are held within the area of learning to share good practice and support members of staff with their assessment decisions. Staff value these highly.

32. There is good key skills training and assessment. All evidence for key skills is integrated into the apprenticeship and learners begin work on key skills as soon as they start their apprenticeship. Staff have produced a comprehensive guide to key skills which collates all the necessary information into one source. Good staff development has taken place using more experienced staff to coach less experienced staff. Most staff are working towards the key skills assessor and practitioner awards.

33. Since the original inspection, the college has introduced a range of measures to improve retention and achievement rates. Retention for 2001-02 is showing improvement on all programmes. The foundation apprenticeship has risen from 33 per cent to 86 per cent. The advanced apprenticeship has risen from 13 per cent to 56 per cent and there is 100 per cent retention on the NVQ programme. It is too soon for these initiatives to have shown an improvement in achievement rates. At

the time of reinspection, there has been no achievement of the full apprenticeship for the past three years. Insufficient attention is paid to agreeing long-term targets for achievement with learners. There is a lack of target-setting in the off-the-job IT sessions and some learners are slow to achieve their tasks. It is not possible for the assessors or managers to clearly identify if learners are on target for achievement.

34. There is inadequate monitoring of on-the-job training. Most of the training for the administration NVQ is done by the employers, however there are no records to show that this is happening. At the beginning of the programme, there is no formal recording of the training needs for each learner, and how these will be met. The college does not monitor the quality of the training given by the employer and this training is not observed by college staff.

Hospitality

Grade 3

35. There are 40 hospitality trainees. The programmes they are following are listed in the table given below. Trainees are employed by, or have placements with, a wide range of employers including hotels, restaurants, public houses and leisure centres. Trainees on food preparation and cookery NVQs attend the college one day each week during term time. During the day, they have a four-hour practical cookery session which is followed by three hours of theoretical training, portfolio building, key skills work and tutorials. Other trainees are visited in the workplace by trainers and assessors but they also attend occasional specialist workshops at the college. Four members of staff have the main responsibility for work-based trainees. They are qualified teachers and assessors and have relevant industrial experience. The number of trainees following hospitality programmes has increased this year. Over the previous two years from 1998, 17 national trainees and 13 modern apprentices had started programmes. Of these, three national trainees achieved an NVQ at level 2 and only one modern apprentice achieved an NVQ at level 3. Fourteen national trainees and six modern apprentices left their programmes early without achieving any qualification. No trainee has completed his or her full individual training plan including key skills units. Inspectors regarded some of the strengths in the self-assessment report as being no more than normal practice and agreed with the one weakness that was given. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. The action plan which was attached to the report included actions to address weaknesses which were not identified in the report. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

Table: numbers of hospitality trainees by NVQ subject and type of training

NVQ	Advanced modern apprentices	Foundation modern apprentices (national trainees)	Other work-based training for young people	Total
Food Preparation and cookery	7	13	4	24
Restaurant service	5	5	1	11
Bar / licensed premises	2		2	4
Front office			1	1
Total	14	18	8	40

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective links between tutors and workplace supervisors
- ◆ detailed action-planning involving all parties
- ◆ frequent and effective visits to trainees in the workplace
- ◆ continuous evaluation of programmes leading to action planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ training programmes not fully individualized
- ◆ some repetitive and uninteresting off-the-job training
- ◆ poor retention and achievement rates

36. The four college tutors who are mainly responsible for trainees have wide experience in the hospitality industry. They are the main contact for employers and workplace supervisors. Employers recognise and respect their knowledge and experience. In addition to discussing training and assessment, supervisors discuss a range of other work-related issues with tutors. This close contact helps to ensure that effective links are made between on- and off-the-job training. The trainees and their employers or workplace supervisors are all involved in reviewing the trainees' progress. These progress reviews include action-planning and the setting of specific, realistic targets for trainees to achieve by the next review. Trainees are encouraged and supported in working towards these targets by both their supervisors and the college's tutors. Trainees are visited at work by their tutor/assessor as well as being seen each week during their day at college. These visits are rarely more than a month apart and frequently much less. Wherever possible, assessments are carried out at work by the tutor or occasionally by a workplace supervisor with an assessor's qualification. Assessments of the skills and knowledge which are not used in the trainee's workplace are carried out at college.

