

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
MARCH 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
AUGUST 2001

Training & Employment
Services
Stockton Borough Council



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 *learn*direct provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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 Training & Employment Services, Stockton Borough Council was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for construction, hospitality, foundation for work 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 construction, hospitality, foundation for work 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).

Training and Employment Services of Stockton Borough Council offers training in several occupational areas for learners with a variety of abilities and motivation levels. The training in childcare and care of the elderly is good in the workplace and at the off-the-job training centre. Training in business administration and retailing is satisfactory. At the time of the original inspection, training in construction and hospitality made insufficient use of workplace evidence and was unsatisfactory. Foundation for work training was unsatisfactory, with learners not having sufficient occupational guidance and assessment of their needs before going into work placements. Training in construction is now satisfactory. Hospitality and foundation for work are now good and training is particularly well planned in these occupational areas. Equal opportunities is actively promoted in the training centres. Learners receive high levels of pastoral support, but progress reviews do not focus on qualification targets. Management of training is satisfactory. When the original inspection took place, arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of the training were unsatisfactory. The monitoring of training is now good, but performance data are still not sufficiently used.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Business administration	3
Retailing & customer service	3
Hospitality	4
Health, care & public services	2
Foundation for work	4

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Construction	3
Hospitality	2
Foundation for work	2

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ open access to training for diverse range of applicants
- ◆ good individual tutorial support
- ◆ effective links with employers

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient focus on NVQs in progress reviews
- ◆ ineffective management of key skills training
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of data to make continuous improvements

INTRODUCTION

1. Training and Employment Services (TES) is part of the personnel and communication department of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. The council is one of the unitary authorities formed after the break up of Cleveland County Council in 1995. TES was created in the summer of 1996, following the merger of the council's existing training section with a local charitable organisation which specialised in training young people with a history of underachievement. TES operates as a separate trading arm of Stockton Borough Council and receives no financial assistance from council budgets.

2. In 1996, TES employed a total of 23 staff who managed the youth training programmes. From 1998 onwards there was a considerable expansion in work-based training, resulting in growth in the business administration, care and construction sectors. The increased demand for learners in business administration partly arose from Stockton Borough Council's decision to limit candidates for certain internal posts to TES's learners. The growth in programmes led to a significant increase in staffing. When the original inspection took place, TES employed 63 staff, 23 of whom were directly involved with the New Deal programme. New Deal training has not been included in either the original inspection or the reinspection, as it was covered in an inspection of the Teesside Unit of Delivery in August 2000. By the time of this reinspection, the staff team has grown to 71. It includes a general manager, three assistant managers, four senior members of staff with corporate responsibilities, eight lead training officers, 15 assessors, five key skills support workers, 25 staff with direct responsibility for New Deal clients and 10 administrators.

3. TES has five training sites, one of which is for New Deal. The other four sites which are all located in south Stockton, provide off-the-job training across a range of occupational areas. All of TES's government-funded training is contracted through Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC), previously Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and the Employment Service. At the time of the original inspection, there were 255 learners across 10 occupational areas. There were 69 modern apprentices, 87 national trainees, 90 youth learners and nine adults carrying out work-based training programmes. Owing to the small numbers of learners in each one, agriculture, engineering, leisure and media were not inspected.

The table below shows the number of people in each occupational area at the time of the original inspection:

	Young people	Adults	Total
Construction	60	0	60
Business administration	64	0	64
Retailing & customer service	23	0	23
Hospitality	14	1	15
Health, care & public	54	5	59
Foundation for work	9	0	9
Others (not inspected)	22	3	25
Total	246	9	255

4. TES has now added security training to its range of occupational areas. There are 254 learners working in 11 occupational areas. Sixty are advanced modern apprentices, 86 are foundation modern apprentices, 99 are following other youth training programmes, and nine are adults on the longer occupational training programme.

5. A large proportion of the young people recruited by TES have achieved few formal qualifications in the traditional educational system and many have poor literacy, numeracy and basic skills. Most are from the top 700 most deprived wards in England. Many of the learners need help to become motivated and to achieve the skills necessary to make them employable. TES offers support to those who lack confidence or have specific needs.

6. The area served by Tees Valley LSC covers the unitary authorities of Stockton-on-Tees, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Darlington, Redcar and Cleveland. The total population of the Tees Valley was 653,700 when the original inspection took place and this has now fallen slightly to 650,600. Unemployment levels across the Tees Valley vary considerably, but in January 2000, overall unemployment stood at 7.4 per cent compared with 4.3 per cent nationally. In June 2001, the proportion had fallen to 6.1 per cent, compared with 3 per cent nationally.

7. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Stockton and Middlesbrough were low at 41.3 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. By 2001, this has risen to 43.7 per cent in Stockton and 34.6 per cent in Middlesbrough, but it is still significantly lower than the national average of 49.2 per cent.

8. The 1991 census identifies that 1.9 per cent of the Tees Valley population are

from minority ethnic groups. However, they are unevenly distributed across the region, with Middlesbrough having the highest proportion, at 4.4 per cent, Stockton at 1.6 per cent, and Hartlepool, 0.7 per cent. Redcar and Cleveland jointly also have 0.7 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

9. TES's self-assessment report was produced in November 1999 and was the first self-assessment of work-based training undertaken by TES. The process started in 1998 with workshops each month which involved and informed staff regarding the process. Management have led meetings each week since the summer of 1999 of all the lead training officers across the range of occupational areas. The staff from each occupational area carried out the self-assessment for their specific area. Management completed the sections on generic areas based on feedback from staff. The organisation's second self-assessment report was prepared in December 2000, building on the action plan from the original inspection. The same staff were consulted and were given time away from their normal duties for this purpose. Lead training officers meet each month to monitor progress against TES's action plan.

10. At the time of the original inspection, nine inspectors spent a total of 29 days with TES in March 2000. Inspectors interviewed 86 learners and made 35 workplace visits. They met with 38 supervisors or employers and with three staff at a local college of further education. Thirty-three interviews were conducted with TES's staff. Seventy-two learners' files and 43 portfolios were examined. Other documents reviewed included contracts, external verifiers' reports, health and safety and equal opportunities policies, quality assurance processes, minutes of meetings, promotional arrangements, management and quality assurance evidence. Inspectors observed and graded 12 training sessions. They also observed six assessments and eight reviews of learners' progress.

