Quality and Standards in Post-16 Education and Training in Wales

A Report on the Quality of Work-Based Learning and Jobcentre Plus Programmes

in

Bridgend College

December 2006

by

Estyn, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
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- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- primary schools;
- secondary schools;
- special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- independent schools;
- further education;
- adult community-based learning;
- youth support services;
- LEAs;
- teacher education and training;
- work-based learning;
- careers companies; and
- the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre plus.

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- provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
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Introduction

Bridgend College was inspected as part of a six-year (2004-2010) national programme of inspections of all post-16 providers in Wales. The purpose of the programme is to identify good features and shortcomings in order that the provider may improve the quality of education and training offered and raise the standards achieved by learners. Inspection is also designed to give learners more information about the quality of providers of work-based learning and Jobcentre Plus Programmes, and the learning options available.

All inspections conducted under the arrangements apply the following principles:

- the use of a common inspection framework which is common to all sectors of education and training in Wales;
- an emphasis on the provider's evaluation of its work;
- the involvement of a provider nominee who worked with the inspection team; and
- the inspection of a sample of provision.

The inspection took place from 04 to 08 December 2006. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, undertook the inspection. The team included additional inspectors.

The team was required to report on standards achieved by learners, the quality of education and training provided, the quality of leadership and management and to judge if the company provides value for money.

Grade descriptors

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1    good with outstanding features
Grade 2    good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3    good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4    some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5    many important shortcomings

The Learning and Skills Act 2000, requires the company to prepare a written statement of the action that they propose to take to address the recommendations in the inspection report and the timescales for completing the proposed actions.
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Context

The nature of the provider

1 Bridgend College is located in the town of Bridgend, midway between the cities of Cardiff and Swansea. The county borough of Bridgend includes the Llynfi, Garw and the Ogmore valleys. The largest towns in the borough are Bridgend, Maesteg, Porthcawl and Pencoed.

2 There are many large multi-national companies in the borough. These include Sony, Ford, Bayer, Cosi, Cooper Standard, Georgia Pacific and Irvin HQ. Between them, these companies employ most of the 23% of all the employees in the borough who work in manufacturing industries.

3 Bridgend College is the main deliverer of post-16 education and training within the borough. It operates from two main locations in Bridgend and Pencoed and has further community college sites in Maesteg and Porthcawl.

4 The college has an annual income of £22 million and enrols more than 2,750 full-time and 8,000 part-time learners.

5 A major local integrated steelworks at Port Talbot employs all learners at Bridgend College on the Modern Apprenticeship programme in engineering. The employer requires a ‘traditional’ four-year apprenticeship in which learners attend the college full time in their first year. During the first year, they complete a NVQ at level 2, six key skills at level 2 and the first year of a BTEC National Certificate, as well as other company-specific training modules. In their second year, learners progress on to work-based learning when they start a NVQ at level 3 and do the second year of their BTEC national certificate. In the third year, learners work towards the NVQ at level 3 as well as starting work on a Higher National Certificate (HNC) qualification. They complete the level 3 NVQ and the HNC in the fourth year of the programme.

6 In addition to the learners on the engineering training programme, there are also a few learners following modern apprenticeships in accountancy, science and design as well as foundation modern apprenticeships in business improvement techniques. The same large steelworks company employs all these learners.

7 The college also provides day-release training for other learners. A wide range of other training providers register these modern apprentices. The college’s modern apprenticeship unit manages all aspects of the work-based learning programmes.

Types of inspection

8 Under the current inspection arrangements, there are three types of inspection for providers of work-based learning. These are full, standard and short inspections.

9 The designation of a particular type of inspection is based on clear criteria that determine the level of risk presented by the provider. The criteria are set out in the Work-Based Learning Guidance Handbook on the Estyn website www.estyn.gov.uk.
As a result of the application of these criteria, Estyn identified that Bridgend College required a full inspection.

