



Increased flexibility programme at Key Stage 4

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Executive summary

1. The Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) supports partnerships of schools, further education (FE) colleges, and providers of work-based learning in efforts to improve opportunities for vocational learning for 14–16 year olds, and to extend participation in education and training post-16. Partnerships now involve half the secondary schools and three quarters of the FE colleges in England.
2. This report evaluates the progress of the IFP during its first two years, building on an interim report published in 2004.
3. The courses offered through these partnerships have proved so popular that the numbers of students taking IFPs have exceeded expectations.
4. Courses are, on the whole, proving to be successful. Students have responded well to the broader opportunities IFPs provide and their attitudes to learning and behaviour have improved. Four out of five students are gaining vocational qualifications as a result of their participation in IFPs, and more students are staying on after 16.
5. Setting up the collaborative arrangements called for by the programme involves considerable time and effort and has proved challenging. Relationships have taken time to develop. Partnership working has improved in the second year of the programme but still has some way to go to meet the objectives of the programme in full. This report highlights issues which require attention if proposals for greater collaboration are to make vocational qualifications successfully available to an even wider range of students.
6. The quality of teaching and learning have improved since the first year of IFPs, with schools having made the greatest improvements, but attendance is in need of improvement on courses which students undertake out of school. There are still weaknesses in assessment and monitoring of vocational courses but they have improved in the second year of the programme as teachers become more familiar with qualification requirements. Links between schools and employers have increased as a result of the IFPs; however, links between work experience and studies in school could be enhanced. There are early signs that more students are staying on in post-16 education at colleges as a result of attending IFPs due to improved information and guidance that students receive at points of transition. However, general careers education and guidance received by students and progression to work-based learning has not improved.

Key findings

- ❑ The IFP enables schools to offer a more diverse curriculum at Key Stage 4 which includes a range of vocational qualifications. The curriculum is broader in the second year than in the first year of the programme, with colleges offering a wider range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and other vocational qualifications in addition to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses in vocational fields.
- ❑ Students respond well to the broader learning opportunities available through the IFP, and this has resulted in improvements among a large number of students in their attitudes, behaviour and social skills at college and back at school.
- ❑ The leadership and management of partnerships have improved significantly in the second year of IFP but they remain unsatisfactory in one in ten partnerships. Organisation is weak in a quarter of partnerships. The most difficult areas for partnerships to resolve are:
 - involving all partners in identifying the most appropriate courses to offer
 - synchronising timetables between partner institutions
 - establishing and implementing clear protocols between organisations
 - ensuring that there are clear progression routes available to all students.
- ❑ In many partnerships there is a lack of clarity about who is responsible for quality assurance. Procedures lack rigour and there is no review of provision in areas such as the quality of teaching and learning on out-of-school courses.
- ❑ Very few work-based training organisations have been involved in IFP partnerships. Where they are involved, one in five offers an unsatisfactory curriculum.
- ❑ In the second year of the programme a large number of colleges were reaching capacity in several vocational areas and had to restrict the places available to 14–16 learners. This was particularly the case in motor vehicle, hair and beauty, and construction, all of which were very popular.
- ❑ The quality of teaching and learning on IFPs has improved since the first year but is still slightly below that in other Key Stage 4 lessons. Schools have made the greatest improvement in the quality of teaching but one in ten lessons remain unsatisfactory. This is mainly because teachers are unfamiliar with GCSE vocational subject specifications and lack knowledge of relevant industrial and commercial practices. The quality of teaching in colleges, where two thirds is at least good, is better because there is a strong emphasis on vocational application. Most colleges have worked hard to train their staff to teach 14–16 year olds. The quality of teaching

offered by work-based training organisations is well below that in schools and colleges.

- ❑ Attendance in the lessons observed on out-of-school programmes has declined over the two years and is well below that in secondary schools as a whole. Attendance varies, depending on the provider, the worst attendance rate being at colleges, where it has fallen to only 68%. However, this figure includes days missed due to activities back at school, such as mock GCSE examinations, about which colleges have not been notified in advance.
- ❑ Attainment in lessons has improved during the second year but the proportion of unsatisfactory work is higher than in Key Stage 4 as a whole. This is particularly so amongst training organisations, where attainment was unsatisfactory in a quarter of sessions observed.
- ❑ In many partnerships students' progress is hindered because schools do not pass information about prior attainment to partner organisations. In the worst cases this results in students being placed on courses at an inappropriate level. The quality and availability of learning support for IFP students whilst they are at college or with training organisations are often insufficient, partly as a result of inadequate information from schools.
- ❑ Most schools make good use of data to monitor students' progress on GCSE courses but often their systems have not been extended to vocational courses. Few schools regularly review the progress of students on courses attended outside school.
- ❑ The quality of assessment on IFPs has improved in the second year of the programme but it is still unsatisfactory in a fifth of schools and training organisations and in a third of colleges. This is mainly because teachers are unfamiliar with the specifications for assessment and are uncertain of grading criteria. Although reports from colleges and training organisations comment on behaviour and attitudes, they rarely provide detailed information on students' academic progress.
- ❑ Links between schools and employers have been enhanced as a result of IFPs. However, schools could do far more to prepare students for work experience and make better links between their experiences on placements and their studies at school.
- ❑ IFP has resulted in improvements in the information and guidance that students receive at key transition points but has had little impact on careers education and guidance as a whole. IFP has made little impact on the choice of courses typically made by boys and girls.
- ❑ The numbers of students continuing their education after the age of 16 has increased as a result of attendance on IFPs. Students find college

promotional materials, open evenings and direct experience of college courses to be the most useful sources of information to help them make choices about their future. By contrast, advice and guidance relating to progression to work-based training and apprenticeships are weak, especially in 11–18 schools.

- ❑ Most partnerships feel they can continue to offer IFPs for the medium term but are not always sure how. Larger, diverse, well-established partnerships with effective business planning and well-developed strategic and operational plans are the most confident that they will be able to sustain activity when direct IFP funding ceases. Smaller partnerships lacking strong commitment to collaboration regard their future as being dependent on external funding.

Recommendations

Partnerships should:

- involve schools more in decisions about the types of courses and when and where they should be offered. The curriculum offered should more closely match the needs and aspirations of all students at Key Stage 4 and have clear progression routes post-16. There should be clear protocols between schools and colleges about the curriculum to be offered
- establish quality assurance processes that ensure that IF provision is regularly evaluated and improved. Partnerships should identify who is responsible for quality assurance and should ensure the quality of teaching and learning is evaluated in all settings
- involve a greater number of training organisations and employers in partnerships and review how provision offered by work-based training organisations can be enhanced
- ensure that Year 9 students have information on IFP courses when choosing the courses they will take in Years 10 and 11
- ensure that IFP courses are timetabled so that students do not miss other lessons and are available to all, not just lower attaining students and those who are disengaged from their studies
- improve attendance on out-of-school IFP courses
- establish systems across the partnership to monitor students' progress. This should include more systematic reporting by colleges and training organisations on students' academic progress compared to target grades
- ensure that those students who need it have sufficient learning support when attending out-of-school courses
- actively encourage students to consider taking courses other than those typically chosen by students of their own gender.