11. For the reinspection, a team of three inspectors spent 12 days at TES's administrative site in August 2001. They visited 11 work placements, one subcontractor's site and four of TES's sites. They interviewed 32 learners and 11 work-based supervisors, and held meetings with 12 staff from TES and one of its subcontractors. Inspectors observed one progress review and observed and graded five instruction sessions, which they graded on a seven-point scale. One instruction session was graded 1, two were graded 2, one was graded 3, and one 4. They examined a range of documents, including 19 portfolios and 18 learners' files, schemes of work, policies and procedures, contracts, internal and external verifiers' records.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions during the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction	0	0	2	0	0	2
Business administration	1	1	0	0	0	2
Retailing & customer service	0	0	2	0	0	2
Hospitality	0	0	0	1	0	1
Health, care & public services	0	2	1	0	0	3
Foundation for work	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total	1	4	5	2	0	12

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

12. There are 59 learners, which is 10 less than at the original inspection. There are 18 advanced modern apprentices, 22 foundation modern apprentices and 19 other learners. Learners are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 in a range of construction trades, including general construction operatives, carpentry, brickwork, plumbing, painting and decorating, heating and ventilation, and scaffolding. Training in drylining from the interior systems trade has just been introduced, in response to a request from a local employer. All advanced modern apprentices are employed. Foundation modern apprentices and other learners are on work experience. They work for a range of local contractors and the council's direct works department. Fifty per cent of the work-placement providers or employers are either sole traders or employ less than three people. Most learners are referred by the local careers service, but a few apply directly to TES. Potential learners are interviewed and attend a one-day initial assessment of basic skills and vocational aptitude, before starting on the training programme. All learners on other training programmes are endorsed as having additional training needs. The induction programme is spread over two weeks, during which learners are introduced to a range of construction activities and assessed for their ability to work safely. The off-the-job training, assessment and verification for the scaffolding modern apprentice are subcontracted to a specialist provider. TES subcontracts all of the off-the-job training, assessment and verification for the other advanced modern apprentices to three local colleges. Learners attend off-the-job training in college for one day each week during term time. Training, assessment and verification for foundation modern apprentices and other learners are given by TES at their new construction training premises. TES has recruited two new tutors, one for bricklaying and the other for site carpentry, to expand its general construction operations. All tutors have appropriate qualifications and experience. Foundation modern apprentices and other learners

attend TES's training centre one day each week for their off-the-job training. The remaining time is spent working on projects or in the workplace.

At the original inspection the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient use of workplace evidence
- ◆ some inappropriate work placements
- ◆ some infringements of health and safety practice on site

13. The action plan, which was prepared after the original inspection and the self-assessment report prepared for the reinspection, clearly identify the measures taken to resolve the original weaknesses in construction. TES's tutors have started to visit sites to gather workplace evidence using direct observation, but the overall use of workplace evidence is still insufficient. Potential work placement providers are now visited by the occupational tutors to ensure that they can give the type and range of work experience which is appropriate for the learners. Once a learner has been placed with a work placement provider the situation is continuously monitored. The quality of work placements is now a strength. No poor health and safety practices were observed during visits to the sites and health and safety monitoring is now a strength.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements and projects
- ◆ effective health and safety monitoring
- ◆ good achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient use of workplace evidence
- ◆ some poorly organised portfolios

14. Work placements are good. Learners are placed with skilled craftsmen who are prepared to spend time helping them and supporting their development. They take an interest in the off-the-job training and are involved in the progress reviews. Tutors are successful in finding and developing potential work-placement providers. In addition to ensuring that the work-placement provider will offer a supportive and safe working environment, they check the range of work available against the requirements for the NVQ. Work-placements are sometimes changed to increase the learners' employment opportunities. Work-placement providers speak highly of TES's staff and the quality of the learners' work. If a learner is not ready to be placed with a work-placement provider, they are placed on a project which offers good skill development opportunities and is effective in enhancing self-confidence and team working skills. Current projects include the construction of a brick-clad planetarium and the conversion of a night club into a church. Learners are completing all the general construction, site carpentry and bricklaying work on these projects.

15. Learners enjoy the off-the-job training, whether this takes place at TES's training centre or at one of the colleges. They consider they are making good progress and value the help, support and encouragement they are given. The average attendance of all learners on- and off-the-job, is good at 95 per cent.

16. Health and safety is given a very high priority. There have been no reported infringements of health and safety practice since the original inspection. Health and safety in the workplace is closely monitored. Data which are collected from accident reports on sites during health and safety monitoring visits showed a relatively high incidence of sprains, cuts and bruises resulting from using wheelbarrows, especially to load skips. The health and safety training at TES's training centre has now been revised to include particular emphasis on the use of wheelbarrows and there have been no further incidents over the past year. Considerable emphasis is also given to health and safety during progress reviews and learners have a good understanding of safe working practices. Health and safety monitoring visits identified that some employers and work-placement providers needed updating on construction design and management regulations, producing method statements, and risk assessment. TES has responded to this need and regularly offers short courses which are well attended by employers and work-placement providers.

17. Achievement rates are good for advanced modern apprentices. Of the 22 who started in 1996-97 and 1997-98, all have achieved the NVQ at level 3. Only one did not complete the whole modern apprenticeship framework. A further 20 learners have started an advanced modern apprenticeship since 1998 and of these, two have left and the others are making satisfactory progress. Since 1997, there have been 175 learners starting on other youth training programmes. Half of these have gained jobs and 45 per cent either achieved the targets on their individual learning plans or transferred to other training programmes. In 1999, 40 learners started on foundation modern apprenticeship programmes. Five have left to go into employment, 11 have transferred to other training programmes and three have transferred to an advanced modern apprenticeship programme. There are 21 learners still in training who are making satisfactory progress through their qualification.

18. There is still insufficient use of evidence from the workplace. Advanced modern apprentices have no workplace assessment and most of their evidence is generated through simulated activities at the colleges. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report and has been raised as a concern by the external verifiers for two of the colleges. Efforts are being made to increase the use of work-based evidence for foundation modern apprentices and other learners. Some learners are using logbooks to record their work and there is some use of witness testimony. TES's tutors have started to carry out assessments in the workplace using direct observation and they are satisfactory. However, the overall strategy for using work-based assessment is inadequate. It is unclear how diverse evidence sources such as witness testimony and logbooks will be used.

