

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION  
REPORT FEBRUARY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION  
AUGUST 2001

# Bexley College Managing Agency



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
- ◆ 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 Bexley College Managing Agency was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for hair and beauty, 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 hair and beauty, 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](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**Bexley College Managing Agency provides satisfactory training. Off-the-job training resources in construction are good, and modular training allows learners to progress at their own speed. Training in engineering is provided by well-qualified staff. Sessions on practical skills and theory are good. Business administration learners have good learning opportunities at work. Although the college's staff understand the importance of upholding equality of opportunity, there is little effective promotion of training to minority ethnic groups. The college provides a full range of support services and resources for learners. At the time of the original inspection, individual learning plans did not provide personalised training programmes for learners in most occupational areas. Employers were not sufficiently involved in the training programmes. Most learners in all areas received little or no assessment in the workplace. Management of training was less than satisfactory. Hairdressing training learners made slow progress towards achieving their NVQs. Quality assurance arrangements were ineffective and unsatisfactory. By the time of the reinspection, the college had remedied most of its weaknesses in these areas. Hairdressing training is now satisfactory, and all training programmes are now managed satisfactorily. Internal verification is co-ordinated well, and quality assurance arrangements are adequate.**

## GRADES

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

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

| REINSPECTION  | GRADE |
|---------------|-------|
| Hair & beauty | 3     |

| REINSPECTION           | GRADE |
|------------------------|-------|
| Management of training | 3     |
| Quality assurance      | 3     |

## KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-taught off-the-job practical construction training
- ◆ good off-the-job training resources in business administration
- ◆ good on-the-job training in hairdressing
- ◆ effective additional support
- ◆ key skills well addressed in all areas
- ◆ well-established appraisal system supports good staff development
- ◆ good management of health and safety
- ◆ good evaluation of off-the-job training

## KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor punctuality by construction learners
- ◆ weak internal verification in business administration
- ◆ failure of many hairdressing and construction learners to complete the apprenticeship framework
- ◆ review process lacks effective target-setting
- ◆ inadequate links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of learners' progress at work

## INTRODUCTION

1. Bexley College Managing Agency (BCMA) is an integral part of Bexley College. The agency was formed in 1992. At the time of the original inspection, there were 256 learners. At the time of the reinspection there were 218, mainly in engineering and construction. Bexley College is a general further education college in the London Borough of Bexley, close to the Thames. The Borough of Bexley is in the southeast of greater London on the borders of Kent. The college has its origins as a Technical Institute which opened in 1907. It was known as Erith College until all further education colleges in England were incorporated in 1993. The college has three major sites in the north of Bexley: Tower Road, Erith Road and St Joseph's. There is also a small site in the south of the borough, in Sidcup. The sites are reasonably well served by public transport and the college's main catchment area extends south of the Thames from the Medway towns in the east through to Deptford and Lewisham to the west. The river Thames restricts recruitment from Essex and east London.

2. The area around the college is mainly residential, with few large employers. Most employment is provided by small companies employing fewer than 60 people. Many local residents travel to London for employment. The college is itself a substantial local employer. Since the original inspection, a new principal has been appointed who has reorganised the college departments. The senior management team now comprises five directors and the principal. The principal reports to a board of governors. The directors manage the curriculum, the staff, the finances and the college's information systems. The reorganisation was carried out with the aim of improving the college's management of information, financial control and quality of provision. At the time of the original inspection, the college held contracts with the former South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to train modern apprentices, national trainees and other young people. Since April 2001, the college has had contracts with the London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Occupational areas offered include accounting, beauty therapy, business administration, construction, engineering, hairdressing, information technology and printing. Printing is offered to fewer than 10 learners through a subcontractor. Because of the low number of learners, it was not inspected. The college also provides Gateway to Work and the full-time education and training option of the New Deal for young people aged 18-24, and a variety of other Employment Service programmes for older unemployed people, including short job-focused training and longer occupational training.

3. The local area is well served by further education colleges. There are at least 12 other colleges within easy travelling distance. Most schools in the borough have sixth forms, and in neighbouring boroughs, selective schools attract many able students. Some 12.5 per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups compared with the national average of 6.4 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, the unemployment rate in Bexley was high at 8.6 per cent,

compared with the national average for February 2000 of 4.1 per cent. In June 2001, the unemployment rate in Bexley was 2.9 per cent, compared with the national average which had fallen to 3 per cent. In 1991, the proportion of school leavers in Bexley who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above, was 47.9 per cent and was the same as the national average. In 2000, this proportion had risen to 50 per cent, compared with an increased national average of 49.2 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. BCMA produced its self-assessment report in the autumn of 1999. It was the first full self-assessment report produced by BCMA, a draft report having been produced in the previous year. The report addressed the generic areas for BCMA but there was heavy reliance on the self-assessment report prepared for the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) for the occupational areas. This focused mainly on education and training in the college. Training experienced by work-based learners was not sufficiently reflected on in the report. Two of the eight grades awarded by inspectors were the same as those presented in the self-assessment report, but the other six awarded were lower. BCMA wrote another self-assessment report in January 2001. This focused exclusively on work-based training.