37. As well as taking part in the college's self-assessment process, the curriculum manager and the tutors carry out their own analysis and evaluation of their programmes. They identify weaknesses themselves and ask for the opinions of trainees. They use this information to help them develop and improve the learning programmes.

38. Some trainees with particular experience or ability are allowed to progress more quickly through the standard schedule of off-the-job training. However, most trainees are expected to attend all the off-the-job training sessions regardless of the particular skills and training they may already have. Tutors use the experience of individual trainees as examples for the class but still normally expect each trainee to attend all of the classes. Individual training plans are discussed with each trainee but the plans rarely go beyond unit level. Trainees are frustrated at being expected to practise skills which they can already demonstrate their competence in at work and routinely undertake to an appropriate standard.

39. The off-the-job training which the college provides is comprehensive, but trainees find aspects of both their theory and practical training sessions repetitive. Some classes are conducted well, but college tutors have a highly traditional view of training for the hospitality industry. Many trainees now work in modern establishments which have a creative view of the appropriate image for restaurants, bars and kitchens and welcome imaginative, and even extrovert staff. Some of these trainees have difficulty relating to off-the-job training in which they are expected to conform to the traditional image of a chef or waiter.

40. Trainees' achievement and retention rates are generally lower in hospitality than in many other occupational areas. The hospitality industry in the Milton Keynes area is particularly short of staff and there are many opportunities for employment. However, the college's retention and achievement rates are poor. Overall, the level of achievement reflects the poor retention rates. Of all the national trainees who started in 1998-99 and 1999-2000, only 18 per cent have achieved an NVQ at level 2. The proportion of modern apprentices achieving an NVQ at level 3 over the same period is only 8 per cent. Some trainees who completed their NVQ up to five months ago are still working towards their key skills but have not yet achieved a single unit. Some trainees who were part of a key skills pilot project last year have still not achieved the required units. No trainees have completed their modern apprenticeships or national traineeships.

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

41. There are 45 hairdressing trainees, of whom 29 are national trainees and 16 are trainees on other training programmes. All of the trainees are employed. Twenty-nine trainees attend the college one day each week for off-the-job training. The other 16 receive off-the-job training in their workplaces, with college tutors visiting every week to give theoretical training. Two workplace supervisors act as work-based assessors in two of the salons. A college assessor also visits these 16

trainees at work every fortnight. All trainees have study packs which cover the knowledge they require for the NVQ. All trainees are visited in their salon each month for a progress review. This is also supported by a quarterly review in line with the contractual requirements. The self-assessment report identified five strengths. Inspectors regarded three strengths as being no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with the other two and identified three further strengths. Inspectors identified an additional weakness to the one given in the self-assessment report, and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent and effective visits to trainees in the workplace
- ◆ wide range of free hairdressing equipment for trainees
- ◆ thorough internal verification
- ◆ good analysis and use of data to evaluate programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates

42. There is good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The hairdressing team leader monitors the training using comprehensive procedures she has devised with her team. These procedures are also used by employers and their staff, who work with trainees who do not come into college for off-the-job training. Employers are given a well-designed handbook, which covers topics such as trainees' attendance requirements and assessment procedures. It also clearly defines the employers' role and responsibilities during the training programme. There are also written procedures for trainees' quarterly progress reviews. These progress reviews fully involve employers and also cover the trainees' welfare and their satisfaction with the training. The programme team works together closely and effectively.

43. The college provides all hairdressing trainees with a comprehensive set of equipment. This includes a hairdryer and scissors as well as a wide selection of brushes and combs. A model head is given to trainees to practise their skills on outside the college. All trainees are given the standard college salon dress. A hairdressing kit is provided by employers for trainees who do not attend the college. They also receive a free model head and a textbook from the college.