10 During a full inspection, inspectors evaluate and report on:
   • all seven key questions across the provider; and
   • all the learning areas that have significant learner numbers.

**The provider’s priorities**

11 The college’s mission is:

Bridgend College is committed to providing the highest quality, of inclusive and value for money lifelong education and training in partnership with local providers.

12 The mission is delivered in the context of the college’s core values of:
   • a single community of learning with one set of shared values and aims that promotes and supports learning for all people in that community (‘One College Team’);
   • placing the interests of the student at the centre of all College activities (‘Student Centredness’);
   • striving for excellence in everything that we do and challenging performance and behaviour against agreed standards (‘Excellence’);
   • requiring mutual respect and integrity in all staff and student relationships (‘Respect and Integrity’);
   • seeking to maximise the potential of all individuals and to recognise and respect their success (‘Celebrate Success’); and
   • embracing an open culture where everyone has an equal responsibility for making these values reality (‘Open Culture’).
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Summary

Table of grades awarded

13 The inspection team judged the provider’s work as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Inspection grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 How well do learners achieve?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Standards

14 All learners on the Modern Apprenticeship programme in Engineering and Manufacturing Technology develop very good and often outstanding occupational skills and theory knowledge. The rate at which learners attain their full qualification framework is outstanding at 94%. Learners’ attainment of key skills, including the wider key skills is very good. All learners attain all the six key skills at level 2. Many learners who have prior key skills attainment extend their key skills to level 3.

15 All learners have a very good understanding of their training and education programme. They are able to discuss in detail where they are in their programme, what they will progress to next and the training challenges that they face. Learners work very well with their peers, assessors, teaching staff, workplace supervisors and training officers. The majority of learners are highly motivated and present a very professional image of the engineering profession.

The quality of education and training

16 Overall, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is good. Teachers and assessors have very good knowledge of the engineering profession. Most teachers use an effective range of teaching strategies. The assessors work well with the learners’ work-based supervisors who also act as good mentors for the learners.

17 All assessors carry out reviews and assessments of learners to a well-planned timetable. Learners’ work-based training officers are fully involved in setting realistic
yet demanding targets for the learners. Assessors encourage all learners to respond to the targets they set in consultation with the learners.

18 The college and the employer together provide an outstanding modern apprenticeship programme in mechanical and electrical engineering. They provide learners with exceptionally good opportunities to achieve a wide range of formal and additional qualifications and skills. These meet the learners' educational and career aspirations and the business needs of the employer very well. Learners have very good opportunities to take part in community-based activities which enrich their learning and working lives.

19 The college and the employer work very well together to provide learners with a very high standard of care, support and guidance. The college and the employer have a wide range of effective procedures for the support and guidance of modern apprentices. Once the company has recruited the learners, the staff work very effectively to make sure that nearly all the learners gain the full qualification framework. The college and the employer have very good systems to support the health, safety and well-being of learners. They systematically promote equal opportunities and consistently challenge any discriminatory language or behaviour.

The quality of leadership and management

20 All senior managers set a clear strategic direction for all provision including work-based provision. There is very good communication at all levels between the employer and the college. All staff involved in the planning, management and delivery of work-based learning work closely together. The regular, formal meetings involving all staff working on the work-based programme make sure that all learners’ progress is monitored regularly and systematically. All staff take speedy action to address any problems. The governors are well informed about the work of the modern apprenticeship unit. However, the quality and standards sub-committee does not receive discrete reports on the standards of work-based learning provision.

21 The college has good procedures in place to evaluate all its work-based provision and to support planning for improvement. The quality audit group within the college monitors all departmental reviews effectively. The self-assessment report completed for the modern apprentice unit provides a useful evaluation of operational processes but does not focus enough on learners and standards. The judgements in the self-assessment report on work-based learning match the grades awarded by the inspection team.

22 Overall, the resources for training are very good. All teachers are very well qualified and experienced. The college and the steelworks provide learners with excellent resources and accommodation. The modern engineering equipment at the college is outstanding. Learners have excellent access to Information and Communications Technology equipment.