5. During the original inspection, a team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days with BCMA during February 2000 working jointly with a team of FEFC inspectors. They met all staff from BCMA and many others at Bexley College, observed 22 monitoring or assessment visits and instruction sessions, interviewed 17 employers on their premises, and 84 learners. For the reinspection, a team of three inspectors spent nine days at the college in August 2001, and visited eight workplaces. They held discussions with 10 learners and 18 members of staff. Inspectors on both inspections examined assessment records, learners' work, and portfolios, and company and awarding body documents. The following table shows the grades awarded to the on- and off-the-job training which inspectors observed at the original inspection.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection:

|                         | GRADE 1  | GRADE 2  | GRADE 3   | GRADE 4  | GRADE 5  | TOTAL     |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Construction            |          | 2        | 2         |          |          | 4         |
| Engineering             |          | 2        | 3         |          |          | 5         |
| Business administration |          |          | 3         |          |          | 3         |
| Hair & beauty           |          | 4        | 5         | 1        |          | 10        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>0</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>22</b> |

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at reinspection:

|               | GRADE 1  | GRADE 2  | GRADE 3  | GRADE 4  | GRADE 5  | GRADE 6  | GRADE 7  | TOTAL    |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Hair & beauty |          |          |          | 1        |          |          |          | 1        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> |

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

### Grade 3

6. The 145 construction trainees account for 65 per cent of BCMA's total number of trainees. Almost all are employed. Thirty-one are modern apprentices, 26 are national trainees and the remaining 88 are network trainees. Most trainees are aged between 16 and 19, and many are referred directly to BCMA by their employers. All trainees attend Bexley College on a day-release basis and all are working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3, or craft qualifications. The breakdown between crafts is shown in the table below.

7. Training days in Bexley College usually consist of half a day of theory and half a day of practical work. The rest of the week is spent at work, at a variety of construction sites. The college is well resourced, with most of the practical training taking place in well-equipped training workshops. All assessments are carried out off the job using simulated, but realistic, projects and exercises. Many of the areas identified in the self-assessment report were descriptive accounts of procedures. Inspectors were unable to agree with some of the strengths and weaknesses. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified during inspection. Little account was made of trainees' retention and achievement in the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the report.

|                         | NVQ<br>LEVEL 1 | NVQ<br>LEVEL 2 | NVQ<br>LEVEL 3 | NON-<br>NVQ | TOTAL      |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
| Bricklaying             |                | 12             |                |             | 12         |
| Building studies        |                |                | 10             |             | 10         |
| Carpentry & joinery     |                | 24             |                |             | 24         |
| Heating & ventilating   |                | 11             | 7              |             | 18         |
| Plastering              |                | 5              |                |             | 5          |
| Plumbing                |                | 25             | 18             |             | 43         |
| Wood machining          |                | 2              | 2              |             | 4          |
| Painting & decorating   |                | 1              |                |             | 1          |
| Electrical installation |                |                |                | 28          | 28         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>0</b>       | <b>80</b>      | <b>37</b>      | <b>28</b>   | <b>145</b> |

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ many good off-the-job training resources
- ◆ trainees progress at their own speed
- ◆ key skills well addressed

- ◆ good standards of health and safety
- ◆ well-taught off-the-job practical training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no work-based assessments
- ◆ poor punctuality of trainees
- ◆ monitoring officers not occupationally qualified
- ◆ some cramped workshop space
- ◆ good practice not shared among staff

8. The off-the-job training resources at Bexley College are modern, roomy, light and well-equipped in most areas. Most of the training is carried out in workshops which are exceptionally well equipped. The one exception is the electrical section, where some training areas are cramped, uninspiring and poorly decorated. There are advanced plans to refurbish this area. All the staff are well qualified, and have industrial experience. Some staff without recent work experience are taking up the opportunity offered by BCMA to spend time in the industry. There is a high level of health and safety awareness among staff. Workshop areas are generally tidy and all safety aspects are well managed. Staff have built up good working relationships with the trainees who work in a responsible manner, without constant supervision.