44. College staff make frequent and effective visits to trainees in their workplaces. The day-release trainees are visited at least once each month to review their progress. Trainees who do not attend the college are visited every week for training and assessment and every two weeks for action-planning. The programme

co-ordinator monitors these visits. The trainees' reviews are highly effective and include monitoring of NVQ assessments, and trainees' progress at work as well as work on the theoretical learning packs provided for all trainees. Any specific training needs are jointly identified and agreed with the reviewer, the trainee and employer.

45. Internal verification is thorough and effective. It is supported by a clear set of procedures which all verifiers use. There is a detailed sampling plan which each verifier uses to ensure that all trainees and all types of assessment activity are verified. The verification process requires each assessor to look at a minimum of one type of evidence and one NVQ unit for each trainee within each six-month period. This includes the observation of assessments, the use of written and verbal questions and portfolio evidence. Work-based assessors are included in the internal verification process. The programme co-ordinator regularly samples the work of the assessors carrying out internal verification. Any issues arising from this are fed back to staff and an action plan is put into place to correct poor practice. All NVQ portfolios are internally verified again before a request for final certification is made.

46. There is good analysis and use of data on the training programme. All trainees are given two questionnaires during the first and second year in training. The questionnaires are well designed, covering the trainees' training and assessment both at work and in the college. The responses are analysed in depth and used by the programme team to produce an action plan to correct any problems. Data on the destinations of trainees are also analysed and the results are presented in both graph and text format for evaluation purposes. A similar procedure is used for the questionnaires completed by trainees who leave the programme early. A questionnaire for use with employers has only been recently introduced and has been completed by two employers.

47. Retention and achievement rates are poor. Over the past two years, the average proportion of trainees remaining on hairdressing programmes has been just 20 per cent. No trainees have achieved their key skills units or the whole of their modern apprenticeship or national traineeship framework during this period. No modern apprentice has achieved an NVQ at level 3 and only 40 per cent of national trainees and 17 per cent of other trainees have achieved an NVQ at level 2 in hairdressing.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

48. The principal takes responsibility for managing equal opportunities and chairs the college's equal opportunities committee. The equal opportunities committee meets each term. Membership of the committee includes college managers and

staff but there is no student/learner member. The college has an equal opportunities policy and procedures. The policy states the college's commitment to encourage everyone to participate in education and training and to strive for freedom from discrimination. The policy is reviewed and updated at regular intervals. It is prominently displayed on noticeboards throughout the college and in student literature and is available in other forms, including Braille. The college also has associated policies including those for race equality, harassment, and child protection. In its charter, the college undertakes to provide opportunity for all to learn, and to value diversity. The college seeks to ensure that all companies, with which it subcontracts to provide work-based learning either have their own equal opportunities policy or comply with the college's policy. The college regularly reviews the gender and ethnic make-up of its training programmes. Fifty-seven per cent of learners are men, 98 per cent of learners are white and only 2 per cent are from a minority ethnic group. The college has a complaints procedure.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor implementation of equal opportunities policy
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ little use of equal opportunities data

49. At the reinspection, two weaknesses have improved and one remains. Inspectors identified an additional weakness. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and well-publicised equal opportunities policy
- ◆ equal opportunities data collected and analysed

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low awareness of equal opportunities among some learners
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of equal opportunities of learners in the workplace

50. The college has a clear equal opportunities policy which is reviewed and updated on a three-year cycle. The policy is clearly displayed on noticeboards throughout the college. It is given to staff and all students each year as a glossy leaflet. The leaflet clearly outlines what the college means by equal opportunities and the rights and responsibilities of each person under the equal opportunities policy. The leaflet also informs the reader of how the equal opportunities policy is monitored. The policy is also included in the college charter, and the learners' handbook and diary which are given to students each year. The college also displays copies of its anti-harassment policy and procedures on noticeboards. There are also policies for race equality and child protection. About 20 per cent of learners do not attend the college for training but they receive the college's documentation on equal opportunities at their induction.