Schools should:

- ensure that colleges and training organisations receive timely information relating to students' prior attainment, support requirements and additional needs
- improve the quality of teaching and learning on vocational courses by enhancing teachers' understanding of industrial and commercial practices
- inform colleges of planned student absences for activities such as work experience and examinations
- establish how targets can be set for students preparing for vocational qualifications and how these targets can be shared more effectively with college and training organisation staff

- improve the links between work experience and vocational subjects, prepare students and employers more effectively for work experience placements and evaluate the learning that has taken place
- improve careers education and guidance to ensure students have the information they need to make decisions about their future. More information and guidance about work-related learning options should be provided, particularly by 11–18 schools
- provide more information to colleges and training organisations when students leave at 16 to ensure they are placed on the most appropriate courses and receive support well matched to their needs.

Colleges should:

- ensure all teachers are competent to teach 14–16 years olds, that they are aware of child protection issues, health and safety requirements for teaching 14–16 year olds, and understand data related to performance in Key Stage 3 tests and target-setting
- improve attendance rates of students on IFP courses
- improve the monitoring of students' progress on IFP courses and provide detailed feedback to schools on students' academic progress, at times to fit in with schools' reporting to parents
- improve the careers education and guidance provision received by IFP students
- review their accreditation of prior learning procedures to ensure that students aged 16+ do not needlessly repeat work they have completed on IFP courses.

Training organisations should:

- take deliberate steps to raise attainment on their IFP courses
- become more involved in IFP partnerships in order to provide a wider range of courses
- raise the profile of work-based learning routes to 14–16 students by becoming more involved in school careers education and guidance programmes
- provide staff development for trainers to enable them to match their teaching to the needs of 14–16 year olds.

Curriculum

Key findings

- ❑ The IFP enables many schools to offer a more diverse and relevant curriculum at Key Stage 4.
 - ❑ Curriculum planning has improved since the first year of the IFP and a wider range of vocational courses is now available to students. The best practice is in schools where there is a commitment from the senior leadership team to ensure the curriculum matches the needs of all students.
 - ❑ Although partnership working has improved in the last year institutions need to do more to synchronise timetables and share information about pupils' prior attainment.
 - ❑ The quality of training offered by work-based training organisations is often unsatisfactory.
 - ❑ Schools could do more to prepare students and employers for work experience and to link placements to students' studies in school and college.
7. IFPs are taught in partnership by schools, colleges and work-based learning organisations and have been successful in broadening the curriculum for students at Key Stage 4. Take-up of places has increased steadily and has been well above forecast in both years, such that in several localities it has begun to strain the capacity of available provision.
 8. As a result of the IFP many schools now offer a more diverse and relevant curriculum at Key Stage 4. About three quarters now offer at least one GCSE course in a vocational subject. Colleges offer GCSE qualifications, particularly in specialised areas such as engineering, and a range of NVQs and vocationally related qualifications (VRQs). In the first year, around three fifths of college courses were NVQ/VRQs and two fifths were GCSEs. The proportions changed during the second year, to around three NVQ/VRQ programmes to one GCSE. Work-based learning providers offer mainly NVQs, although some support basic skills courses and a few contribute expertise to programmes taught jointly with schools.
 9. The overall quality of the curriculum and vocational learning in schools improved slightly in the second year, but in one in eight schools the curriculum of IFP students is unsatisfactory. In most schools IFP students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. These schools usually offer a core of GCSE subjects to meet National Curriculum requirements and a choice of other subjects, including vocational qualifications. These qualifications include: an increased range of GCSEs in vocational subjects;

NVQ qualifications; VRQs such as Business and Education Council (BTEC) first diplomas; and extended work experience placements. Short courses in information and communication technology (ICT), religious education, and citizenship are often used to provide further flexibility in the timetable.

10. In many schools the curriculum now provides students with a richer experience, better matched to their interests and aptitudes.

The curriculum is planned very well to ensure that there is thorough coverage of the core subjects of the National Curriculum. ICT is available as an option and is also covered across all subjects. Students are offered the choice of five vocational subjects including childcare and education, engineering, and applied business. The curriculum is broadened further through extension studies for half a day a week. These include numeracy, cognitive acceleration through science education (CASE), and an 'improving writing' project. These extension studies are enhanced by a further range of enrichment activities including short, focused work placements related to their vocational courses, college vocational taster days, and 'booster clinics' where students are supported individually to achieve the best possible grade in their examinations.

11. The best curriculum provision is found in schools where the senior leadership team is committed to providing a curriculum which matches the needs of all students, as illustrated in the example below.

The school is fully committed to a flexible curriculum and is keen to expand the number of vocational options on offer at Key Stage 4. The headteacher feels that high quality vocational courses are a means of raising standards and providing an appropriate curriculum for students. The IFP is an integral component of the school's approach to curriculum planning and provides pathways to match the wide range of abilities and aptitudes of students in the school. The take-up of vocational options has increased each year and over a quarter of the current Year 10 students follow vocational courses at a nearby college of further education. Students are very clear about what they will do at the end of Year 11, which includes A levels, apprenticeships and employment with training.

12. In the less successful schools there is little understanding amongst senior managers about IFP. It is separate from the general options system and offered only to those students who are losing interest in school or those with low levels of attainment. In the worst schools students receive a narrow curriculum. For example, in some schools students undertake two days of work-related learning and three days of extended work experience with no qualifications being offered to them. In other schools vocational options are timetabled against modern foreign languages or design and technology, thus limiting students' choices. Some schools provide less time

for GCSE courses than is required to achieve the double award, and this results in teaching which lacks vocational application.

13. Colleges generally offer a good range of courses to IFP students, with three quarters leading to NVQ and VRQs during the second year of the programme. They are well placed to offer students experiences in settings which more closely resemble real working environments. Although a good range of NVQs is available at colleges the majority are offered at level 1 in order to meet the requirements of Section 96.¹ For some students these are not demanding enough to match their abilities. Colleges have responded by offering a wider range of VRQs at level 2 across a wide range of subjects, such as animal care, uniformed services and horticulture. In the best practice, college teachers provide supplementary qualifications, for example food hygiene qualifications alongside catering courses.
14. There has been little improvement in the quality of the provision offered by work-based training organisations. A fifth of provision is unsatisfactory and there is very little that is good. Satisfactory work-based providers offer students the opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in specialist areas, usually at NVQ level 1. In a minority of training organisations students study at entry level with a focus on key skills. In the good provision students gain relevant industrial experience and are provided with clear guidance about progression to apprenticeships.