9. Trainees work through a series of pre-planned exercises and progressive modules. Trainers provide good individual support. Those trainees who need further practice are able to attend additional sessions in the evenings. For the most part, key skills are well integrated into the training, through timetabled sessions. Sound practical instruction is provided, using appropriate techniques, with clear explanations and good practical demonstrations. Trainees benefit from working on realistic activities, to good industrial standards, during the off-the-job training. Most trainees are exposed to a wide range of appropriate activities during their work-based learning. Assessment procedures are well planned, thorough, and well written. Most trainees find assessment challenging and rewarding. Feedback to trainees is prompt and comprehensive, and they know how well they are progressing. Trainees' progress is particularly well recorded in plumbing, electrics, and painting and decorating. Wall charts are displayed for both staff and trainees to see. Progress tracking is less good in carpentry and joinery and in brickwork.

10. Most training plans are poor, with no short term or intermediate targets, and they lack any meaningful information against which to measure progress. Trainees' understanding of the NVQ system is not comprehensive and few fully appreciate the importance of their portfolios. No assessment is carried out at work. Normal work activities are not used for assessment purposes. Reviews are carried out at work every two months, but these are bland and are mainly administrative; they lack effective target-setting or measurement of progress against agreed objectives. Some key skills training is carried out at work but evidence sources are missed and not recorded.

11. Despite the good opportunities for learning at work, training is unplanned and unstructured. On- and off-the-job training are not co-ordinated. No single record is kept to provide an overview for monitoring staff of all trainees' progress. Individual trainees' files are comprehensive, but this information is not consolidated. Some trainees do not know how long it will take them to complete outstanding modules and assessments. Trainees follow a set training plan, which is not significantly modified to take into account their individual needs, learning styles or prior experience. Some trainees with proven skills and knowledge in key skills are required to attend the training sessions to repeat work covered already. Employers and trainers do not meet, although there are plans for instructional staff to visit employers in the future. Good practice is not shared between all off-the-job training staff, notably in areas of monitoring trainees' progress. Trainees' punctuality at off-the-job training sessions is universally poor, with trainees routinely attending more than 15 minutes after the published start times. Trainees are not sufficiently challenged and employers are not alerted to trainees' lateness. The library at the main construction campus is not sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of all trainees. Some current texts are not available. An average of 45 per cent of trainees who started on construction programmes achieved an NVQ or other qualifications. Each unit is accredited as it is achieved. Achievement figures are low and they are adversely affected by the local employment situation where all construction companies are busy and a significant number of trainees drop out of training in order to work full time. Evening classes have been organised to offer trainees the opportunity to continue with their training, but few attend.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*All motor vehicle trainees are prepared and assessed for key skills at the levels required of a modern apprentice. This means that national trainees and network trainees are encouraged to aspire to modern apprenticeships, in the knowledge that they have already achieved the key skills requirements. Those who conclude their training as trainees leave with enhanced key skills, which add value to their qualifications and their future employment prospects.*

### **Engineering**

### **Grade 3**

12. BCMA provides a range of NVQ engineering programmes. They involve welding at level 2, motor vehicle mechanical and electronic systems at levels 2 and 3 and vehicle body repair at level 2. There are 28 trainees following motor vehicle mechanical and body-fitting programmes, three trainees on a welding programme and one following an engineering manufacturing NVQ. Nine trainees are modern apprentices, eight are national trainees and the remaining 15 are network trainees. They are employed or placed within the local motor or engineering sectors. Training is provided by Bexley College's mechanical and automotive engineering school. Trainees attend college for training and assessment on a day-release and evening basis. There is no assessment by employers' staff at trainees' workplaces. College tutors have recently started to visit them at work to assess competencies, in line with the awarding body's requirements. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses which are specifically relevant to the work of BCMA, rather than the college as a whole. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-qualified staff provide good practical and theory training
- ◆ good resources in welding
- ◆ effective key skills training and assessment

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ reviews carried out by occupationally inexperienced staff
- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace

13. BCMA uses the Bexley College's facilities to provide training and assessment. All training staff are well qualified and experienced in their respective vocational areas. Training revolves around the traditional college day-release sessions plus evening attendance. In recent years, the adoption of NVQs has meant that the pattern of the day has changed and trainees now attend for relevant theory sessions and practical skills training. This is followed by assessment of competencies on the college site during the evening attendance period. Assessment is carried out by staff who have not been involved in the training process. This promotes impartiality of assessment. Internal verification is carried out by other staff drawn from a parallel occupational area within the school. Six staff are qualified as internal verifiers. One member of staff is qualified as an external verifier for the awarding body used by the college. Assessment and internal verification procedures follow awarding body's requirements and are well written. Information on trainees' progress is limited to records of units achieved, there is no detailed element-by-element tracking system.