23 The college makes very good use of its resources to deliver the modern apprenticeship programme. The provision is outstanding value for money.
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Recommendations

24 In order to improve, the provider needs to:

R1 further develop the self-assessment and quality assurance arrangements for work-based learning;

R2 make sure that the new arrangements for the management of work-based learning continue to maintain high standards in all aspects of the work;

R3 formally report on the outcomes of work-based learning programmes to the governing body of the college; and

R4 make sure that all staff use an appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies.
Standards achieved by learners in Engineering and Manufacturing Technology

Summary of provision

25 The college provides Modern Apprenticeship training in mechanical and electrical maintenance engineering. A local major integrated steelworks employs all 45 of the learners on the current programme.

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

26 The training frameworks for learners on the Modern Apprenticeship programmes include key skills at the levels indicated in the table below. Learners also have to complete an NVQ at level 3 and the specified technical certificate in order to achieve the qualification framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Application of Number</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Information Technology</th>
<th>Improving own learning and performance</th>
<th>Working with others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Apprenticeship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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Success in attaining agreed learning goals

27 All learners on the Modern Apprenticeship programme develop very good and often, outstanding occupational skills and theory knowledge. All learners develop their practical skills to demanding industrial standards and relate theory and practice very well. Many learners demonstrate very good practical skills in a wide variety of engineering activities. These include the operation of large capacity machine tools, the maintenance of overhead cranes and in fabrication and welding techniques.

The maintenance of very high attainment rates.

Learners’ average attainment rates over the last three years are over 80%. In the period from 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006, the rate at which learners attained their full qualifications framework is outstanding. Of the 33 learners who left the programme, 31 attained their full framework qualification (94%).

28 Learners’ attainment of key skills, including the wider key skills is very good. Learners develop their key skills from the start of the training programme. All learners attain their key skills before they start their on-the-job training at the steelworks. All learners attain all the six key skills at level 2. Many learners, who have prior key skills attainment, extend their key skills to level 3. All learners also gain a wide range of additional technical qualifications.

29 Learners in recent years have been very successful in the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) Apprentice of the Year award. One learner recently used his machining skills to produce a precision scale model of a torpedo truck used for
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transporting iron between the blast furnace and the steel making plant. Another learner used similar skills to produce a high quality toolbox complete with useful engineering hand tools.

30 The standards of learners’ portfolios are very good. They are well organised and presented. These portfolios are used by the learners on a very regular basis throughout their time on the plant. They contain a wide range of workplace evidence, including photographs and clear records of the learners’ own work including projects. The portfolios also contain comprehensive records of reviews as well as health and safety case studies from within the industry. Nearly all learners use Information and Communications Technology very effectively to develop their portfolios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>New starters during this period</th>
<th>Total leavers this period</th>
<th>Leavers gaining full NVQ</th>
<th>Leavers gaining full ILP</th>
<th>Leavers gaining part NVQ &amp;/or Key skills</th>
<th>Destination of leavers who did not gain an NVQ, part NVQ or any key skills</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Apprenticeship</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 0 2</td>
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</table>

Progress in learning

31 All learners have a very good understanding of their training and education programme. They can discuss in detail where they are in their programme, what they will progress to next and the training challenges that they face. This is particularly the case in their fourth year, as they approach their individual trade tests set by their employer. All learners make very good progress towards achieving their full qualification framework. They use the tracking documentation very well to check on their own progress.

Excellent progression

Learners have very good opportunities to progress to higher education programmes. Nearly all the learners progress to higher national certificates and diplomas. Many progress to undergraduate degrees in relevant aspects of engineering.

Development of personal, social and learning skills

32 Most learners are keen to make the best use of the opportunities offered by the training. All learners’ attendance and punctuality is very good and closely monitored by the college and the employer.