Students are provided with a clear insight into the motor vehicle industry and their course provides realistic learning opportunities. These include customer service, working in the parts department, providing tyres and exhausts and also working on real design projects. Students study all Key Stage 4 statutory subjects back in school. The IFP course offers students the opportunity to learn the skills required for employment, including the interpersonal skills of working in a more adult environment. Employers speak highly of the skills the students gain as a result of the programme and readily accept them on apprenticeship programmes.

15. In those training organisations where practice is unsatisfactory there are no clear links between students' learning at school and that offered by the provider. Individual learning plans are not used in a sufficiently structured way to enable students to improve their work and skills, and opportunities for the development of key skills are often missed.
16. When IFP funding was first announced, partners that were already working together moved quickly to submit their proposals. Even in the limited time available they were able to make adjustments to existing

¹ Approved external qualifications for students under 16 under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

arrangements so as to start the programme in September 2002. Some partnerships reached agreement and synchronised parts of their timetables so they could provide students with a wider choice of qualifications, typically involving travel to different member schools and colleges for one or two half days a week. Those partnerships that were starting afresh often found it impossible to re-schedule timetables at short notice, so students encountered awkward or conflicting commitments in their timetables. The well-established partnerships, and most of those formed in the second year, planned timetables sufficiently far ahead to avoid such clashes.

17. Even though curriculum planning has improved since the first year of the programme it is still unsatisfactory in more than one in ten partnerships. Some partnerships are starting to use more innovative approaches to timetabling, moving away from attendance at college for whole or half days, and instead using specialist equipment at colleges for blocks of time. There are still instances where a lack of forethought in curriculum planning leads to students missing key aspects of their school work when they attend out-of-school courses. In a small number of partnerships insufficient time is allocated at the college, so courses are not completed. Transport arrangements, particularly in rural areas, are often difficult and can hinder partnership working.
18. Too few schools link students' work experience placements to their studies at school or college. Very few schools offer students opportunities to carry out work experience in a setting which relates to the vocational course they are taking. Most schools have yet to establish clear learning outcomes for work experience, or have adequate systems for monitoring students' progress or the quality of learning while on work experience. Students and employers generally receive very little preparation before the placement and links to the students' vocational courses are not clearly explained to them.
19. There has been an increase in the number of schools, to about one in ten, offering extended work experience placements, particularly for students who are less able or have become disengaged from learning. The most common pattern involves study for two days in school, one or two days at work placement and one day at a training organisation or college. In these circumstances most schools try to ensure that students study and gain some form of qualification in English, mathematics and science. In the worst cases students spend up to five days on work experience with a lack of structure or accreditation of their learning. Tracking of students' progress and communication between the school and employer are often weak. In the best practice, schools appoint a co-ordinator who takes responsibility for ensuring that extended placements are carefully planned and qualifications are achieved. Where training organisations are involved in arranging work placements, they are usually well managed and supervised. However, instructors often have limited knowledge of

students' individual abilities, learning needs and the curriculum they are studying at school.

20. Work experience placements are most effective when employers have adequate information about the students involved, as in the following example.

Students undertake a structured work placement for one day a week in high quality West End hair dressing salons. In addition they attend a training organisation for another day to gain the knowledge and skills for an NVQ Level 1 in hairdressing. Salon managers are all well briefed about the requirements of the NVQ and are kept informed of the aspects of learning that the students are covering at the training organisation each week. This enables employers to provide students with the opportunity to practise the skills they require for successful completion of their NVQ. Students are visited regularly by their trainers and are assessed in the work place.

Teaching and learning

Key findings

- ❑ Teaching on IFPs has improved in the second year of the programme but is still not as good as that seen in Key Stage 4 as a whole.
- ❑ There is still a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching on courses provided by training organisations.
- ❑ Teaching in colleges is better than in schools because of a stronger emphasis on vocational applications.
- ❑ The quality of learning on IFPs has improved in the last year in schools, colleges and training organisations.
- ❑ The availability and quality of learning support across IFPs is unsatisfactory in many partnerships.

Teaching

21. Teaching on IFPs has improved over the two years of the programme, with two thirds of lessons observed in colleges and nearly six out of ten lessons in schools being good or better in the second year.
22. In **schools** the number of lessons that are good or better has risen from just over half to nearly six out of ten, while the number of unsatisfactory lessons has fallen from one in six to about one in ten. Although the proportion of good teaching in schools has improved since the first year of the IFP, it is still below that found at Key Stage 4 in general. This is mainly because teachers are unfamiliar with GCSE vocational subject syllabus requirements, and they lack relevant industrial and commercial experience. Better preparation, training, and a more secure knowledge of the course specifications and assessment requirements has led to some improvement. In the best lessons teachers make imaginative use of links with local employers to bring vocational contexts to life. Teachers with good personal contacts with employers or, in a few instances, recent industrial or business experience themselves were the most successful in establishing links with business and industry.
23. The teaching in **colleges** improved slightly in the second year with almost two thirds of lessons being good or better. The strengths of the teaching in colleges are the emphasis on vocational applications and the good links with industry. Many teachers have first-hand experience of the vocational areas they teach and students have access to industry-standard resources. In the first year of the programme many college teachers were unaware of the learning requirements of younger students, but by the second year

of the programme they made changes to their lesson planning to better meet the needs of 14–16 year olds.

24. The best college lessons are well structured with short sections integrating theory and practical work. There is systematic teaching of specific technical skills with plenty of opportunity for students to practise skills and apply them in new situations. Teachers set high expectations for achievement and behaviour, and foster independent learning. Many students speak positively of the more adult atmosphere at college and the way they are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. However, the teaching in colleges still places insufficient emphasis on developing key skills, especially written and oral communication, and teachers often fail to capitalise on opportunities to apply these skills during vocational activities.
25. The quality of teaching provided by **work-based training organisations** is well below that observed in schools and colleges, with a fifth of lessons being unsatisfactory and only two fifths being good or better. Training organisations are well placed to provide students with opportunities to work in real vocational settings, especially in fields such as engineering, hairdressing, construction and catering. In the best practice, learning activities integrate theory with practice and many use real industrial activities or work with clients. Links with industry and commerce are strong and progression rates to apprenticeship programmes at 16 are good. Weak lessons lack pace and activities are often pitched at an inappropriate level for the students. As in the colleges, there is a lack of focus on the development of key skills.
26. Good teaching in all settings is characterised by the extensive subject knowledge of the teachers and the use of a stimulating range of teaching strategies. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives which closely match the course specification. Teachers are well aware of what they can expect of students and set them realistic but challenging targets. Practical lessons are well organised, often involving good professional practice in authentic work environments. Teachers make good use of demonstrations and practice to develop students' practical skills, and they provide supportive guidance to develop confidence and competence. There is a strong link between theory and practice, as in the following example.