14. Successful achievement of qualifications in motor-vehicle work has varied in recent years. In 1999, 52 per cent of starters achieved their target qualification. In 1997, 57 per cent were successful. This figure increased to 68 per cent in 1998. In welding, the numbers are small and achievement rates are unreliable indicators of the overall effectiveness of learning. In 1999, only one student was recruited to the course and one was successful in the welding NVQ level 2 award. College staff have adapted to the changes which NVQs have imposed and provide a range of learning approaches which reflect the needs of the trainees, their employers and the awarding body.

15. In welding, the premises and equipment are good. New workshops were opened a year ago and the trainees are provided with modern classrooms and workshops facilities. In motor-vehicle work, the quality of equipment is variable. Some pieces of equipment are above and some below the quality expected for this type of work. Within the workshops area, storage for trainees' clothing and possessions and sinks for washing hands are inadequate. Key skills are well integrated into the occupational training provided by the school of engineering and trainees achieve them promptly. BCMA's trainees enjoy using the college's computers and the other learning centre opportunities.

16. Individual training plans reflect the administrative requirements of the TEC

and do not provide personalised programmes for trainees. Trainees all start their programmes in September of each year and proceed as a group towards final assessment and achievement in June. There is little opportunity for trainees to join programmes at any other point during the year. Some trainees have to wait for many months to start their training. The purpose of NVQs is to provide individualised training with regular assessment and achievement driven by the ability and competence of each trainee. There is no routine provision of personalised programmes which reflect trainees' individual circumstances or work patterns. The monitoring visits are held at eight-weekly intervals to comply with TEC requirements. The visits centre on health and safety and insurance issues.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

17. The business administration programme is taught within the schools of business and tourism and secretarial studies and office technology. There are 11 trainees taking part in business administration training. Two modern apprentices and three network trainees are following accounting programmes, leading to professional qualifications at foundation (NVQ level 2) and intermediate (NVQ level 3) levels. There are four modern apprentices and two network business administration trainees working towards at NVQs level 2 and 3. In the accounting programme, trainees attend college on one day each week joining college students in class. In business administration, the attendance pattern is similar, although in this case there is a separate group of trainees. Two trainees attend college less frequently by agreement between BCMA and their employer. A monitoring officer visits trainees in placements every eight weeks. During the early part of a programme, visits are more frequent. College staff also visit the workplace and carry out assessment. Inspectors considered the strengths identified in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice while they agreed with the two weaknesses. Inspectors identified further strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good off-the-job training resources
- ◆ work placements provide good occupational learning opportunities
- ◆ effective integration of key skills with business administration training
- ◆ regular progress targets set in off-the-job training sessions

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ insufficient training and assessment at work
- ◆ employers not sufficiently involved in the training programmes
- ◆ internal verification does not include observation of assessments

18. Trainees who attend the college's day-release sessions receive good coaching and instruction. Trainees have access to the full range of college resources. In

business administration, there are well-planned sessions which involve working on assignments. Supportive coaching is provided to assist with portfolio building. Targets are discussed and action plans are agreed on for unit completion. Accountancy trainees progress satisfactorily in the intermediate group. In the foundation programme, two trainees' off-the-job training has been disrupted owing to staff absence. This was identified as an issue before the inspection and action was taken to resolve the problem. In business administration, key skills are covered by the tutor with support from key skills specialists in the college. Trainees are well informed and confident about how to approach key skills learning. The portfolios show evidence of effective teaching and learning. Attendance at off-the-job sessions in business administration is poor. The number of trainees on the programme in business administration have declined significantly in the recent past. Trainees' achievement rates were good in 1998-99, at 74 per cent, which was a marked improvement on the previous two years when there was poor retention. Trainees who are currently on the programme are able to progress at a pace which reflects their ability and motivation. Achievement and retention for accountancy trainees has been good over the past three years. Most of the level 1 to level 3 trainees completing each year achieved their qualification.

19. The business administration programme is not designed as a workplace training programme. It is a traditional off-the-job programme with work experience. The work placements provide good occupational learning opportunities. Monitoring staff visit the placements regularly but they do not assess trainees' competence. Opportunities for training and assessment at work are missed. There is little work-based assessment carried out by the tutor. Trainees are encouraged to bring workplace evidence to college to support the achievement of competence. There is not enough direct observation of trainees' performance and too much reliance on the evidence portfolios. Internal verifiers effectively scrutinise all portfolio work and trainees' understanding, but assessments are not observed. The internal verification process does not set any expectations regarding the amount of evidence which should be generated in the workplace nor how much of the assessment should be by direct observation.

20. Employers are not sufficiently involved in their trainees' programmes. BCMA's staff do not monitor, plan and review the programme with employers. The lack of an effective training plan makes it difficult for employers to make the most of training opportunities at work. Links between on- and off-the-job training are weak. There is insufficient formal or informal contact between the college staff, who supply the off-the-job training, BCMA's staff, and employers.