33 Relationships between learners, employers and training staff are outstanding. Learners work very co-operatively with their peers, assessors, teaching staff, workplace supervisors and training officers. Nearly all learners are highly motivated and present a very professional image of the engineering workforce. They are highly regarded by all who work with them.
The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Overall, the quality of teaching, training and assessment is good and sometimes very good. The teachers, college and work-based assessors and steelworks training staff work well together to plan and deliver all parts of the training programme. All the teachers, trainers and assessors have excellent subject knowledge and occupational skills.

Teachers prepare detailed lesson plans and schemes of work well for the off-the-job parts of the training programme. They share these with the learners. This information encourages learners to plan much of their future learning. Teachers prepare learners well for the technical certificate. In a few sessions, the teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to maintain the pace of the lesson. In these sessions, they do not provide enough of a challenge for a few of the learners in the class.

All assessors work closely with all the employers’ training staff, including the learners’ supervisors in the different parts of the steel plant. The assessors also provide a very effective communications link with the teaching staff in the engineering department of the college and steelworks training staff. All assessors and teachers use good questioning techniques when assessing learners. Teachers, trainers and assessors provide learners with very good written and oral feedback on their progress. The relationships between the assessors, teachers and learners are very good. Internal verifiers carry out their work with rigour and work to an agreed schedule of activity.

Teachers plan the assessment for technical certificates very well. They differentiate the assessment activities well at different stages of the learning programme. They encourage learners to attain above a pass grade at the beginning of the programme. When learners have become more competent, the teachers encourage them to extend their work to gain grades at distinction level.

Work-based assessors meet with learners every six weeks to review their progress. These reviews are thorough and cover all aspects of the learners’ performance. Learners and assessors agree their personal targets at their regular meetings. College managers and the employer set clear targets to make sure that learners achieve and maintain good standards.
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

39 The college has an excellent and well-established partnership with the steel works. Working together, they provide an outstanding modern apprenticeship programme that meets the educational and career aspirations of learners and the business needs of the employer.

40 In their first year of training all learners are full-time college based and attend for 44 weeks. During this time, they achieve the full range of key skills at a level appropriate to or above that required by the training framework and the NVQ in performing engineering operations at level 2. The learners then progress to higher level NVQs, complete the appropriate technical certificate and start higher national certificate qualifications. Following this, a few then progress to undergraduate studies. At all stages, there are very good links between the on-the-job and the off-the-job parts of the learning programme.

41 The college and the employer work well together to plan very good quality workplace programmes. These programmes make sure learners experience a wide range of tasks in all departments. This meets the requirements of their learning programme and gives learners the skills, knowledge and experience to progress to employment. All the modern apprentices gain permanent positions within the company once they have successfully completed the modern apprenticeship programme and passed a demanding trade test.

Wider learning experiences

The modern apprenticeship programme provides outstanding learning experiences that not only meets the learners’ career and educational aspirations but also enables them to develop their self-esteem, respect for others, and a sense of social responsibility.

Learners have excellent opportunities to take part in wider, community-based events that enrich their learning and working lives. Six apprentices were involved in the recent Engineering Week Wales event at the college. They volunteered to take charge of 96 year 9 pupils from local schools. They talked to the pupils about the apprenticeship programme, conducted tours and helped with engineering projects set for the pupils. The schools responded very positively to the involvement of the apprentices and the learners have used the experience to add to the evidence for their key skills particularly communication, problem solving and team building. A few learners are also involved with the Young Enterprise programme where project work within their training programme has a potential business benefit. The employer also sponsors groups of apprentices to take part in a wide range of local charity events. Learners mature into motivated and confident young people.

42 The college and the employer use the six weekly partnership meetings well to identify any further bespoke courses to improve the training programme. At these meetings, the employer informs the college if it has any new requirements for training including
the modern apprenticeship programme. The college provides a very good range of company-specific training modules and is currently working with the company to plan and deliver a level 3 course in rigging to meet the employer’s requirements.