In an applied art and design lesson, students worked on a real design brief through a link their teacher had developed with a local company. The brief required students to design a sculpture for a roundabout using photos of stimulus material supplied by the client. Students worked individually on their design ideas knowing that they would be submitted to the client for competitive selection. The group would then construct and install the chosen design. The work entailed resource costing; time management; health and safety considerations; and key skills of measurement, calculation, and communication alongside much

imaginative visual conceptualisation. The students were clearly committed to the process and proud that they had been entrusted with a project that would actually be realised and appreciated.

27. In the best planned programmes the vocational dimension is strengthened by contributions from outside speakers, work experience opportunities and involvement of local employers. Such collaboration, though time consuming to plan, has improved strongly over the two years and is frequently effective.

The IF partnership supports students in schools and colleges by building good working relationships with employers in the town. The partnership arranges a series of summer schools where employers representing a good range of sectors offer workshops, seminars, tutorials and some visits to premises to help students understand the business or industry. Students learn how the industry works, what skills and qualifications are needed and how links are made with course objectives. In addition, employers underline the importance of key skills. This event has proved very popular.

28. In the unsatisfactory lessons, teachers' expectations are too low and they often use only a narrow range of teaching strategies, so students find it difficult to sustain attention over the whole lesson. The pace is too slow and all students, irrespective of ability, are set undemanding, mechanical tasks with little sense of the standard expected. These lessons make little reference to the vocational dimension of the subject, and students are not taught to make connections between work experience or other learning about the sector. Too often the teachers themselves are unaware of what these links might be, and they fail to make connections between theory and practice.
29. In poor lessons teachers give insufficient attention to consolidation, checking students' knowledge and understanding and recapitulation of key points. This is often associated with lack of emphasis on note making by students, poor attention to literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, and poor teaching of basic research methods. These teachers often overlook opportunities to encourage those young people who find learning very difficult to read and write in contexts they value.

Learning

30. The quality of learning has improved steadily over the two years. In two thirds of lessons in colleges and half the lessons in schools and training organisations the quality of learning is now good or better. Improvements in learning reflect the slightly better teaching, combined with the better match of courses to the levels of attainment of the students. Despite the improvement there remain too many lessons where learning is weak.

31. In the better lessons students engage well, apply themselves to the subject and work with tenacity. As a result, they rapidly acquire new knowledge, conceptual understanding and relevant skills. Often they flourish in their vocational subject and quickly learn new vocabulary, professional practices associated with an industry, and the customs and ethos of that particular vocational area.
32. Students' social skills also develop well as they respond positively to the blend of responsibility and freedom that colleges and training organisations nurture. Study in these new settings provides students with the opportunity to be part of a learning community more diverse than their year group at school.
33. Teamwork amongst students has improved over the two years, and its relevance to business and industry is reflected in well-designed assignments, through which students develop an awareness of how individuals contribute to the work of the team. Students are encouraged to reflect on the challenges facing them when they work in pairs or small groups.

In one college, a number of engineering groups worked on different phases of the design and construction of a large Ferris wheel, modelled on the London Eye. Students moved from one production process to another and understood through experience that different components had to be produced in sequence. They learned well from each other and responded to the constantly changing demands of the multi-task activity. Their contribution to the success of the final outcome was a key motivator for them.

34. The availability and quality of learning support across IFPs is unsatisfactory overall. Colleges and training organisations find it difficult to provide timely and well-focused support to students from different schools. The best partnerships have agreements between schools, colleges and training organisations which enable information about students to be shared between the IFP partners; learning support is funded through the lead partner. However, too few colleges have the relevant information to make a rigorous assessment of individual learning needs. In some partnerships, funding constraints and a lack of clarity over responsibilities hinder the efficient use of resources available to provide support.
35. In the more effective partnerships' learning support assistants and learning mentors make a significant contribution to students' learning, as in the following example.

The application form includes a section to identify students' special educational needs; any additional demands for support are identified through discussion with the school, parents/carers and students. The

first stage of the individual learning plan focuses on support needs. Support in the college was comparable to that received in school and in some cases better. Learning support assistants work alongside teaching staff in all classes and other professionals are involved when appropriate. A comprehensive equality and diversity policy is successful in fostering and maintaining an inclusive approach. The needs of students who use English as an additional language are met through placements or links with the specialist teachers at the college.

36. Learning support assistants, mentors and technicians have been used more often and more effectively in the second year of the programme. Support assistants, in particular, often help students to learn at different rates by providing discrete support, especially with basic and key skills. Their role could be further extended and developed with professional training.
37. The best learning in **colleges** is enhanced by the professional working environment that encourages students to aspire to high vocational standards. They enjoy the challenge and relevance of courses that include projects with a strong vocational dimension and realistic elements of commercial practice, such as determining the cost of work and working to deadlines. Many students develop better social skills while improving their subject knowledge.

In a construction lesson students worked in small competitive groups to fit rainwater goods to a brick wall. While working against the clock they learned how to carry out technical tasks, meet safety requirements and produce a professional finish. They all started with the required materials and a job sheet, and had to compete for speed and quality of work with each other. The group that finished first were jubilant until their guttering was tested and found not to be pitched enough to drain the water. Another group whose work met the standard and who had also finished under the time limit was declared the winner. During this exercise students learned the value of teamwork. They were encouraged to put into practice the principles of assigning particular tasks to individuals, following precise instructions and solving any problems that cropped up, without intervention from the teacher.

38. The good learning in **schools** is often effective in helping students become more independent learners through practical tasks and working in pairs or small groups. Well-planned lessons, structured assignments, and targeted support by learning support assistants help students learn at an appropriate level.

In a childcare lesson, students responded confidently to questions relating to the care of babies and young children. Careful consideration was given to health and safety issues such as water temperature when bathing a baby. Students confidently demonstrated to the group and

provided commentary on the techniques they had employed. In the second part of the lesson they made good use of the class text book, and drew on their own recent work experience placement to good effect as they discussed the possible problems that might be encountered during this activity.

39. Good learning in **training organisations** is often the result of excellent specialist resources. In the best practice, students are inspired to learn because they have the opportunity to use the same equipment that is used by apprentices. They are motivated to learn from tutors who they see as representing the industry and who carry the authority and status of current practitioners.

A group of NVQ hairdressing students at a training organisation learned the skills of using perming irons and rollers. The skills were reinforced by expert teacher demonstration. There was a real improvement in the students' practical skills as the lesson progressed, and one student in particular who had no confidence at the start of the lesson showed great delight as she learned to roll and pin the hair properly. Students acquired social skills while developing their manual dexterity. They made good use of the well-resourced salon, and all aspects of the work had direct vocational relevance. Students' portfolios showed clear development from Year 10 to Year 11 with a growing confidence in the presentation of their work.