51. From September 2001, the induction of new work-based learners has included a good introduction to equal opportunities. A one-hour session is devoted to showing a video highlighting numerous equal opportunities scenarios, which is followed up with a session during which bullying, harassment and initiation are discussed. First-year learners were able to recall this session and the issues discussed. The new prospectus for work-based learning has been thoughtfully produced and includes photographs which attempt to break gender and racial stereotypical images of some occupational areas.

52. Managers of work-based learning review the gender and ethnic composition of learners each month. Only 2 per cent of learners come from a minority ethnic background. This figure compares with a much larger figure of 9 per cent in the college. Work-based learning staff have set a target to increase the proportion of minority ethnic learners to 5 per cent. One hospitality initiative to help achieve this target is the introduction of a 'quick service' catering training programme targeted at the Chinese and people from the Indian subcontinent. Native speakers promote this programme to local restaurants. It is too early to determine the effectiveness of this project.

53. Learners inducted before mid-2001 did not receive the same level of detail on equal opportunities. Second- and third-year learners in some vocational areas have been shown the new video but others have not. Many second- and third-year learners do not remember being given equal opportunities training and have an inadequate awareness of equal opportunities issues.

54. Learners are asked to confirm during the progress review that they have been made aware of, and are regularly updated, on training policies and procedure, including equal opportunities. They do this by ticking a box. Learners often tick this box without having had a discussion with their reviewer or of being aware of what they had agreed had taken place. This is the only opportunity that some learners have to become better informed about equal opportunities issues. Equal opportunities is not consistently discussed with employers during the reviews.

Trainee support

Grade 3

55. The college's work-based learning directorate is responsible for the recruitment, selection and initial testing of applicants to work-based learning programmes. The college advertises training programmes in local newspapers and jobcentres and the employer liaison officer visits schools and careers events. Potential learners are also referred to the directorate by the careers service. Some employers contact the college directly to request that their learners join a modern apprenticeship scheme. All applicants for work-based learning are interviewed and given a key skills test to determine the level of programme they should work towards and whether they require additional learning support. Each learner is then visited in the workplace where the trainer, the learner and the employer negotiate

an individual learning plan. Learners' progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks. Most learners are visited at least every four weeks for assessment purposes. The college has a wide range of services for students including study support, welfare, careers guidance and counselling, which learners can share. These services are advertised on all college noticeboards and in publications given to learners when they begin their training. Many of these services are used by work-based learners.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ ineffective initial assessment process
- ◆ inappropriate choice of training programmes for some trainees
- ◆ poor initial induction for some trainees

56. At reinspection, the weaknesses had improved and had become satisfactory. Inspectors identified two additional weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good learning support for learners
- ◆ good access to a wide range of college support services

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some inconsistent and missed progress reviews
- ◆ infrequent contact with some learners in the workplace

57. Work-based learners receive good learning support during their training. Learners are identified as needing additional learning support during their initial interview and test, or they are advised by their teachers to accept the support provided by the college to improve their literacy or numeracy skills and improve their chances of success in achieving their NVQ. Most learners take up the offer of additional learning support and some others request extra help with their learning. Basic skills teachers provide good individual help for learners. The English skills of some minority ethnic learners are poor. The college also provides good individual support for these learners. All learners receiving learning support meet their support teacher every week. A programme of work is agreed with the learner and their vocational teacher for a six-week period and targets are set for the learner to achieve. The learner's progress is reviewed at the end of the six-weeks and a new learning plan and targets are agreed.

58. The college provides a good range of personal support services for students and work-based learners. These services include assessment and specialist support, for those with dyslexia, counselling, welfare and finance and careers guidance, and childcare. The college also has a team of staff who work with students and learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. These services

are explained during induction and are prominently advertised on noticeboards throughout the college, and some services, such as the confidential counselling service, are also advertised in lavatories. Most noticeboards also have a small supply of freepost postcards for students and learners to indicate whether they have a personal issue that may be preventing them from making the most of their training, but which they do not want to discuss with their tutor. Several learners have used the college-wide support services. The college is aware that it needs to improve the publicity of these services to work-based learners who do not visit the college.