A wide range of additional programmes for learners

All learners take good advantage of the additional skills and qualifications available outside of their main training programme. These include outdoor team building activities and a recognised training programme in safer driving.

The occupationally related qualifications include steel industry specialised programmes and health and safety courses. Many learners attain good additional technical qualifications such as the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE) 16th Edition Wiring Regulations, the City and Guilds Electrical Verification and Testing and Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) qualifications. As a result, the learners improve their occupational and social skills to a very high level.

43 Sustainable development is integral to the learning and workplace experience. Learners are very aware of the importance of their employer as a major provider of jobs within their local communities. They use recycled materials within their off-the-job training to make sure that waste is minimised. In the workplace much of their project work focuses on the impact the steel industry has on the environment. The modern apprenticeship programme enhances learners’ employability and their opportunity to contribute to the social and economic sustainability of the local community.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

44 The college works in well with the employer to manage learners’ support to a very high standard. The college has clear, comprehensive policies and procedures for the care, support and guidance of learners. These meet legislative requirements and are reviewed annually.

45 The employer and the college staff work together very well to recruit and select learners. They have good clear entry procedures. They use rigorous selection criteria to recruit learners who are committed to a demanding four-year training programme. All learners have a clear outline of, and understand the requirements of, their full framework qualification before they start their programme. All learners have a good induction to the training programme and all parts of the workplace. All assessors, trainers and teachers provide learners with good information about the workplace and college support services to make sure that learners know what services are available and how to use them.

Promotion of learners’ health, safety and well-being
The college and the employer have outstanding systems to support the health, safety and well-being of learners. Learners' induction to health and safety is very good. Teachers, trainers and assessors emphasize the importance of health and safety throughout training. Learners also use their steel company plant safety briefings well in their project work at college. They use these to simulate previous equipment safety failures and to identify, and plan developments to machinery or work practice to ensure safer working.

The employer is very good in promoting learners’ well being, for example, they provide all learners with the opportunity to take part in a safer driving course. They also offer help with substance-dependency related issues. All these arrangements together make sure that all staff support learners’ health, safety and well-being very well at every stage of their training.

Learners with difficult personal circumstances receive a particularly high level of support and encouragement from teachers, assessors and steelworks staff. All staff work very well with the learners to make sure that they stay on the training programme and complete their apprenticeship. Learners who have a period of absence undertake a very good return to work review with work-based assessors. They work well with work-based assessors to plan and monitor their return to full-time training following any absence.

**Strong partnership support**

Teachers, personal tutors, training officers and work-based NVQ assessors give excellent individual personal support to learners throughout their training. The employer provides additional effective work place mentor support for learners. Unit supervisors in each steel works department act as good mentors as the learners change departments during their training. The assessors provide all stakeholders with excellent information on the progress of learners. All these arrangements help to make sure that learners successfully complete their learning programme.

All learners are aware of the college and work place appeals and complaints procedures. They have a good understanding of procedures for dealing with racism, bullying, harassment and oppressive behaviour. The employer encourages learners to join a trade union when they first start their training programme. Learners are fully aware that the trade union can provide independent additional support for them in the workplace.

The college has good promotional and marketing materials that use positive images of women and learners from ethnic minority groups. The employer regularly recruits and supports female engineering apprentices well. All staff systematically promote equal opportunity and challenge any discriminatory language or oppressive behaviour effectively.
Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

49 Senior managers of the college are responsible for setting the clear strategic direction of all of its provision including work-based learning. The college’s mission statement has a strong focus to provide the highest quality of education and training for all its learners in partnership with local providers. A clear set of values underpin the mission statement. Managers use the mission statement and its values well to support strategic and operational planning and to take forward all of the work, including the development of work-based provision.

50 The college recently established a new organisational structure that promotes clearer and more coherent arrangements for the management of its work-based provision. Managers and staff within the modern apprenticeship unit understand their roles in contributing to the effective delivery of the provision. They all have clear job descriptions. The staff of the modern apprenticeship unit make sure that learners complete all aspects of their training programme to the highest possible standard. Managers of the unit have very good relationships with employers which support the promotion of high standards in the work-based provision.