40. In the poorer practice in training organisations, although students learn new knowledge and practical vocational skills they find it hard to make good use of them as their general skills are undeveloped. Oral and written skills are often poor and impede progress on the course. In the weaker practice too many students have not learned to work maturely or in a team. In some weaker lessons students lack direction, fail to grasp the essentials and need support to help complete their portfolios.

Attainment and progress

Key findings

- ❑ Results from a small-scale survey showed that nearly four out of five students on IFPs passed their qualifications. Pass rates were best on entry level courses, GNVQ intermediate and NVQ level 1 in hair and beauty, catering, and sport and recreation courses.
 - ❑ Attainment and progress in lessons have improved during the second year of IFP but still remain lower than in Key Stage 4 generally.
 - ❑ Students' progress is inhibited where information about their prior attainment is not passed to partner organisations from schools.
41. One of the original IFP targets was that one third of students should gain a GCSE in a vocational subject and one third should achieve at least one NVQ at level 1 in addition to the qualifications they would have taken if they had not followed the IFP. Results from a survey of nearly 50 schools involved in the IFP show some encouraging results. Returns were received from half of those surveyed and included responses from over a thousand students. Four out of five students in the survey passed; one in six failed, withdrew or did not complete the course, while the remainder gained units towards a qualification.
 42. Pass rates of those surveyed varied between different types of course and levels. Nearly 90% passed on GNVQ courses and 70% passed on NVQ courses, but only 60% passed other vocational courses. At level 1 pass rates exceeded 80% in catering, sports and leisure, and hair and beauty but were only around 50% on engineering and motor vehicle courses. Less than a quarter of students passed ICT courses. Pass rates were better for level 2 courses than level 1, with 86% of students passing, 3% gaining units towards a qualification and 12% failing or not completing their courses. GNVQ intermediate accounted for 93% of level 2 courses with more than 40% of passes being in GNVQ ICT. In a sample of 62 students who took entry level qualifications 97% passed.
 43. Attainment and progress have improved as the IFP has developed but the proportion of work that is unsatisfactory still remains higher than in Key Stage 4 generally. In the second year of IFP these aspects were good or better in just under half the schools and colleges and in only one third of training organisations. They were unsatisfactory in around one tenth of schools and colleges and in a quarter of training organisations. The proportion of schools where attainment is unsatisfactory halved in the second year of the survey.
 44. Where attainment is satisfactory or better students develop independent learning skills, knowledge of the relevant vocational sector and work-

related skills. The most common consequences of unsatisfactory attainment are that students do not understand the course requirements, have little idea of how well they are doing and receive insufficient feedback on their progress. In these cases, students often fail to complete assignments and take little pride in their work. In a few cases, progress in developing practical skills is also unsatisfactory and industry standards are not promoted. Sometimes students acquire appropriate knowledge but are not able to apply what they know. Weaknesses identified in Ofsted's interim report on the IFP, such as poor or non-existent links with industry, failure to exploit prior learning and lack of attention to employability, though less frequent, still exist.

45. Students are developing key skills well in only around one third of the institutions visited. The development of skills such as team-working, problem-solving and improving personal learning is generally better than the acquisition of skills in communication and the application of numeracy. Even when opportunities are identified in teachers' lesson plans, they are not always followed through and there continues to be insufficient use of ICT in most provision. Very few providers award key skills qualifications.
46. During the first year of the programme schools rarely provided colleges and training organisations with information about students' attainment. This resulted in some students being placed on courses that were too demanding. Poor literacy skills, especially in writing, were the most frequent problems and, as a result of them, the students concerned had difficulty building up their portfolios. The profile of IFP students in the second year changed with substantially more higher-attaining students participating.
47. Over the two years the proportion of lessons in colleges where attainment is good or very good improved from around two fifths to above half, and instances of unsatisfactory attainment in lessons fell to below one in ten, from around one in seven. Colleges are usually very effective at developing students' ability to apply their skills in a vocational context and in helping students to become more employable. Factors contributing to this are: college staff with relevant employment experience; higher expectations of good quality practical work; and the good specialist accommodation found in colleges.
48. During the two years of the IFP the proportion of unsatisfactory attainment in schools has decreased from about three in ten lessons to one in eight. About two fifths of schools successfully develop students' skills of application and employability. However, there is still scope for improvement, particularly in the vocational elements of the courses.
49. Training organisations are often sub-contracted by partnerships to provide specific vocational training programmes. Overall, the attainment of students is good in around half the sessions but unsatisfactory in around

one in ten. Regular reviews are used to keep students informed about their progress and most have well-organised portfolios of work. Where attainment is low, it is usually because training organisation staff are not briefed about students' individual abilities or learning needs, and so their planning and training fail to build on earlier learning or students' current work back at school. Individual learning plans are often poor and there are weaknesses in the monitoring of students' progress and the teaching of key skills.

Attitudes, behaviour and attendance

Key findings

- ❑ The improvement of students' attitudes and behaviour is a strength of the IFP.
 - ❑ Good behaviour in lessons at college often leads to improvements in behaviour back at school.
 - ❑ Attendance rates on IFPs have declined over the two years, and are well below that of secondary schools as a whole.
50. The attitudes and behaviour of students on the IFP have improved significantly, and this is a strength of the programme. Attitudes and behaviour are good or better in nearly three fifths of visits and at least satisfactory in more than nine out of ten. Students speak positively of their experiences and value their growing confidence, self-esteem and developing vocational skills. The majority enjoy their courses and those who attend colleges or work-based providers value the adult learning environment.
51. In the best instances, students become more self-disciplined and responsible. They are well motivated and sustain good attendance. This is better where colleges have selected teachers because of their experience or pre-disposition to work with younger students, and where teachers are skilled at teaching 14-16 year olds. Social learning is often good. Students co-operate and interact well with peers from their own and other schools.

In one partnership, students taking a GCSE in applied business took part in computer-simulated activities and problem solving exercises. Students had to work together to evaluate the computer applications being used. There was a strong group spirit. Initially there was some rivalry between schools but this soon subsided as students learned to collaborate with their peers.

52. Strategies to deal with challenging behaviour are generally effective. Learning mentors make a strong contribution to supporting students' behaviour in many partnerships. Most students value their place at college and do not want to jeopardise it. Often their behaviour back at school is better as a result of their involvement in out-of-school learning.

The partnership introduced a behaviour contract, part of which required them to share information about students through regular reports which included comments about good behaviour and more formal reports every half term. Colleges faxed attendance records to schools as early in the day as possible so that school staff could follow up any absenteeism. All schools involved in this partnership commented on the improvement in

students' attendance and behaviour, which they attributed to students attending the IFP.