59. Some learners have not been visited regularly at work for assessment or to review their progress. Most work-based learners are visited by their assessor at least every four weeks for the purpose of NVQ assessment and every 12 weeks to review their progress. Following assessment, learners are set targets to achieve for the next review. For some learners, however, there have been long periods when they have not been visited for either review or assessment. Learners in construction and engineering have not been visited for periods of between two and 12 months. The college does not have procedures for the way assessment is carried out relying instead on the experience of individual assessors. College managers or other work-based learning staff do not observe learners' progress reviews with the aim of standardising and improving the process.

POOR PRACTICE

One work-based learner has not been visited for assessment or review for a year. A manager of the company employing the learner made several complaints to the college but no action was taken. The company eventually complained to the local LSC and the college is now arranging for a member of staff to visit the learner.

60. Almost 20 per cent of work-based learners do not attend the college for any part of their training. Some of these learners are not visited or contacted sufficiently regularly to monitor their training. Two new learners were not visited until they requested a visit some two months after they had started training. In engineering and construction, learners are also left for longer periods than is considered good practice, to review their training and progress. A member of the training staff had left the college and the need to visit these learners had not been identified. These learners were not supported effectively during the early stages of their training.

Management of training

Grade 4

61. Following the original inspection, the college restructured into three directorates responsible for campus-, community- and work-based learning. Work-based learning is no longer the responsibility of the curriculum leaders. It is a separate unit within the college with its own dedicated staff, with the exception of engineering and construction. Many learners no longer attend off-the-job training at the college for one day each week. Their training is wholly in the workplace. They attend the college for key skills and occupational training when necessary. Twenty per cent of work-based learners never come into the college. The work-based learning directorate is based mainly at two sites, but by the end of July, will move to a new building at one site, which will house campus-based learners as well as all work-based staff and new vocational training facilities. The unit is led by a director who reports to the principal of the college, and subsequently, the

governing body. The director of work-based learning has two training managers responsible for the service sector (business administration, retailing, hospitality, hairdressing and ICT), and engineering and construction. In addition, there is manager for work-based learning contracts and a cross-college quality assurance manager, who has recently brought support to work-based learning. In each of the occupational areas, there is a senior training adviser who manages the trainers and assessors. The college contracts with Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire LSC and Northamptonshire LSC. The college merged with two training providers last year (who have two subsidiary providers) and is still co-ordinating five separate contracts with the local LSCs, each with their own system. The college will have a single contract with each local LSC in October. Another local provider has recently gone into liquidation and the local LSC has asked the college to take responsibility for the learners. The college employs all staff in the work-based learning unit and many of them have come from the two training providers. The transition process began in September 2001 and should be completed by 1 October 2002.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ ineffective action to improve achievement and retention rates
- ◆ slow implementation and poor integration of key skills with vocational training
- ◆ poor management of some part-time staff

62. At reinspection, two of the weaknesses have improved and one remains a weakness. The achievement and retention rates of learners remain poor. Key skills training and assessment are now integrated with the vocational training in most areas. The key skills weakness has been identified in engineering. Part-time staff are managed effectively by the senior training advisers. The self-assessment report for work-based learning presented to inspectors showed the existing strengths and weaknesses from the published report and the planned actions to improve the provision. During inspection, an updated self-assessment report for the whole college was available but no specific strengths or weaknesses for management of training were identified in it.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good staff development
- ◆ good strategic and operational planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of work-based learning
- ◆ insufficient progress on improving achievement and retention rates

63. The college provides a wide variety of training for work-based learning staff. Many of the trainers/assessors are working towards a further education teaching qualification and nine are expected to achieve this in the summer. Some new staff are training as assessors and internal verifiers. There has been good raising of

awareness of key skills through team meetings. In the service sector, five staff are working towards their key skills assessor awards and one has achieved the award. One has the key skills practitioners' award. Two staff responsible for recruitment are working towards an NVQ at level 3 in guidance and counselling. Two staff are training in basic skills support. The manager of the service sector is following a teachers' certificate course and is making good use of assignments to develop and improve the training practice in the area. Several staff have attended the college-wide development days, which have included planning and funding of training. In some of the occupational areas, the senior training advisers effectively promote continuous professional development and make good use of industrial experience. There is a college-wide appraisal process and many work-based learning staff are due to be appraised the month after reinspection.