Very effective communication with employers

Communication between the college and the employer is outstanding and operational teams work very well together. There is very close and regular liaison between all members of staff delivering the various parts of the work-based learning programme, both on and off the job.

A well-established liaison group involves all staff in the modern apprenticeship unit and key training staff from the steel works. The assistant principal with responsibility for work-based learning chairs this group, which meets every six weeks. The group discusses barriers to learners’ progress and makes decisions about any issues affecting the delivery of the programme. Staff provide these meetings with excellent reports on the progress of all learners in all parts of their training programme. These meetings promote effective communication and support the outstanding standards achieved by work-based learners.

51 Managers and staff in the modern apprentice unit collect and collate information carefully and provide good quality reports to help work-based assessors track and monitor the progress of learners and set effective targets. The unit has recently introduced a central tracking system that records learners’ progress and achievement across all aspects of the training programme. This is particularly effective in helping all staff to monitor trends and identify issues of concern.
52 The college uses well-developed systems for managing the performance of staff. Managers observe teaching staff regularly. The college also has good systems for identifying and meeting the professional development needs of all staff.

53 College governors have a broad range of knowledge and skills and provide appropriate support and challenge to senior managers. They are well informed about the work of the modern apprenticeship unit. The board of governors has a sub-committee, which monitors the standards and quality of provision. However, this sub-committee does not currently receive discrete reports relating to work-based provision in order to monitor its effectiveness.

**Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?**

| Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings |

54 The modern apprentice unit is committed to providing the highest quality education and training for all its learners. The unit has good contractual arrangements with employers of work-based learners. These set out their requirements clearly in relation to compliance with the unit’s quality assurance systems.

55 The modern apprenticeship unit uses the college’s wide range of formal quality processes well. All staff understand their responsibilities for quality and have good access to all documentation relating to quality assurance on the college intranet. In addition, the college has recently developed a comprehensive year planner to secure consistency in all aspects of college activity and to promote best practice. Internal verification processes are robust and fair.

56 There are good systems for the review of all provision in the modern apprenticeship unit. These include an effective annual programme of course reviews undertaken by a panel of staff from another department within the college. The college has a quality audit group, which monitors internal quality reviews and self-assessment reports carefully. This group gives thorough and helpful feedback to heads of department to help them to improve the quality of their self-assessment reports.

57 The engineering work-based learning programme, delivered within the modern apprenticeship unit, is included in the annual self-assessment report prepared by the engineering department of the college. However, the report does not always include enough specific reference to the overall performance of the work-based learning provision or its strengths and areas for improvement.

58 The self-assessment of functions other than teaching and learning is at an early stage of development in the college. These functions include finance, marketing, learner support and estates as well as the modern apprenticeship unit. Currently, the college uses a system of functional area self-assessment to evaluate the work of the modern apprenticeship unit. The report on the unit provides a useful evaluation of its operational processes. However, it does not focus enough on standards achieved by learners, the quality of education and training and the quality of leadership and management.
All staff involved with the modern apprenticeship provision, including representatives from the employer, meet formally every six weeks. The information exchanged at these meetings helps to promote quality improvement, particularly in relation to setting targets for further improvements. The staff of the modern apprenticeship unit also provides the employer with comprehensive written reports every 13 weeks on learners’ progress that cover all aspects of their training programme, including key skills, technical certificates and additional NVQ and short course activities. These reports also help to maintain the high quality of the provision.

All learners complete questionnaires at various stages in their programme. This provides the modern apprenticeship unit with information about the learners’ experiences. However, many of the questions relate to compliance with procedures rather than measures to improve quality. The staff of the unit analyse the outcomes of these questionnaires and report these to the head of department. Staff deal effectively with any issues arising from learner or employer feedback.