19. The standard of portfolios is poor. They are difficult to follow and do not give a clear picture of competence. When witness testimony sheets are present, they are not referenced to the performance criteria, although the unit they relate to is sometimes identified. Some portfolios contain record sheets which describe the work the candidate has completed, but again they are not referenced to the performance criteria. None of the portfolios are indexed and there is no use of photographic evidence. The only items of evidence in the portfolios which are used to confirm competence are the direct observations and theory tests. The portfolios for advanced modern apprentices were not available for inspection.

Business administration

Grade 3

20. There are 64 trainees in business administration working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3. Twenty-one are modern apprentices, 32 are national trainees and 11 are on other youth training schemes. Twelve trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. All trainees attend the training centre for one day each week; the remainder of their training week is spent at work placements. Seventy-one per cent of trainees have work placements within different sections of Stockton Borough Council while the remaining trainees have work placements in a variety of well-established local companies. Thirty-two modern apprentices have started training since 1997, 13 per cent of whom have completed their training plan. Fifty-six per cent continue to work towards their qualifications. Forty-five national trainees started training in 1999 and 64 per cent of them are still in training. The remainder left early with no qualifications. All trainees begin their programme in the training centre where they receive an induction and basic skills training. Assessment is carried out by a team of five assessors. Two staff are new to the training centre and are working towards assessor qualifications, the rest are fully qualified assessors. The centre has recruited four past trainees as full-time members of staff. The self-assessment report included some strengths which were considered to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with other strengths. Recent action has addressed most of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified other weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ prompt placement of trainees
- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ delayed assessment for some trainees
- ◆ some trainees inadequately prepared for work placements
- ◆ lack of accreditation of NVQ units

21. All trainees are found work placements within two to three weeks. Requests from employers for trainees are quickly dealt with and interview procedures with both trainees and employers help to ensure good matches. Some trainees benefit from a trial period within the workplace before making a final decision. If a placement proves to be unsuitable, prompt action is taken to find an alternative.

22. There is excellent communication and frequent contact between training centre staff, trainees and employers. Workplace training is of a high standard and trainees are given appropriate responsibility and support to enable them to produce a range of evidence of real work skills. Opportunities exist in many placements for trainees to extend their skills and gain other qualifications. The development and assessment of key skills is integrated with the NVQ programme. Trainees receive a key skills induction and employers are made aware of the need for trainees to gather key skills evidence at work. During assessment sessions, both trainees and assessors identify key skills evidence from the workplace.

23. Thorough training sessions for the skills needed at work are held at the training centre. Staff giving these sessions use good support materials. Some trainees are not able to attend the training centre during the day. To prevent them from falling behind, tutors hold evening and one-to-one sessions. Where naturally occurring assessment opportunities do not exist at work they are provided at the centre. Extra support on key skills is offered and set sessions for information technology and numeracy are held.

24. Assessment takes place at the training centre and at work. However, assessment was not sufficiently managed to ensure continuity when one assessor left TES. Approximately 20 per cent of trainees received no assessment or off-the-job training for periods ranging between two and six months. Several trainees did not complete their programmes on schedule and some new trainees had little understanding of their training programmes.

GOOD PRACTICE

Some trainees were too busy in their work-placement to attend the training centre during the day. Consequently they were falling behind with their portfolio building. Trainers put in their own time to stay behind in the evening to give one-to-one support to these trainees.

25. Some trainees are inadequately prepared for their work placements. Initial training in basic skills takes place in the centre prior to trainees starting work placements. However, these skills are not formally assessed and employers are not always aware of the capabilities of new trainees. For example, some trainees are not capable of answering the telephone or greeting members of the public in a professional manner.

26. All trainees who complete a full programme receive a certificate at the end of it. However, there is no accreditation of the separate NVQ units trainees achieve throughout the programme, and some trainees leave without any formal recognition of what they have achieved. TES only recognises achievement in terms of NVQ units for de-motivated trainees who are not pursuing a full qualification.

Retailing & customer service

Grade 3

27. TES offers training in retail and warehousing at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3. Most trainees have previously achieved few formal qualifications. There are 23 trainees, including 11 national trainees and 12 youth trainees across the retail and warehousing sectors. Eleven trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. Trainees are work based and attend off-the-job training at one of TES's centres for various theory sessions including job search, personal skills and legislation training. TES's staff visit trainees at work regularly for reviews, support and assessment. TES's staff are appropriately qualified and their occupational skills have recently been updated following sessions in industry to reinforce their knowledge of new technology. The lead training officer is also qualified as an internal verifier and to accredit prior learning. Staff have also had workshops for health and safety, safe lifting techniques and equal opportunities training. TES has two sites close to the town centre and is able to offer training and support at both venues. There are computer rooms for key skills training and classrooms for group work. Key skills training is relatively new but weekly training sessions are held which are well attended. During the last year, seven trainees have achieved full NVQs and 21 trainees secured employment, and over the last four years 44 achieved NVQs and 52 trainees have gained jobs. The self-assessment report identified some strengths which are no more than normal practice and failed to identify two weaknesses. The grade awarded was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

One mature trainee who had never been employed and lacked confidence was very worried about going on a work placement. Following extensive additional support on a one-to-one basis, the trainee has achieved units towards the retailing NVQ. The trainee is now a volunteer supervisor in a local charity shop and has staff working for her.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ supportive and involved employers
- ◆ extensive guidance given to trainees
- ◆ additional qualifications achieved by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ ineffective assessment planning
- ◆ poor resources in training centre
- ◆ poor retention rates

28. Employers are fully involved in the review process and actively support trainees in the workplace, offering extra training if required. Trainees attend the training centre for workshops and key skills sessions. Some employers have provided placements for several trainees and many have offered employment. TES invites employers to awards ceremonies and to open days to look at trainees' off-the-job work. The open days are well attended and employers value the chance to view the work and gain a better understanding of the NVQ requirements. Employers are then able to offer better informed support. Trainees who have not previously been successful are able to obtain qualifications and gain considerable self-confidence. Trainees are sometimes motivated for the first time and go on to

find employment which has previously seemed to be out of reach.

29. Trainees are visited in their placements on a regular basis and some trainees receive visits two and three times a week. Daily visits can be made if required by trainees with severe difficulties. TES's staff also operate a drop-in service to further extend the level of support, such as visiting a retail shop when passing, just to see if the trainee is comfortable with the surroundings. Trainees can contact any of the staff at any time. Staff work well as a team to provide this support. Trainees are enthusiastic about their training programmes, enjoy the visits from their assessor and appreciate the extra help they receive.