64. The college has a new three-year strategic plan which clearly outlines the plans for campus-, community- and work-based learning. Middle managers and team leaders have developed operational plans from the strategic plan. In each area of learning, there is a detailed development plan which identifies the proposed actions for improvement, with a deadline and criteria to evaluate the success of the actions. Many of the senior training advisers regularly review the development plans. Some trainers/assessors are more involved in this process than others. The plans are effectively linked to the college's self-assessment report.

65. The college does not adequately monitor work-based learning. Senior staff do not have a systematic review of work-based learning to identify whether the local LSC contract is being met. Targets for achievement and retention have not been established and given to staff. Staff performance is not measured against targets. Some senior training advisers have effectively monitored the individual progress of learners and have designed some good systems for keeping records. This good practice is not shared across all areas of learning. There is insufficient management information to show the progress of learners across the areas of learning. In construction and engineering, learners' progress has not been monitored and not all staff can identify if learners are likely to achieve or remain with the college. The college does not sufficiently monitor the training in the workplace and does not know if employers are fulfilling their contractual requirements or if learners are receiving appropriate development and support. Over the past year, there has been insufficient management guidance and support to the training managers. A manager was appointed for construction and engineering who did not receive an induction. There were insufficient management reports available to describe the performance of the section or explain the issues for improvement. In some areas, there has been a lack of communication and feedback to staff. In the past six weeks, the director for marketing and business development has taken responsibility for the work-based learning unit and has been providing good support to the middle managers. Many staff have come from the training providers with which the college is merging and continue to use the providers' systems rather than the college's. Other staff are managing the transition well.

66. The college has made insufficient progress in improving achievement and retention rates. In ICT there have been no achievements and five out of six learners have left without completing their programme. In retailing and customer service, few learners have achieved their apprenticeships but nine out of 12 learners have completed the NVQ. In hospitality, there are few achievements and low retention rates. In hairdressing, no learners have achieved an apprenticeship and retention is low, but there are signs that retention is improving following the introduction of a trial period of work experience before learners enrol on the programme. Administration learners have also had poor achievement rates. The results in construction and engineering are equally poor. In some cases, learners have completed their occupational training but have not started the key skills training and assessment. The college is unable to identify the overall progress of work-based learners, partly because of using different management information systems, and partly because the learners are not effectively monitored. The college was reinspected 18 months after the original inspection, and during that time, many learners could have achieved both a qualification and an apprenticeship, but unsatisfactory management has hindered their progress.

Quality assurance

Grade 4

67. One of the college's directors has overall responsibility for quality assurance arrangements within the college. The principal chairs a quality and development board which receives reports from a self-assessment review group. The group is responsible for the production of the annual self-assessment report. Recently a quality review committee has been formed within the work-based learning area to identify best practice and deal with quality assurance issues related directly to work-based learning. This committee's membership consists of the commercial manager for work-based learning, the college's quality assurance manager and the managers for the main occupational areas. Further members have been invited from the trainers and assessors. The college's quality assurance manual and procedures do not specifically mention work-based learning but there are common quality assurance procedures across the college. The college regularly collects feedback from employers and learners and this is used in development plans. The self-assessment report has been updated twice since the original inspection. The reports were produced by senior training advisers and the two training managers, with the guidance of the college's quality assurance manager, and included feedback from trainers and assessors. The self-assessment reports in work-based learning are used to produce the college-wide self-assessment report. A self-assessment review group monitors the progress of the process and gives feedback on proposed development plans.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements for work-based learning
- ◆ some poor internal verification
- ◆ insufficient sharing of good practice
- ◆ insufficient use of statistical data to improve work-based learning

68. At reinspection, two of the weaknesses have improved and two remain. Internal verification has improved and is now a strength. The sharing of good practice is now satisfactory. Substantial work has been carried out on the review of the quality assurance system. However, the full review is not complete and current quality assurance arrangements across the work-based learning areas are inadequate. Statistical data have now been separated from central college data but their use is still inadequate.