53. Attendance at out-of-school provision is well below that of secondary schools as a whole, and there has been a decline in attendance on IFPs at colleges and training organisations over the two years. Attendance in the first year of the IFP fell from 87% in the first term to 83% in the summer term. During the second year this fell further to around 75% overall.
54. There is a substantial variation between attendance depending on the provider, with 82% attendance at training organisations in year two and only 68% at colleges. This latter figure includes a few colleges where attendance is particularly low and also includes some absences where students were, for example, at school taking examinations, or on work experience. Schools do not always inform colleges and training organisations about such planned absences. Despite these mitigating circumstances, attendance at college courses is poor, and well below target.

Assessment

Key findings

- ❑ Although the quality of assessment and monitoring of students' progress has improved in the second year of IFP, it is still unsatisfactory in one in five schools and training organisations and one in three colleges.
 - ❑ Schools make good use of data and value-added systems usually monitor students' progress on GCSE programmes. However, these systems have not been extended to vocational courses.
55. The quality of assessment and monitoring of students' progress was a cause for concern throughout the first year of the IFP. Overall, across all forms of provision, almost a third of assessment practice was unsatisfactory. During the spring term of the first year, assessment was good or very good in only a quarter of the institutions and was unsatisfactory in another quarter. During the following term around half the inspections revealed weaknesses in assessment and monitoring likely to hinder students' attainment and progress. This improved slightly in the second year of the programme but is still unsatisfactory in one in every five schools and training organisations, and one in every three colleges.
56. During these first two years of the programme many teachers were uncertain about grading criteria and lacked confidence in predicting likely grades, and this is the root of much of the weak assessment. As a result, few students were clear about the standard of their work in relation to accreditation requirements and were not given enough information about their overall progress.
57. In examples of good practice, task sheets give students clear guidance on how to achieve good grades and complete their assignments competently. Teachers give helpful oral feedback on progress and when marking work they provide helpful, written comments to students to show them how to improve.
58. Most of the schools have systems for tracking students' progress on GCSE courses. In the first year of the programme there were clear gains in attainment on many of these courses, but processes for setting and monitoring individual learning targets were often inadequate. The use of target-setting is more common in the second year but remains ineffective in some cases because students perceive the process to be formulaic and insufficiently personalised. There is a lack of data linking Key Stage 3 attainment to performance in vocational courses. Few partnerships collect such information against which to measure students' progress.
59. Monitoring of programmes and students' progress has been uneven throughout the survey period. In most partnerships students' progress on

courses provided by colleges and training organisations is not effectively linked to established school or partnership monitoring systems.

Careers advice and guidance in Key Stage 3

Key findings

- ❑ The quality of information, advice and guidance offered to students aged 11–14 has improved over the two years of the IFP but is still unsatisfactory in one in five providers and is particularly poor amongst training organisations.
 - ❑ Information about options has been provided to students at an earlier stage of the Year 9 options process in the second year of the programme.
 - ❑ There is a better match in the second year of the programme between the prior attainment of students and the courses undertaken through the IFP.
 - ❑ The IFP has made little impression on the choice of courses typically made by either sex.
60. The quality of information, advice and guidance, and recruitment procedures have improved gradually over the two years of the IFP but are still unsatisfactory in around one in five providers. This improvement has been greatest in schools, where the proportion of good provision has increased from a third to almost a half. As a result, many Year 9 students are better informed when they come to choose the courses they wish to study in Years 10 and 11. The careers education and guidance national framework 11–19 is beginning to be used to review and develop careers programmes. In the best practice, careers education and guidance are closely aligned with personal development and empowerment, preparing students' self-awareness, self-confidence and skills for the choices that lie ahead.

Careers education at the school forms part of a programme aimed at developing the whole person, through personal, social and health education. In Years 8 and 9 it concentrates on developing self-awareness, critical thinking and decision making skills. Awareness of the world of work is raised through games which introduce students to business practices, and by invited speakers who tell students about key features of their work. The students are then given opportunities to research further the work done by these people and build up a picture of a range of different job opportunities.

61. Better practice concentrates on developing students' confidence, awareness and skills. Careers education and guidance lessons often include small group tasks, events, and outside speakers, and learning is supplemented by opportunities for students to research out of class. Students therefore need ready access to resources, libraries, ICT equipment, and up to date information from notice boards.

62. Advice and guidance are adequate in most of the partnerships that have protocols between schools, colleges and training organisations for informing students about courses and recruitment procedures. In the second year of the programme options were agreed much earlier in the spring term so they could be incorporated into schools' Year 9 options arrangements. There have also been more vocational 'taster' activities, familiarisation days and parents' evenings at colleges and training organisations before students start IFPs.
63. Guidance given in Year 9 about education, training and employment opportunities after the age of 16 is generally good. This enables a better match between the courses students choose and their aspirations, motivations and prior attainment.
64. In the best practice students choose from a wide range of vocational courses offered to all as part of their Year 10 and 11 options. Information and guidance materials provided to students and parents are clearly written and visually attractive. The best guidance also includes detailed information on the range of opportunities open to students that successfully complete vocational programmes. Some bear the logos of all the partner organisations, which gives a sense of coherence about learning opportunities available in their locality.
65. Where providers are reaching capacity, mainly in vocational areas such as hairdressing, construction and motor vehicle studies, many are introducing selection criteria. Students complete an application form and attend an interview. They are usually assessed on their interest in the vocational area, preferred learning style, and attendance and behaviour at school. Students feel these criteria are fair and gain in confidence if they are chosen for the course of their choice.
66. The following case study provides an example of good practice relating to advice and guidance associated with the IFP.

A variety of vocational opportunities are now in place at Key Stage 4, and the school takes great pains to ensure that individual students join programmes best suited to their interests and abilities. Information about courses is well presented to all students in an options booklet, which is issued after an options evening for students and their parents in March. The college makes a presentation at the options evening, and parents have a chance to find out more about the implications for their children of taking a college course. Careers education lessons enable students to make informed choices. Senior managers and the head of year interview all students and provide effective one-to-one guidance about courses. The options booklet gives clear explanations of what is involved in college courses and their suitability for students of a wide range of ability. All students, including higher-attainers, are free to choose vocational courses. There are more applicants than places, and

the partnership uses a well thought out application form and interview process to ensure courses match the needs and aspirations of individual students.