### **Hair & beauty**

### **Grade 3**

21. At the time of the reinspection, there were 23 learners on hairdressing programmes. All learners are employed. Twenty-two are foundation modern apprentices and one is an advanced modern apprentice. Learners work for four days and on model evenings in one of the 21 local salons where they are trained.

Most learners attend the college one day every week for theory and practical training throughout the year including July and August. Some learners attend college once a month. Their college tutor trains and assesses them in their salons. A monitoring officer visits learners in their salons every eight weeks to review their progress. Learners receive most of their assessment during practical sessions at the college. They are also assessed in the salons by a college assessor and by assessors based in the salons.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ shortage of models in off-the-job training centre
- ◆ too little work-based assessment
- ◆ learners' slow progress
- ◆ learners' poor achievement

22. BCMA has taken appropriate action to rectify the weaknesses. Learners now receive more assessment in the workplace and the number of models in the off-the-job training centre has been increased. Some learners still make slow progress however, and too few complete their apprenticeship. Inspectors agreed with both the strengths and one of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good training
- ◆ good teaching and thorough assessment of key skills
- ◆ good employer links

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ failure of many learners to complete the apprenticeship framework
- ◆ ineffectively organised portfolios of evidence

23. The college has good facilities for off-the-job training and this takes place in spacious accommodation. One of the college salons is new and offers a modern commercial environment. Hairdressing staff have occupational qualifications and they are also appropriately qualified as trainers, assessors and internal verifiers. Some staff are involved in training for part of the week and work in salons for the remainder. This arrangement helps them keep their practical skills relevant and commercial.

24. Learners receive on-the-job training in well-resourced modern salons and have the chance to practise on models in quiet periods or on model nights held for training purposes. In one salon, training takes place over a six-week period and each training session covers specific hairdressing skills. Learners are encouraged to watch stylists working on clients. They also benefit from being able to attend manufacturers' courses and trade exhibitions. Learners on level 3 programmes learn appropriate technical skills which they demonstrate through organising and

presenting a hair show. All the college staff who teach the learners follow the same schemes of work and standardise their teaching methods, to ensure that the learners can be taught the full programme by any one of them. Notes, handouts and workbooks relating to hairdressing theory are also standardised.

25. The teaching of practical skills on the off-the-job programme is satisfactory. The college salons are open six days a week during the college year and one day a week in July and August, to ensure that learners can be taught and assessed throughout the year. Learners participate in the summer school and demonstrate good commercial skills on a range of clients. Following improvements in advertising and the decision to open the salon for longer periods, the college has been successful in obtaining the services of more hairdressing models. Key skills training is well structured. Specialist communication and information technology tutors are also experienced hairdressers. Learners have a good understanding of key skills and their portfolios contain relevant and appropriate evidence. One learner has been given responsibility at her salon for helping to enter the updated records of clients on the computer system.

26. Employers and college staff work closely together to help learners to learn effectively. More work-based assessment is taking place as more employers become qualified as assessors through a training course offered by the college. A college tutor spends between two and three hours a week in some salons to teach and assess those learners who receive off-the-job training programmes once a month. These learners have caught up with those who started earlier in the year. More employers now attend the college's open evenings. One of these included a session at which employers and their staff, who are assessors, had their assessments internally verified by college staff. An internal verifier visits salon-based assessors. Internal verifiers provide assessors with feedback on the assessments and where necessary, suggest ways of improving it. Employers are kept well informed about their learners' off-the-job training activities and the college provides them with regular reports on their learners' progress. Both employers and the learners themselves are closely involved in the reviews of learners' progress which are carried out in the workplace.

27. Approximately a third of learners leave their programme early without achieving any qualification and this proportion is in line with the national average. Following the increase in availability of models at the college, the provision of more assessors in the workplace and the effectiveness of the college's monthly training programme, learners are now making more progress on their learning programme. More learners are achieving their NVQ level 2 than at the time of the previous inspection. Most learners now achieve their NVQ level 2 within eighteen months to two years, whereas before very few did so in under two years. Around a quarter of these learners receive additional support to meet their individual learning needs. At the time of the reinspection seven of the 22 learners who started in 1999-2000, had left without achieving any qualifications a further seven have completed their NVQ level 2 and the remaining eight learners are in the process of submitting their portfolios for assessment. The 15 learners who are still on the

programme have completed at least one of the key skills units towards completion of their apprenticeship. No learner, however, has yet completed the apprenticeship framework.