69. The submitted self-assessment report did not identify new strengths but referred to those in the original inspection report. The action plans included in the report dealt with weaknesses only. The report for work-based learning had been produced in advance of the main college-wide self-assessment report. At the time of the reinspection, the main college report had been completed and included a section on work-based learning. This report was more detailed for areas of learning but quality assurance had been incorporated into the main college report. The weaknesses of quality assurance had been identified as college-wide weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a lower grade for quality assurance than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good monitoring of most college trainers
- ◆ good internal verification in most occupational areas

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ unsystematic use of data

70. The college operates a good programme of internal inspection of teaching and learning. Internal inspections are carried out in March and November of each year. The inspection has traditionally been for off-the-job training sessions but this has been extended to cover work-based learning processes such as assessment, reviews and on-the-job training. Selection and training of the internal inspection team is good. Team members are selected through the curriculum heads and the inspectors are subject to training in the methods and documentation and are required to undertake several mentored inspections. The internal inspections are well organised and based on the *Common Inspection Framework*. Learning sessions are graded. The internal inspection reports highlight weaknesses and

strengths which are used by local managers to develop action plans. Good records are maintained. Internal inspection also makes use of peer and management assessment of teaching. In engineering, the internal inspection is less memorable and is ineffective.

71. In most occupational areas, there was an ongoing verification process which was well planned and organised. Assessors are verified using observation and review of documents. The frequency of observation varied according to the experience of the assessor and on feedback from internal inspection reports and personal development plans. Internal verification records are good with detailed feedback to assessors and learners. Internal verification arrangements in construction and engineering are unsatisfactory.

72. The quality assurance arrangements for work-based learning are inadequate. The quality assurance procedures and processes have been subject to partial review and some have been improved. The college's quality assurance manual and some procedures are out of date, questionnaires and procedures have been superseded, and, in some cases, the terminology is obsolete. The manual is still available in some areas and the college recognises that some information was out of date. The awareness of quality assurance processes and procedures is low among some learners. There is a college-wide plan for the review of the quality assurance system but there are no detailed plans for training trainers and assessors on it. Trainers and assessors have no clear guidance on the current quality assurance measures. In several areas, such as business administration, motor vehicle and construction, different systems, inherited from the merged training providers, are being used across the areas. Review and feedback questionnaire processes are inconsistent. Feedback is sought regularly from campus-based learners. This feedback is processed and analysed and response rates are high. However, in work-based learning, feedback is not sought regularly and analysis is inconsistent. There are intentions to extend the central college system out to work-based learning, but this has not, as yet, been implemented. The central college complaints procedure is sound and there are appropriate responses to the complaints. However, in work-based learning, the handling and processing of complaints have been left to staff working in the area of learning. In one case, a work-based learner who had no contact with staff for over a year, including no review or assessments, had no action taken when complaining to college staff. The learner finally complained to the local LSC. The work-based learning complaints-handling procedure is inadequate. Staff are unclear about the processes of the quality assurance system in use.

73. The access to data and report production is inadequate. Across the work-based learning area there are three different systems for the gathering and presentation of data. These have different report formats and are only accessible by, and at, certain parts of the organisation. Different work-based areas of learning employ different methods in the gathering and analysis of data. There are no common reports across the work-based learning area and, although data are used to produce reports in connection with contract requirements and equal opportunities, there is

no systematic use of data to establish operational targets in terms of achievement and retention and recruitment targets within occupational areas. In some cases, senior training advisers have their own databases gathered from their own records, in several cases at home, and they use these to generate reports for management. Quality assurance of work-based learning was inadequate at the original inspection and insufficient progress has been made to improve the system, manage the merger with two training providers, and manage an increase from 200 to 800 learners.