30. Additional qualifications are offered, such as the fork-lift truck certificate, first aid and basic food hygiene certificates. Trainees also have the opportunity to progress to higher-level NVQs if they are in the appropriate job role. Some trainees also achieve more than one NVQ at the same level. The fork-lift truck certificate, in particular, is valued among employers in the warehousing industry and it improves trainees' chances of gaining employment. All the additional qualifications offered are certificated at no cost to the trainee.

31. Assessments are planned but trainees do not receive a copy of the plan and, although they sign the form, they are not involved in the planning itself. The plan is inadequate and fulfils no purpose except as a log of dates. There is no target-setting or information given to trainees on what is required or what action they need to take to complete the plan. There are no assessment plans for key skills and trainees are unsure of what evidence they need to collect. Some assessments are not planned and trainees are not given advance notice. Opportunities to plan assessments across several units of the NVQ are missed.

POOR PRACTICE

One level 3 trainee was on the programme for almost five months before being assessed. The assessor was on extended sick leave. Recently, a new assessor has been recruited to strengthen the team. The trainee has had his programme extended several times, but no formal assessment has yet taken place.

32. There are some documentary resources in the training centre but they are poor-quality copies and some are out of date. There are no open-learning packs to support trainees who cannot attend the centre or who may need support between assessors' visits. Staff are unaware of the resources which are commercially available and have been unable to acquire relevant training packs. There are no resources for additional key skills training and trainees generally work with handouts rather than support packs. There are no resources for level 3 trainees. Trainees were unaware of the necessary legal frameworks such as the sale of goods act and trade descriptions legislation.

33. In 1999, 18 young people applied directly to the national traineeship programme. Thirty-nine per cent of these trainees have left early without any qualifications, while the remaining 61 per cent continue to work towards the award. A total of 141 youth trainees started training over the last four years. Sixty-nine per cent of these trainees left early with no qualifications. Trainees do have 'taster' training sessions but many are still unsure of which programme they want to undertake. The open-access recruitment strategy provides training opportunities for trainees with considerable additional training and support needs, but at the

expense of poor retention.

Hospitality

Grade 2

34. At the time of the original inspection there were 15 learners in hospitality and there are now 12. One of the learners is a foundation modern apprentice and 11 are other learners. Seven are working towards an NVQ at level 1 and two at level 2. There are two adults on a longer occupational training programme. TES offers NVQs in food preparation and cooking at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 and all learners are expected to achieve a basic food hygiene qualification. This is a one-day course which is taught at the training centre each month. All learners are given a one-day induction at the training centre and then receive a further induction in the training kitchen. The training centre runs a café which is open to the public for lunches and snacks throughout the day and the kitchen is approved as a realistic working environment by the awarding body. Initially all learners work at the training centre for five days each week and some then move into work placements. The work placements include a hotel, a public house, a day-care centre and a restaurant. When the learners are in a work placement, they attend the training centre one day each week for training and assessment. Some of the assessments are carried out in the workplace by tutors who have occupational experience, and training and assessing qualifications. Between April 2000 and April 2001, 46 per cent of leavers achieved their NVQ, and a further 29 per cent left having achieved some of the units. Fifty per cent gained employment at the end of their training programme.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient planning of training
- ◆ no use of workplace evidence
- ◆ learners not sufficiently challenged
- ◆ some poor assessment practices

35. TES has resolved all of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. The planning of training is now very thorough, and is a strength. Assessment practice is also a strength and the use of workplace evidence is now satisfactory. Learners' individual learning goals are now appropriate and challenging.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned training
- ◆ good initial assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient written feedback given to learners after assessment

36. At the original inspection, the planning of training was a weakness. Theory sessions were arranged on a random basis, and neither learners nor work-placement providers knew what would be covered during these sessions. Training is now very well organised, and is tailored to the needs of individuals. Since the original inspection, TES has taken over additional council premises, which are equipped as a theory training room. The room has a good range of equipment, including a television and video, an overhead projector, and a computer. Training sessions are well structured, and the standard of teaching is high. Key skills are taught by a specialist tutor, and are an integral part of the vocational training programme. Large, clearly-written charts are used in the training centre to record progress. They are regularly updated, and give learners a clear picture of their achievements. Learners make good progress and many achieve units, and in some cases full NVQs, ahead of their target dates. Some of the learners have completed units additional to those stated on their individual learning plans.

37. Employers are kept informed about the content and planning of the off-the-job training. They offer workplace opportunities which complement the learners' experience in the training centre. Workplace evidence is now included in portfolios and daily diaries are used to capture a range of relevant evidence. The improvement in planning is valued by learners and they are now able to understand, and take responsibility for, the content of their learning plans. Learners are well motivated and enthusiastic, and look forward to progressing into a job in the hospitality industry at the end of their training.

38. Each learner undergoes a thorough initial assessment, which is effective in identifying additional support needs. After the induction, learners' basic skills are assessed using a formally validated assessment. The results are then discussed with the learners, and are used in the development of the individual learning plan. Learners understand the initial assessment process and are confident that they are getting the additional support which they need. Weekly support sessions for learners with literacy and numeracy needs are held at the training centre. They are taught by staff who have the appropriate basic skills qualifications, and they use vocationally relevant activities and evidence to build upon the workplace learning.

39. The original inspection identified some poor practice within the assessment process. Assessments were poorly planned and recorded, were often delayed and feedback was unstructured. Assessment practice has considerably improved. Assessments are now well managed and learners are fully involved in the planning process. A chart, which is displayed in the training room, is used to monitor progress in off-the-job training and in the workplace and to identify assessment opportunities. A daily notice board reminds learners of their next planned assessment. However, although they are given adequate verbal feedback at the end of each assessment, it is not recorded on the feedback forms. Learners have no records which they can refer to to remind them of their performance during an assessment, to give them action points for improvement, or to help their preparation for the next assessment.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