28. Most portfolios contain witness testimonies and details of assessments carried out in the salon. They contain few photographs. Portfolios lack structure and are not organised well. In some instances, the forms used for recording learners' consultations with clients do not indicate clearly how learners' competences meet specific performance criteria. Some portfolios do not contain enough supporting evidence in the form of, for example, clients' record cards. Some learners' assessments are poorly recorded in their log books.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

29. BCMA endeavors to provide equality of opportunity for all staff and trainees. Equal opportunities is firmly linked to the policies and operational procedures of Bexley College. The college has a well-developed equal opportunities philosophy and range of equal opportunities activities. The college charter and student handbook are provided to all of BCMA's trainees. These documents contain details of the college's equal opportunities policy with clear guidance and contact points for future reference and advice. There is an equal opportunities monitoring group which meets termly. Data are maintained relating to equality issues. Senior staff are knowledgeable of the disposition of minority communities within Bexley and surrounding boroughs. Inspectors judged that the self-assessment report was over generous. It did not identify weaknesses related to the work of the agency. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good awareness of equality issues by BCMA's staff
- ◆ regular training for staff
- ◆ achievement of regional awards for trainees with special learning difficulties and disabilities

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ data on equality of opportunity undervalued
- ◆ targets for under-represented groups not met
- ◆ recruitment of trainees follows stereotypical patterns

30. BCMA's staff, and the teaching staff of the college, are aware of equality issues and demonstrate a positive involvement and interest in the welfare of all the trainees. The college and TEC have provided a range of training events for staff. Bexley College's and BCMA's documents carry a statement of commitment to equality of opportunity for all staff, students and trainees. The policies are

comprehensive and information on how to seek advice and guidance is communicated to all trainees. Contracts with employers make specific reference to equality of opportunity issues. The process for the selection and assessment of trainees promotes equality of opportunity and employers are monitored regularly to ensure that trainees are not discriminated against at work. BCMA has challenged one employer for exposing trainees to a workplace where inappropriate materials are on display.

31. In 1997, one of BCMA's trainees was successful in achieving the Solotec Young Achievers Award while taking an NVQ at level 2 in administration. The trainee has disabilities and is regularly unwell. The award is made annually to one trainee judged to have made the most impressive training achievement. A BCMA trainee was runner-up for the same award in 1998. The college is currently installing a bridge to link college buildings and a lift in a teaching block where access for those with mobility difficulties is currently limited to the ground floor. There is an effective complaints procedure for both trainees and staff. Trainees are advised in the college charter and student handbook about what to do if things go wrong. There are few recorded complaints.

32. BCMA has failed to achieve its targets for the recruitment of women apprentices and trainees, or those from minority ethnic communities or people with disabilities. No sustained marketing to these groups can be demonstrated by BCMA. There are examples of specific courses offered by the college, for example, to women in construction and for those from minority ethnic communities. There are a number of examples of the college being actively involved in cultural events with the Sikh community, but this is not specific to the work of BCMA. BCMA's recent marketing material has been designed to include positive visual images of young trainees representing differing ethnic groups. The gender balance of trainees is largely along traditional lines. For example, there is only one female trainee among the 32 engineering trainees and a significant majority of the hair and beauty trainees are women. Statistics are not used effectively to target trainees from minority groups. Trainees and employers' awareness of equal opportunities issues is weak. Although equal opportunities is included at induction, it has little impact on the trainees.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

33. BCMA provides support for trainees throughout their training. At the pre-entry interview, guidance and support is provided to assist trainees in making choices about programmes and occupational routes. An initial assessment test is used to identify numeracy and literacy ability levels. Trainees with additional support needs are identified at this stage. On entry to training induction is provided by BCMA at the college. A visit is also made to trainees at work to check arrangements in the workplace and review the induction programme. College staff who provide off-the-job programmes also carry out an induction to the NVQ, which in some cases also includes an initial assessment. Additional support needs

are identified this way and referrals made if necessary. There are three monitoring officers who visit trainees regularly at work to review progress. One monitoring officer specialises in health and safety. One is responsible for visiting new trainees. Reviews may also lead to further support needs being identified and met. Additional weaknesses were identified by inspection and a lower grade was awarded than that identified in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ trainees benefit from additional support
- ◆ college provides a full range of services and resources for trainees
- ◆ good key skills support

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor trainees' review process lacks target-setting
- ◆ no systematic recording of trainees' support arrangements
- ◆ individual training plans do not reflect training needs

34. An initial assessment test is done at an early stage and some additional learning needs are identified as a result of its use. The response is often a referral for further guidance, assessment or support with basic skills. There are a number of examples where trainees have benefited from the support they have received and have been helped to progress with their training as a result. Some trainees attend support workshops while others receive one-to-one support. All the facilities that the college has to offer are available to BCMA's trainees. These include counselling, libraries, computers, careers guidance and social and leisure facilities. All of BCMA's trainees have access to key skills support as part of their off-the-job training programmes. Trainees' achievement and confidence in relation to key skills are good.