67. In the less satisfactory practice, students are often unclear about the differences between GCSEs in vocational subjects and NVQs/VRQs. Students are sometimes provided with information that is inaccurate or lacks details about what the course entails. In these cases, once students start the course they often become dissatisfied because it does not meet their expectations. For example, students in one partnership were offered a general construction course which they understood would cover a range of construction techniques, only to find their practical work was confined to bricklaying.
68. Placing students on the level of course to match their abilities has improved over the two years. In the first year there were some schools that restricted IFPs to low-attaining pupils or those at risk of becoming disengaged from learning. The analysis of prior attainment of nearly 6,000 students on IFPs in the second year of the programme, shows a better match between the type and level of course undertaken, and the needs and abilities of the students. One in four students is taking a NVQ and most are working at level 1. Many students taking NVQs have attained level 4 or below in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3, which reflects a suitable match to the level 1 course. The majority of students taking GCSEs in vocational subjects, as part of the IFP, have attained levels 4 and 5 in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. A few have attained level 6 in English and mathematics but very few have achieved level 6 in science. Very few students with level 6 or above take GCSEs in vocational subjects.
69. IFPs have done little to increase the range of choices made by girls and boys in vocational fields. Boys slightly outnumbered girls: 56% of the students in 2003/04 were male. In the lessons observed, two thirds of all girls were following just three subjects: hair and beauty, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. In motor vehicle, engineering, welding and construction courses, 19 out of 20 students were boys.
70. Among IFP participants, white students were slightly over-represented compared with all students in Year 10 in 2003/04. A slightly higher proportion of IFP students received free schools meals than the national average.

Transition to post-16 opportunities

Key findings

- ❑ Participation in IFPs provides students with useful experience in relation to future education and training opportunities, but careers education and guidance for those involved in the programmes has not improved. In two fifths of the schools, careers education and guidance are good; in one fifth they are unsatisfactory.
 - ❑ Very few partnerships offer students a clear, simple guide to all the available post-16 opportunities, including work-based training and apprenticeships, available in the area. Some students find it hard to negotiate the maze of options.
 - ❑ The range of courses at levels 1 and 2, particularly in school sixth forms, is limited for the most vulnerable students.
 - ❑ Almost 90% of students were still in full-time education or training the term after completing their IFP. This is above the national figure and well above the target set for the IFP.
 - ❑ The transfer of information between schools and different post-16 institutions is poor and leads to delays in support being available to students.
 - ❑ Post-16 institutions have given insufficient attention to the accreditation of prior attainment, particularly for those IFP students who have gathered evidence towards a NVQ level 2 qualification.
71. Students are better informed about the education, training and employment opportunities open to them at the age of 16 as a result of their participation in IFPs. However, this is often because of their experiences rather than improvements in established careers education programmes, which have altered little. Although careers education and guidance were good or better in more than two fifths of schools, there were very few instances of schools, colleges and training organisations jointly planning and delivering careers education and guidance, and little involvement of employers. Careers education and guidance were unsatisfactory in nearly a fifth of schools.
72. Some colleges expressed the view that careers education is solely a school responsibility. Colleges have their own links with the Connexions service and there is little evidence of Connexions resources being allocated to institutions across IF partnerships. Just occasionally the same personal adviser supports IF partnership schools and the college.

73. In the better practice schools work closely with employers whose contributions to careers education are varied and often distinctive, bringing immediacy and relevance to students' perceptions. Although training organisations are rarely involved in formal careers education and guidance programmes, their staff provide students with industrial experience, and increased awareness of employment opportunities and the expectations of employers. There are a few pockets of good collaboration.

The IFP college co-ordinator has responsibility for the careers education and guidance of Year 11 students. Workshop sessions are organised with Connexions personal advisers followed by support sessions in schools, in part because few Year 11 students have one-to-one careers guidance interviews in their schools. A representative from Trident attends partnership steering group meetings and aims to match work experience placements to IFP vocational courses. The level of support at the college is unusually high. Three staff are trained in careers education and guidance to Level 4, and have worked in schools as well as colleges. The partnership is discussing plans for a longer day to allow students time for tutorial support. This will include a structured programme for 14–16 year olds which will include help on making independent informed choices, time management and careers research.

In another partnership, each Year 10 and 11 tutor group in one school has an industrial mentor who stays with the group for two years. They come into school twice a term and help with option choices, skills development (for example writing a curriculum vitae, interview skills, application forms), and careers discussions. Year 10 students can apply to join a manufacturing programme which includes a cross-section of students with a balance in terms of gender and ability. These students visit five different companies to find out what would be required of them if they were to work there. They prepare in advance to talk to trainees at the companies about careers, qualifications, and the general and social aspects of working life.

In a third partnership the interests of well motivated students in manufacturing and engineering are effectively sustained through a programme of industry visits organised by the training agency. Work-based initiatives on industry 'taster' days have been established, providing further strong links with IFP courses. These visits and taster days help students put their training into the context of the workplace.

74. Most colleges offer 15- and 16-year-old students, and sometimes their parents or carers, taster sessions and information events to help them make better informed decisions about courses available once they have finished the IFP. College publicity literature is usually informative and attractive, although details about additional costs and equipment required for some courses are not always included.

75. In schools where practice is weaker there is no clear strategy for ensuring all students receive the information and advice they need to make effective decisions about future careers. Time for careers education and guidance is often limited or programmes begin too late. Although support from the Connexions service for students most in need is generally good, advice and guidance for the majority of students is often limited. In these schools students are not always told what support is available, and so they frequently make decisions not knowing there are careers advisers and materials available to help them. Too few careers teachers in schools have a sound understanding of post-16 vocational and training opportunities. The use of Progress Files as a framework for personal development is rare, and there are few links between work experience and careers guidance.
76. The variety of choices open to students at age 16 is often bewildering to them. Too few partnerships plan jointly to ensure they offer students a clear, coherent range of opportunities that build on their IFP experiences and qualifications when they reach 16. In some partnerships there is lingering competition between institutions and duplication of provision. There are frequently too few level 1 and 2 courses in school sixth forms, and opportunities for students with additional or special educational needs are often limited. It is hardly surprising that, for some students, it is hard to find suitable courses, the maze of routes is confusing and they find it easier to opt out of any further education or training.
77. Over 200 Connexions advisers gave their views on the opportunities open to students at the end of Key Stage 4. More than four out of five thought there was insufficient post-16 provision below A level, and over half felt that opportunities in their area did not match the interests, abilities and needs of 16 year olds. They were particularly concerned about vulnerable groups of young people, especially those with learning difficulties. They also felt that there was a shortage of apprenticeships, particularly in construction and motor vehicle, and there were too few incentives for small and medium sized employers to participate in apprenticeship schemes.
78. Once students have decided on the courses they wish to follow post-16, they are usually invited to attend an induction programme at the school or college of their choice. Increasingly, institutions offer an introductory induction session towards the end Year 11, and an in-depth induction at the start of the new course. Few partnerships engage the support of employers in the planning and delivery of these events.

In one example of good practice, the school produces very thorough and up to date learning needs information and student profiles. These are sent with students, to colleges, at the point of application and interview. Individual education plans, statements of learning need, examination

dispensations, and other relevant information are made available to colleges and post-16 providers. The school's learning support unit identifies students who might be at risk of early withdrawal, and discusses such students, at an early stage, with relevant college staff.