40. TES offers NVQs in early years care and education and care at levels 2 and 3. Key skills training and qualifications are offered at level 2. There are 54 trainees, of whom 20 are modern apprentices, 20 are national trainees and 14 are on other training programmes. Thirteen trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. Three adult trainees work in care and two adult trainees in are in childcare. Trainees work in supervised placements with social services and privately owned locations. These placements include primary schools and nurseries, crèches, residential homes, nursing homes, and learning resource centres providing day care for adults with learning difficulties. Off-the-job training sessions take place at a TES centre. Level 2 trainees have the opportunity to attend weekly sessions during the day. Level 3 childcare trainees may attend evening training sessions. Theory training takes place at work for level 3 care trainees. There are half-day off-the-job sessions for key skills training in information technology and numeracy. There are five training officers who support trainees and workplace assessors. They carry out assessments at work as required. All training staff are qualified to teach and assess. Two are qualified to internally verify trainees' assessed work and to accredit any prior achievements. Two other staff are working towards an internal verifier award. There are 13 work-based assessors in care and childcare placements. Staff attend courses to update their professional skills and knowledge. The self-assessment report identified many strengths which were no more than normal practice for NVQ training. Inspectors agreed with three of the strengths and two of the weaknesses and identified an additional strength and weakness. The grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good training
- ◆ frequent workplace assessment
- ◆ good use of NVQ unit accreditation

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress for some trainees
- ◆ low retention rates

41. There are good links between all parties involved in training. Employers are well informed about the content of the training and receive copies of the weekly training programmes. This provides guidance to staff in the workplace as to the activities which trainees need to practice at work. Regular meetings are held for workplace supervisors and employers to discuss a range of training issues. These meetings provide work-based staff with an opportunity to make contributions to the programme. Employers and work-based staff understand the NVQ process and recognise that trainees need to cover a full range of activities to achieve the NVQ.

Childcare trainees move between rooms if they are working in a nursery and trainees based in schools spend time in nurseries to gain experience with all ages. Care trainees are key workers for some clients and take supervised responsibility for providing all of their care needs. Some care trainees have arranged outings and given presentations promoting health to their clients. Recently these have been recognised as an opportunity to assess both occupational and key skills.

42. Well-planned off-the-job training takes place at TES's training centre. Information relating to occupational and key skills is displayed on the walls. There is also a display promoting equality of opportunity in terms easily understood by trainees. There is a bank of lesson plans for most units so that continuity of training can be maintained if a trainer is absent. Training session plans are detailed and clearly identify general and specific objectives, teaching methods and resources to provide evidence for all NVQ units. Trainees participate in the training sessions and find the sessions interesting, varied and useful. Tutorial support is available after each session and trainers respond to requests for additional tutorials at other times, often at work during assessment and support visits.

43. Training in the workplace is well planned. Care trainees working at level 3 receive both practical training and theory sessions at work. Trainees have an induction to the workplace including information relating to policies, procedures and guidance in specific areas. No trainees are allowed to lift clients until they have completed an appropriate course. Trainees work alongside experienced staff in the initial stages of training.

44. TES's training officers make frequent visits to the workplace, sometimes several times each week. This support builds trainees' confidence in relation to observed assessment. In the initial stages, assessment planning and observation focuses on one element. Direct observation is recorded in detail and evidence is cross-referenced to the unit, element and performance criteria. Recent records have included assessment of key skills during daily work activities. Written and verbal feedback is given to trainees. Trainees monitor their own progress and achievement of NVQ units and this progress is also displayed on a wall chart in the training centre. Portfolios are well organised, clearly separated into units and contain evidence individual to each trainee. As trainees achieve NVQ units, these are accredited appropriately to motivate trainees and improve their self-confidence.

45. Progress has been slow for some trainees. One trainee on a level 3 programme since 1998 has only achieved three units. Four trainees on a level 2 programme since 1997 have not yet completed their award. The progress of some trainees was delayed owing to the unavailability of an assessor.

46. There has been low retention of both adult and youth trainees. Over the four year period since 1996, a total of 178 trainees have started work-based training programmes. Approximately 50 per cent of these trainees left the programme early

with no qualifications. During 1999, 57 national trainees and modern apprentices started, 70 per cent of whom remain in training, working towards their qualifications.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

47. At the original inspection, there were nine learners on foundation for work programmes, training in preparation for work, as well as working towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications. Since then, Stockton TES's foundation for work training has changed considerably. It is now wholly subcontracted to Stockton Youth Service, who offer a Life Skills training programme, which lasts for 19 weeks, as part of the Learning Gateway. The training programme is aimed at young people who have many barriers to learning, including homelessness, drug addiction, mental health problems and learning difficulties. A major objective is to help them to return to learning, and to help them find employment, or to attend mainstream training. There are 12 learners on the training programme. They attend a training centre in Billingham for four or five days each week, where they work towards individually negotiated milestones and a nationally recognised qualification in preparation for employment. Training is given by eight qualified youth workers. Four of them work full-time on the Life Skills project, two are part-time and two work on a sessional basis.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ low retention rates
- ◆ no systematic assessment of learners' needs
- ◆ few opportunities to gain qualifications
- ◆ inadequate occupational guidance given

48. There is still insufficient initial assessment of learners' needs but the other weaknesses have been successfully resolved. Retention rates are significantly better and learners work towards a recognised qualification, receiving timely and appropriate occupational advice.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned, effective training
- ◆ particularly effective individual support for learners
- ◆ good rates of retention and progression into mainstream training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessments
- ◆ narrow range of work experience opportunities

GOOD PRACTICE

Learners on the Life Skills programme attend a 'Business and Bowling' course at the local tenpin bowling centre. This takes place over a half day each week for 10 weeks. It comprises a taught session which lasts for 45 minutes, and includes job-seeking skills, customer service and tournament organisation, followed by a game of tenpin bowling. After completing the course, learners receive a certificate of attendance. Those who complete the course are guaranteed an interview if they apply for a job at the bowling centre.

49. The Life Skills programme is carefully structured to maintain interest, build confidence and increase the learner's ability to work as part of a team. There is a detailed training schedule for the 19 weeks of the training programme. Work sessions are well planned, with clearly stated objectives. They contain a wide range of activities and a good mix of practical and written work, group discussions and individual pursuits. Although clearly structured, training sessions are flexible enough to allow for problems to be discussed and dealt with as they arise. For example, with an earlier group of Life Skills learners, individual training sessions were changed to include a greater emphasis on discussions about sexual health and homophobia, since they had arisen as areas of particular concern. As the training programme progresses, learners are given more responsibility for their own learning, and for that of the group. For example, each session begins with an ice-breaking activity. Early on in the programme, trainers choose and run these activities, but as learners grow in confidence they are encouraged to select, introduce and evaluate the success of icebreakers themselves. Training takes place in a spacious youth centre with adequate resources, in Billingham. Learners attend two well-planned residential courses, one to develop their skills in seeking employment, and the other to give them the opportunity to try out a range of outdoor pursuits.