35. Trainees' files do not show the additional support received. The effectiveness of any support is not evaluated. Arrangements for trainee support, including the policy for initial assessment, are being reviewed. A procedure for referral of trainees and review of support effectiveness was introduced in the few months prior to inspection. This is being effectively implemented.

36. Training is not planned to meet individual trainees' needs. Employers' requirements are rarely identified and recorded. Individual training plans are standard documents, the same for all trainees. There are no milestones set. End dates are all the same and follow academic yearly cycles. Trainees are visited regularly at work placements. General progress, health and safety issues and individual needs or problems are identified through this process. But there is a lack of continuity as it is not always the same monitoring officer who visits the trainee. Visits are often too brief. Monitoring officers are not usually occupationally experienced nor do they have an up-to-date record of trainees' progress or detailed training programmes. Monitoring officers are conscientious in their duties, but

they are unable to provide authoritative guidance in vocational issues.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

37. Work-based training for young people at Bexley College is managed by a group of staff known as the Bexley College Managing Agency (BCMA). This unit contributes to the college's business and strategic plan. College policies and procedures cover the staff and learners in BCMA. At the time of the reinspection, the college was being restructured. BCMA is now part of the workforce development division of the college. This division is responsible for training provided for businesses, and for contracts with the Employment Service for New Deal clients and other unemployed people. The workforce development manager is directly responsible to the director of business development and quality. BCMA is led by a youth training manager. A new manager was appointed in July 2001. The youth training manager is supported by one full-time and two part-time monitoring officers and a full-time safety monitoring officer. The team is supported by an administrative co-ordinator, two work-placement assistants and a learner. Staff are responsible for establishing and maintaining links with employers, monitoring learners' health and safety at work, and reviewing learners' progress. Staff hold formal meetings once a month. There is also continuous, informal discussion among all staff. Staff are appraised annually by the manager. The training needs of staff are identified during appraisals. The college achieved the Investors in People standard in 1995, and was re-accredited for it in 1999.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ weak links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ few performance targets set
- ◆ insufficient use of management information
- ◆ inflexible training programmes
- ◆ lack of work-based assessment

38. BCMA has rectified three of the weaknesses identified in the original inspection. The youth training manager analyses data on learners' achievements carefully, and is able to make informal comparisons between learners' performance across different areas of learning. He has set BCMA targets for improvement. These include targets relating to meeting all the terms of the contract with the local LSC, improved retention rates and better off-the job training. Many more learners are now assessed at work, than was the case at the time of the original inspection. Work-based assessment is now taking place in most areas of learning, but has not yet led to better links between on- and off-the-job training. The organisation and implementation of many training programmes are still insufficiently flexible to ensure that individual learners' learning needs are met. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-

assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ open and consultative management
- ◆ good staff recruitment, induction and development
- ◆ good learning opportunities at work placements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ weak links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ inflexible training programmes
- ◆ some missed opportunities for gathering work-based evidence

39. BCMA's management is open and positive in style, it encourages staff to discuss issues frankly. Staff feel well informed, they are consulted regularly and encouraged to share their views and opinions. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work well together as a team. Training issues are discussed regularly on an informal basis. Staff hold formal monthly meetings which are minuted. Internal communication in general is good. Staff have open access to curriculum managers and tutors to discuss issues relating to learners and training programmes. BCMA staff now attend meetings of tutors in occupational areas. Communications between them and the learners' off-the-job tutors have greatly improved. Tutors now inform BCMA staff much more promptly if a learner is falling behind in his or her work or has missed a training session.

40. Staff recruitment and selection procedures are carefully structured and applied well. New members of staff are given a full and detailed induction. They are informed thoroughly about the college and BCMA, its systems and requirements, their roles and responsibilities and the management structure of the college. There is a well-written staff appraisal procedure, and each member of staff has an annual appraisal interview. Outcomes of the appraisal interview are recorded and appropriate training and development needs are agreed on and met. For example, part of the role of the monitoring officers is to monitor health and safety procedures at learners' work. The staff who serve as monitoring officers have attended a health and safety course which enables them to perform their monitoring role more competently. Each member of staff is also given free access to one college course of their choice each year.

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*An electrical installation firm where learners receive on-the-job training, displays an inspection test rig at its head office. This rig is used in the training of staff and learners. The rig has been designed to meet the requirements of the appropriate skills test. This firm provides relevant and appropriate on-the-job training.*

41. BCMA's work-placement officer has built up good working relationships with a wide range of local companies. Employers are fully aware of their responsibilities regarding training learners. Work placements provide relevant and appropriate work experience and training and good opportunities for learning. Workplace supervisors are well-qualified and experienced. They check learners' work carefully and guide their on-the-job training. Learners' portfolios include wide-ranging examples of how learners demonstrated their skills and competence at work.