The self-assessment report produced for the inspection is appropriately critical and honest and the grades match those awarded by the inspection team. The college has made good progress in meeting all the recommendations from the last inspection.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

| Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |

The teaching staff who deliver the off-the-job part of the training programme are very well qualified. As well as holding very good professional qualifications, nearly all of them are also fully qualified teachers. Most of them worked in relevant parts of engineering industries prior to entering teaching. They apply their theoretical knowledge and practical skills well to engineering practices in the workplace. The work-based assessors are also very well qualified and have recent experience of working in industry. All supervisors in the workplace are highly skilled and provide excellent mentorship support to learners in all parts of the steel plant. All staff have up-to-date and detailed job descriptions.

All teachers, trainers and assessors who assess and internally verify learners’ work hold appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications. The work-based assessors work very well with the employer’s training officers to monitor and support the progress of all learners. There is a very good ratio of assessors to learners.

Overall, staff development opportunities are good. The objectives of the college’s staff development programme match the strategic priorities of the college well. The college organises a good range of staff development activities to meet the needs of teachers who both assess and teach modern apprentices. Nearly all staff participate well in this programme which includes training in the college’s quality procedures. Teachers also keep up-to-date with changes in qualifications by attending a wide range of relevant training events organised by outside bodies.
Excellent learning resources

There is very good technical learning equipment available to learners at the college. These include up-to-date technology equipment such as a flexible manufacturing system that enables learners to work on live real-time systems. These simulate the best current industrial working practices including the development lean technology that reduce inefficiencies in the manufacturing process. The engineering department at the college also has a very good range of modern workshops and specialist engineering laboratories.

All classrooms are well equipped and most of them have interactive whiteboards that link to the technical equipment to demonstrate electronic principles. Learners also have very good access to computing resources in the engineering department as well as in the college’s learning resource centre. All these resources help to make sure that all learners have a very good learning experience in all parts of their training.

All accommodation for teaching and learning is of a high standard. The steelworks has an excellent training centre that they use to provide specialist training courses for all of their employees including the modern apprentices. Wheelchair users have good access to all parts of the engineering department.

Both the college and the employer emphasise the importance of health and safety. All parts of the engineering department at the college have good arrangements for maintaining a safe working environment. Supervisors at the workplace give learners a thorough induction to the safe working practices in each area of the employer’s premises. The employer provides learners with appropriate health and safety equipment.

Standards are outstanding in the learning area inspected. Very few learners fail to complete the full training programme. In recent years, all the modern apprentices have progressed to employment as skilled technicians in the steelworks. The employer also provides the learners with considerable additional training that enables them to gain further qualifications and skills. Overall, the college and the employer provide learners with excellent value for money.
Bridgend College welcomes this report as an accurate and fair picture of the standards of our students’ achievements and the quality of the programmes that the College provides to employers.

Indeed we note that the grades awarded to the College match exactly the grades that we self-assessed prior to the inspection, and this further demonstrates the robustness of our College quality procedures.

Estyn’s findings and comments are a reflection of the achievements of the College and a tribute to the outstanding work and commitment of staff, managers, our colleagues in industry and the students themselves.

We do recognise that this is only the start of the next stage of the College’s development. Therefore we now intend to continue in the same way and to further develop and expand this outstanding model for the benefit of other learners and employers.
Appendix 1

The evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors visited:

- twenty learners in the workplace and during off-the-job training at the college; and
- a variety of other activities delivered at the college and the employer’s training centre.

Members of the team held meetings with:

- governors, managers and staff of the college and its modern apprentice unit;
- learners at the workplace and in off-the-job locations; and
- the employers’ training staff.

The team also considered:

- a selection of learners’ work and photographic records of achievement; and
- comprehensive documentation provided both before and during the inspection.
## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor Davies HMI</td>
<td>Reporting Inspector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernard Hayward HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janice Thomas HMI</td>
<td>Team Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Jones</td>
<td>Additional Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy Needs</td>
<td>Additional Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Evans</td>
<td>Provider nominee</td>
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