50. Each learner works towards a formal qualification which prepares them for employment. They compile a portfolio of work and undertake practical activities which identify their skills, attributes and employment goals and improve their job-seeking skills. In addition, they work towards a number of personal milestones which are chosen to help them overcome their barriers to learning. These range from improving their punctuality and attendance, to developing reliability and motivation, learning first aid skills and succeeding on the residential courses. The milestones present learners with a number of short-term, achievable goals. Each one, when completed, is rewarded with a certificate which is formally presented to them by a senior member of the youth service. Learners value the certificates, which give tangible evidence of their progress. They take the responsibility for selecting their milestones seriously, and many choose personal goals which are very challenging.

51. Learners on the Life Skills programme may have serious social, emotional or learning difficulties. They need, and receive, a substantial amount of personal support from their trainers who have extensive experience of working with this client group, and are skilled and sensitive in their approach. In addition to their youth work qualifications, they have all achieved mentoring awards and one is a qualified counsellor. They have an excellent rapport with learners and build up an atmosphere of trust and openness within the group. There are always at least two, and often three, members of staff in each learning session and this means that one-to-one counselling or support can be given when necessary. Trainers are available to learners outside working hours and offer effective practical help with problems such as homelessness, debt, addiction and pregnancy. They have good contacts with agencies in the locality, and refer learners to external agencies for additional

support when appropriate. The high level of support is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

One learner had serious problems with travel when he started his training. He was unable to go anywhere unaccompanied. The Life Skills tutors negotiated a milestone with him which was aimed at improving his travel skills. They developed a programme which gave him the confidence to travel independently and to make increasingly long and challenging journeys. He now travels daily and independently, to a work placement some distance from his home.

52. Retention rates on the Life Skills programme are good. The proportion of learners who move on to a mainstream training programme or into employment is also good, given the severe barriers to learning experienced by most of them. Of the 60 learners who started in 2000-01, 13 per cent achieved employment, and 37 per cent moved into mainstream training. Since April 2001, 36 per cent of the 42 starters have moved on to a mainstream training programme and 4 per cent have gained employment. A further 30 per cent are still in training and are making good progress towards their goals.

53. There is insufficient initial assessment of learners' needs. The Learning Gateway requires that learners are referred to the Life Skills programme by a personal adviser from the careers service, after a period of initial assessment of their barriers to learning. In practice, not all referrals are made in this way. Some young people join the programme at the suggestion of youth workers undertaking outreach work or as a result of friends' recommendations. They are then referred to the careers service for initial assessment. When learners are referred by a personal adviser, initial assessment is not routinely carried out, and information about their needs is not passed on to trainers. Personal difficulties and barriers to learning are often not identified until they are some way into the Life Skills programme and this limits the time available for them to develop strategies to overcome their problems. TES has recognised this problem, and is dealing with it with the careers service. It is too early to say how effective this will be in improving matters. Once on the programme, learners undergo an initial assessment of their basic skills, and attend training if necessary.

54. A major aim of the Life Skills programme is to improve learners' employability and to help them identify their career goals. Some attend short, specific work placements, or tasters, either on Stockton TES's mainstream training courses, with another local training provider, or in local companies. The Life Skills team have built up a list of suitable placements, but they do not meet the occupational goals of all learners. Those who have very specific or unusual career aims sometimes miss out on the opportunity to experience a work taster, because a suitable placement cannot be found for them. This is identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

55. The equal opportunities policy and procedures of Stockton Borough Council are applied to the work of the TES. The policy and procedures were last revised in July 1998. TES has a written procedure for the implementation of the equal opportunities and harassment policy. This procedure is subject to annual internal

audit. New staff receive copies of the policies during their induction. The trainees' induction programme includes a session on equal opportunities. A small group of staff meets on a quarterly basis to discuss equal opportunities issues. Most of the staff meetings have a standing agenda item on equal opportunities. No individual member of staff has overall responsibility for implementing the equal opportunities policy in TES's work. The self-assessment report identified seven strengths and four weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with most of the identified strengths and weaknesses but expressed them in a different format. The grade awarded was the same as that in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open access to training for a diverse range of applicants
- ◆ good promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities in training centres
- ◆ good awareness of equality of opportunity by trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities at work
- ◆ little promotion to under-represented groups
- ◆ little analysis of equal opportunities data

56. TES offers work-based training for a diverse range of applicants, including those of low academic attainment and those from areas of social deprivation. During the last 12 months, nine of TES's staff have attended an external training session to raise their awareness of equal opportunities issues. However, not all occupational areas have been covered by the staff training plan for awareness raising. In most of the training rooms and reception areas of the TES centres, notice boards display guidance and information relating to equality of opportunity. During the management team's internal audits of training and review sessions compliance with equal opportunities is monitored. Further monitoring occurred during 1999, when a senior member of staff undertook in excess of 50 individual confidential interviews with a selection of trainees across the training centres. Two members of staff have recently completed assessor training as part of the TEC's equal opportunities quality framework. The two staff have internally assessed TES against the framework and an action plan is being implemented.

57. During the TES's one-day general induction programme, trainees receive a well-structured information booklet relating to equal opportunities. Group discussions are encouraged on illustrative examples of discrimination and sexual harassment. The booklet contains clear advice on how to complain and provides a wide range of contact details for seeking advice and support. Trainees are aware of how to complain and get advice. TES encourages trainees to feel able to complain.

58. Initial vetting and further reviews with employers and supervisors are insufficient to monitor compliance with equal opportunities at work. TES gives new employers a handbook containing its policy statements but no systematic

checks are made. TES's monitoring is dependent on verbal feedback from trainees during staff visits.

59. The proportion of TES's trainees from minority ethnic groups is 1.6 per cent of the total number of trainees, compared with 1.9 per cent of minority ethnic residents in the Stockton area. The localities covered by TES's training centres have a high concentration of minority ethnic residents. TES's promotion of opportunities for work-based training to the minority ethnic communities has not been successful. Its prospectus has some text in two Asian languages. However, these sections are immersed in the overall English text and the outside covers do not identify their presence. None of the promotional materials display appropriate images to attract more applications from minority ethnic groups. TES's staff have recently made links with key members of the local Asian community and a staff training session on cultural awareness is planned.

60. TES does not adequately analyse equal opportunities data. There has been little analysis of data on complaints, retention, achievement and destinations in relation to the diverse background of the trainees. Analysis of recruitment and selection statistics is at an early stage of development with the local careers service. TES has set recruitment targets for under-represented groups.