42. Many supervisors in construction and engineering workplaces are not aware of the content of off-the-job courses. In a few areas, college tutors still do not know what their learners do at work, and have never visited them at work.

43. The organisation and design of courses are determined by the structure of the college year, rather than the needs of learners and employers. In practice, this means that learners receive about 35 days of off-the-job training. All learners follow the same course and this is not modified to take account of learners' prior learning and experience, ability, aptitude, or of what learners learn in their workplace. Some tutors wrongly consider them to be on a time-based programme rather than one based on the achievement of competences.

44. Although more learners are now assessed more frequently at work, learners still fail to gather enough evidence of their acquisition of NVQ competences through performance of their daily tasks. Some learners and their supervisors do not understand the need to gather evidence, or the process for gathering evidence. Learners are not using log books as a means of gathering evidence. Witness statements are seldom included in portfolios and their purpose is not widely understood by learners and staff.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

45. BCMA staff are responsible for the quality of training, including that provided by other college staff. The college has policies and procedures which cover key aspects of its training programmes. A quality co-ordinator is responsible for quality assurance initiatives. She reports to one of the five directors. Each course is evaluated annually, and the views of learners, other students, staff, and employers are taken into account in this evaluation. A qualified internal auditor audits internal verification activity.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ college's quality assurance systems exclude work-based training
- ◆ learners and employers do not evaluate the training programme
- ◆ no quality assurance of training provided by subcontractors
- ◆ no analysis of learners' achievement and destination data
- ◆ weak self-assessment

46. Immediately following the original inspection, one of the directors met with all BCMA staff to identify appropriate action to rectify the weaknesses in quality assurance. BCMA's responsibilities regarding quality assurance were clarified, and systems were developed to ensure quality assurance of work-based learning. Monitoring officers now have a checklist, and grade workplaces according to the quality of their training. If they feel the training at work is sub-standard, they take remedial action, which in extreme situations may include helping the learner find

alternative employment. The college has frequently gathered the views of learners and their employers on the college's work. Action has been taken on these and led to some minor improvements. They have also invited employers to attend events at the college but not many have done so. The college now exercises better monitoring of the quality of training provided by other colleges it contracts to provide training for some of its learners. It has revised its agreements with these colleges, and has a system for ensuring that they meet their obligations. Other colleges are contracted either because they are more conveniently located for learners, or because they offer training in a skill area not catered for by Bexley College. Since the new manager was appointed in July, he has analysed data regarding learners' achievements and destinations thoroughly. Staff now assess and grade BCMA's provision separately from other areas of the college's work. Self-assessment is now more thorough. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good evaluation of off-the-job training
- ◆ good co-ordination of internal verification

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ ineffective checking of how well learners learn at work
- ◆ ineffective use of data to inform improvements

47. The college has maintained and developed the strengths identified at the original inspection. One key aspect of the college's quality assurance system is the evaluation of teaching practice. This is carried out by a trained auditor who observes teaching sessions and grades these. This is well recorded and reported to the teaching director and heads of school. If remedial action is needed, the issue is fed into the staff-development programme. Staff also watch one another teach with the aim of identifying and sharing good practice.

48. The internal auditing activity also covers internal verification. The audit schedule ensures that all internal verifiers are audited at least once a year. The audit covers internal verification activities such as observation of assessment practice, assessment decisions, sampling plans, interviews of candidates regarding their assessment experience and the monitoring of the findings of appeals. Audits are recorded carefully and data are analysed by the NVQ co-ordinator and presented to the quality assurance director. Action plans are drawn up to rectify weaknesses and their implementation is monitored by the NVQ co-ordinator. Action-planning covers recommendations made raised by external verifiers from awarding bodies.

49. College staff and BCMA staff now make more frequent visits to learners than they did at the time of the first inspection. These visits, however, are restricted in scope and are made for the purpose of carrying out assessment, or for ensuring compliance with the terms of funding body contracts. Staff do not, in conjunction

with workplace supervisors, set learners learning targets. They do not find out what learners have learned since their last visit. Comprehensive objectives and clear procedures for visits have not been established. Learners are often visited by many different staff. Some visiting staff do not speak to the learners' supervisors.

50. Since the original inspection, the youth manager has conducted a thorough analysis of data on learners' destinations and achievement. Action on this analysis to improve students' progression and achievements, has not yet been taken. BCMA staff have not yet decided what data should be subject to analysis on a regular basis, or how and to whom the findings of any analysis should be presented.