Trainee support

Grade 3

61. Trainees are recruited through the Employment Service, careers service and from employers. TES advertises its training programmes in the local press. Potential trainees complete an application form which identifies their occupational interests. Staff from the occupational area interview them to assess their understanding of the occupational area. When trainees are unsure, they have the opportunity, as part of their preparatory training, to experience 'taster sessions' in the workplace before starting an NVQ. Most trainees complete literacy and numeracy tests to identify any additional support needs, and trainees with learning difficulties or disabilities are given the support they need. Some trainees are already employed and their job role determines the level of NVQ towards which they will work. Inexperienced trainees start at level 1 or level 2 as appropriate for their ability. The self-assessment report identified eight strengths and three weaknesses. Several of the strengths and weaknesses were considered not directly relevant to trainee support. Inspectors agreed with some strengths and identified others, as well as three weaknesses not identified by self-assessment. The grade awarded by the inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective induction
- ◆ good individual tutorial support

- ◆ access to specialists for advice and guidance
- ◆ well-structured programme on leaving
- ◆ celebration of trainees' successes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ reviews lack focus on NVQ targets
- ◆ individual training plans not used as working documents
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills

62. Induction to TES is thorough. The first day of induction for all occupational areas is used for trainees to complete paperwork and receive information about equal opportunities. During the second day, induction is related to the trainees' occupational area and aspects of health and safety are introduced. Two weeks later, trainees complete a questionnaire about the induction to assess their understanding and recall. Most trainees have a good recall of their induction and understand their rights and responsibilities.

63. TES provides support for a high proportion of level 1 trainees who need individual guidance and support to complete their NVQ. Initial assessment is used to determine the support needed by these trainees. Numeracy and literacy support is provided by specialist staff, one half day each week for each skill. Trainees receive confidential one-to-one tutorials, giving them opportunity to identify any aspect of their training which is causing concern. TES's staff make good use of this opportunity to discuss progress, time keeping and attendance. Some trainees are given help to complete their portfolio evidence during these tutorial sessions. The sessions are available after normal working hours. A trainee representative has recently been appointed to provide additional pastoral support and guidance. The current post-holder is a past trainee who is now employed as a personal assistant to a manager at TES. Trainees recognise this representative as having a good understanding of their circumstances.

64. TES arranges for a local careers advisor to attend its central site one afternoon each week to provide further guidance which includes preparation for job interviews. TES has established effective links with other specialist support agencies. Trainees are supplied with contact details for finance and benefits advisors, drug abuse counsellors and HIV/AIDS counsellors.

65. Trainees nearing completion of their programme but not yet employed have the opportunity to practise their interview skills and writing for job applications during special sessions arranged by TES. TES's staff from specific occupational areas provide information on local job vacancies and trainees are given access to the council's vacancies bulletin.

66. Trainees from some occupational areas monitor their progress through NVQ units on display charts in their training room. These displays help to motivate trainees to complete their units. Photographs and history of trainees who have

found employment or received awards for achievement from awarding bodies are displayed in the reception area of the main training centre. All trainees' achievements are celebrated during an annual awards ceremony, with local dignitaries presenting the awards. Trainees' relatives, friends and employers are invited. The event is well publicised in the local media.

67. TES's staff undertake formal reviews of trainees' progress on a three-monthly basis. The reviews provide opportunities for trainees to discuss problems and talk through experiences with staff. The reviews focus on pastoral support rather than trainees' progress towards achieving their target qualifications. Trainees' progress is often not adequately recorded. Trainees are not given precise and measurable targets or deadlines for completion. Some trainees make slow progress towards their qualifications and the review process is not adequately used to motivate them to progress. Some trainees view the review process as simply a means of monitoring their attendance and timekeeping.

68. The training plans do not consistently identify individual target dates for NVQ unit achievement. Individual training plans are not always updated with trainees' achievements after review. Training is not thoroughly planned on an individual basis. In some occupational areas, individual training plans are all very similar.

69. There is no initial assessment of trainees' key skills on entry. Trainees' additional support needs are often not identified until they have been on programme for several weeks. Some trainees had already completed key skills qualifications before joining TES but have not been accredited with their achievement. Some trainees repeat activities unnecessarily.

Management of training

Grade 3

70. The general manager of TES reports directly to the director of personnel and communications of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council. TES's senior management team comprises the general manager, the assistant manager, the programme co-ordinator and the New Deal co-ordinator. This team meets informally on a monthly basis. The senior staff and the programme area leaders meet formally every month. Programme area staff organise their own meetings as required. All staff attend an annual briefing on the strategic plan and the six-month progress review. The current staff team comprises 40 people directly involved in mainstream work-based training and 23 people involved in New Deal programmes. The total number of staff in TES has nearly doubled during the last year. All staff are employees of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and are subject to the council's recruitment, appraisal and staff development systems. All new staff attend the council's main induction as well as TES's induction programme. The training centre was last accredited with the Investors in People Standard in 1997. The self-assessment report failed to identify effective links with employers as a strength. The report did

not include any of the weaknesses identified by inspectors. A number of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report related to quality assurance. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ open management style with good internal communications
- ◆ effective staff training linked to strategic plan
- ◆ effective links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate management information system
- ◆ ineffective management of key skills training

71. Frequent meetings are held between the training centre manager and the director of personnel and communications. There is significant support from the council for the work undertaken by TES. The open style of management ensures that all staff are aware of any new developments and the senior management team is aware of any issues. The training centre manager meets monthly with the senior staff and programme area managers to review targets against TEC contracts, and other developments. The programme area managers meet with their staff teams to share this information. All staff have clear job descriptions and reporting lines.

72. There is a structured and thorough appraisal process. Staff attend the council's appraiser or appraisee training as appropriate. Appraisals take place annually and any training needs are clearly identified, linked to the strategic plan. Identified needs are converted into a staff training plan which identifies actions and review dates. All courses attended by staff are evaluated. Staff development is encouraged and staff can, at any time, apply for further training. Some staff have received support to undertake higher education programmes as part of their personal development. Within the last year, a new grading and career structure was introduced which recognises not only length of service and responsibility but also qualifications, particularly in teaching and health and safety. Staff success in gaining qualifications is celebrated at an annual certificate ceremony attended by the mayor and the chief executive of the council.

POOR PRACTICE

In many of TES's documents, there are spelling and grammatical mistakes.

73. Staff at all levels and across all areas have developed close links with employers. All employers receive a comprehensive guide to the requirements of work-based training when they accept a trainee from TES. There is an abundance of work placements available to trainees in all programme areas. Employers frequently contact TES to find out if they have suitable trainees either for placements or for employment.

74. Current and accurate information on trainees' progression and achievement is not readily available to TES's management. Some data are held on computer, but a great deal of information is still paper-based in a variety of sources. Management

information is not used as a tool to systematically guide decision-making. TES sets itself few targets other than those directly related to NVQ achievement against TEC contracts. Staff do not have personal performance targets to work towards.

POOR PRACTICE

In many of TES's documents, there are spelling and grammar mistakes. Frequently bad grammar is used in text and to phrase questions.

75. TES's management of key skills training across the range of occupational sectors has been delayed. Recently a senior member of staff has been recruited to co-ordinate key skills training and assessment. Some staff are undertaking the key skills practitioner's award. In two occupational areas, key skills are now being integrated within the vocational training and assessment. In other areas, key skills training comprises separate sessions taught by a specialist in another training centre. Opportunities are missed for trainees, not only to recognise the importance and value of key skills, but also to provide naturally occurring key skills evidence from their vocational work-based training.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

76. TES complies with the contractual requirements of Tees Valley LSC and is subject to periodic external audits. Since the original inspection, the programme co-ordinator has taken responsibility for quality assurance within the organisation. Another member of staff has been appointed as quality assurance co-ordinator to assist the programme co-ordinator, and will take up the post in September 2001. TES has a quality assurance manual and a range of controlled procedures. Quality assurance is a standing agenda item at quality management review meetings, team meetings, lead training officer meetings, and senior managers' meetings.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate systems for monitoring training
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of data to further continuous improvement
- ◆ underdeveloped use of feedback from learners and employers
- ◆ insufficient monitoring of subcontractors

77. The monitoring of subcontractors is now satisfactory and the monitoring of training is sufficiently thorough and well organised to be judged a strength. The weaknesses concerning the use of performance data and of feedback from learners and employers have only been partially resolved and remain areas of weakness.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent, detailed internal audits
- ◆ thorough monitoring of training
- ◆ particularly effective action-planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poorly designed evaluation questionnaires
- ◆ insufficient use of performance data

78. TES has a comprehensive quality assurance manual and a range of procedures which cover all aspects of training and assessment. Copies are held on all sites, and in all occupational areas. Since the original inspection, the programme co-ordinator has updated the quality assurance manual and the procedures, and staff and subcontractors are well aware of the changes. They receive notification when procedures are updated and are required to sign a form to say that they have read the amended procedure, and understand it. TES has a thorough and well-organised system for the internal audit of documents and of procedures. This was in place at the time of the original inspection, but has been significantly improved. Occupational areas and subcontractors are now placed in order of risk on the basis of their performance in previous audits. Those whose paperwork is completed accurately are audited twice each year, those who have performed less well are audited every three months and in some cases eight times a year. The results of audits are recorded in detail and corrective actions are clearly identified in the event of non-compliance. The audits have highlighted problems and have led to improvements in a number of areas, notably the requirement to update individual learning plans regularly and the need to ask questions about equal opportunities during progress reviews. Procedures are regularly audited to ensure that they are appropriate, effectively used and well understood by staff. Tutors from several occupational areas are involved in the audits which increases their understanding of quality assurance and of the requirement to accurately complete each document.

79. When the original inspection took place, the monitoring of training and assessment had only just begun and it was poorly planned and ineffective. The process is now frequent, thorough and well managed. Staff are observed by a line manager several times each year as they carry out key aspects of their job role, including training and assessment, progress reviews, conducting interviews and inductions. They are given detailed written and verbal feedback on their performances. The programme co-ordinator keeps a file for each occupational area, with a matrix showing the months during which each member of staff is due to be observed. She uses these to ensure that observations cover all aspects of performance and are carried out regularly.

80. The original inspection identified that TES's three subcontractors were not being routinely monitored. More formal monitoring systems have now been put into place and are satisfactory. They include the examination of external and internal verifiers' records, of teaching observations and of portfolios of evidence. The subcontractors are subject to the same internal audit process as occupational areas within TES and receive copies of TES's policies and procedures. The internal verification process is regular, planned and operating effectively. Issues have been raised by internal verifiers which have been notified satisfactorily.

81. The evaluation of learners' and employers' views had only recently been

introduced at the time of the original inspection and was ineffective. The questionnaires have now been revised and are given to learners at several points during their training programme and to employers twice each year. However, the questionnaires are poorly designed and not specific enough. Some questions lead respondents into giving a particular answer and the purpose of others is unclear. Many questionnaires are completed by learners and employers, but they produce insufficient information to help TES improve their training. The views of learners are also sought through one-to-one interviews, which are carried out by assistant managers and lead trainers at regular intervals within each occupational area. This approach is more successful at finding useful information, but is highly dependent on the skill of the individual interviewer. The interviews have not led to significant changes or improvements. Since the original inspection, a questionnaire for staff has been introduced, which seeks information about the way in which they carry out key training processes. This is useful for gathering factual data, but does not give a picture of how staff perceive or understand their roles.

GOOD PRACTICE

In some of the vocational areas a group of learners are brought together each quarter to discuss and review problems and concerns with their training programmes. These meetings are minuted and action points are generated. The action points are reviewed with the learners to confirm that action was taken and to evaluate the effect of the actions.

82. At the time of the original inspection, TES did not analyse data on retention rates, progression or achievement by occupational sector. Data were not used to set performance targets, or to make improvements. Data are now collected and analysed, and there are a few examples of how this has helped to improve the training programme. In one case, an analysis of the areas of deprivation where many learners live has prompted TES to employ a dedicated support worker. However, the strategic use of data is still inadequate, and opportunities to use data target marketing and to direct the organisation's activities are not taken.

83. TES's updated self-assessment report takes the strengths and weaknesses which were identified in the original inspection report, and accurately states the progress made in resolving them. TES has produced a clear and detailed action plan which is based on the findings from the original inspection. Occupational area staff, overseen by the assistant manager, routinely update their section of the action plan and progress is discussed at team meetings and lead trainer meetings. Many meetings result in the development of additional, short-term action plans and this ensures that the actions agreed in meetings are clearly recorded and accomplished within the required timescales. The effectiveness of TES's action-planning is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.