In another good example, the college has worked hard to develop the concept of 14–19 education. The brochure reflects this concept so that Key Stage 4 courses within the IFP framework highlight post-16 progression opportunities. Post-16 providers are encouraged to be present at Year 9 options events, including those representing work-based learning. The criteria for acceptance on to post-16 courses have been adapted to take account of the full range of Key Stage 4 qualifications.

79. Transition to education and training post-16 does not always go smoothly. Students sometimes miss induction events because they clash with other events, such as examinations, or they do not learn about them until too late. In rural areas, lack of access to transport and the distance and cost of travel deter students from continuing their studies. In one partnership the cost of a 20 mile journey to college restricted take-up of courses for a number of learners. Around a third of Connexions advisers felt that there was a need for enhanced support and monitoring for vulnerable young people. In too many cases advisers had insufficient information to intervene effectively and felt agencies should co-operate more closely.
80. The transfer of information between schools and colleges on student attainment is often unsatisfactory. Most college application forms require comments from school tutors on progress and attainment, but these are often incomplete. Information about students who might need support is sometimes omitted, occasionally with the laudable, but misguided, intention of giving the young person the opportunity of a fresh start at college. Partnerships have yet to give sufficient thought to the accreditation of prior attainment on IFPs, for example evidence gathered towards NVQ level 2 qualifications, and work experience.
81. All the schools and colleges visited allow young people to transfer to another course if they are dissatisfied with their selection. Connexions advisers felt that, in most colleges, such arrangements were good except when courses were over-subscribed. In the better institutions students were interviewed by tutors who checked that the move had parental support before any changes were made. In one particular good example, a college ensured that Connexions advisers were available early in the autumn term to give students advice about changing courses to reduce the drop-out rate.
82. Of more than 2,000 students from 32 partnerships who completed a questionnaire during the last term of their IFP, 91% intended continuing their education or training beyond the age of 16. This exceeds the target

of 75% and is well above the national average. The information and guidance they found particularly helpful were the promotional materials and familiarisation events at local colleges, their careers education and guidance lessons and their experiences of college courses. Least useful were their work experience placements and discussions with family and friends.

83. A term later, in autumn 2004, over 1,000 young people who had taken an IFP and had since left school, completed a questionnaire about the choices they had made at 16. At this stage the majority felt that their families had helped most in making changes to their plans. Friends and connexions advisers were also considered to be helpful. Over 90% of the girls were in education or training with nearly 40% attending further education colleges. Of the boys, 88% stayed in full-time education or training, 6% more than had intended to in the summer term.

Resources and accommodation

Key findings

- ❑ Resources and accommodation are satisfactory for vocational subjects in schools and are good in colleges and training organisations.
 - ❑ Schools usually rely on colleges or training organisations to provide specialist resources which reflect the appropriate industrial environment.
 - ❑ The provision of ICT in schools is good but the use of it to promote vocational studies through on-line learning, particularly in rural areas, is still very limited.
84. Overall, resources and accommodation are satisfactory for vocational subjects in schools, and are improving. More than a third now have good or better resources compared to less than a fifth in the first year of IFP. Only one in ten schools has unsatisfactory resources. There are significant differences between schools, and often between subjects within a school. Resources and accommodation are very good in two thirds of colleges and are rarely less than satisfactory; they are also good in training organisations.
85. Schools generally rely on partner colleges to provide adequate and suitable accommodation for specialist subjects such as horticulture, construction, motor vehicle and hairdressing. However, a number have worked hard to adapt classrooms to reflect the vocational essence of the courses, mainly while preparing for and implementing GCSEs in vocational subjects and GNVQ.

The school has made good use of its limited site and buildings to adapt resources to fit the vocational needs of some GNVQ courses. For example, a large classroom has been adapted for use by construction students, with space for bricklaying and building activities as well as a classroom area for theory work. There is a building technician on hand to support students and teachers. Similarly, there is a large food technology kitchen and food preparation area, which is used for teaching the hospitality and catering GNVQ.

86. A minority of schools, mainly in rural communities where travel is difficult, have improved existing accommodation to match effectively the needs of vocational courses, and enable them to be run on site. For example, several have converted accommodation to suit hairdressing courses so students have a genuine vocational experience which includes the opportunity to develop their skills in working with customers. Several schools have received financial contributions from local businesses to support such developments, and some specialist schools have built new or refurbished vocational accommodation which is often very good.

87. In almost a third of courses in schools accommodation lacks subject identity, and the worst is bereft of displays to lend vocational relevance to the room. Accommodation, especially for ICT courses, is sometimes too cramped and poorly ventilated. Provision of ICT resources is generally good but in a minority of schools it is still inadequate, so some vocational courses lack authenticity.
88. Other resources in schools are generally adequate but senior managers often underestimate the need for specialist facilities to support vocational courses. As few schools have adequate, appropriate and up to date equipment and machinery for specialist subjects such as engineering, construction and motor vehicle studies, most rely on colleges and training organisations to provide such courses. Some partnerships share provision for particular aspects of a course, rather than the whole. For example, one centre of vocational excellence shares high quality computer graphics facilities and technical support with several partner schools that offer applied art and design GCSE. The time for each element is modest, but the gains recorded in attainment and the broader range of work justify the planning and additional costs.
89. Resources for most college courses are good, particularly those relating to horticulture, agriculture, animal care, construction, catering and hairdressing. Joint planning by school and college staff ensures students have access to authentic resources and realistic experiences such as dealing with clients and meeting commercial and industrial visitors. In the best colleges IFP students have access to other resources, such as digital cameras, so they can record key features as they progress and include relevant photographs in their portfolios. The more effective provision ensures students have access to relevant work-related experience, a strength of work-based training organisations.

Courses are taught in purpose-built college accommodation which is very well resourced. Spacious and modern, it has equipment that enables students to learn the latest aspects of the skills-based programmes. The motor vehicle workshop has several types of ramp, a wide variety of vehicles and an area where students learn how to carry out test procedures. The construction area is light and airy, and well resourced, providing a wide range of tools and equipment for construction and allied skills. Health and safety requirements are adhered to closely and risk assessments, particularly relating to 14–16 year olds, have been carried out diligently. Good technical support is provided by technicians with specialist skills and knowledge in each vocational area.

90. Most vocational courses, in schools and colleges have good technical support. In the best examples, workshop, studio and laboratory technicians provide effective support to teachers and students. Many have useful industrial experience and bring extra relevance to the students'

learning. Attention to health and safety is satisfactory overall, and particularly thorough in colleges, although there are occasional gaps in risk assessments relating specifically to 14–16 year olds.

Organisation and management of partnerships

Key findings

- ❑ The leadership and management of IFP partnerships have improved significantly during the second year of the programme.
 - ❑ In larger partnerships there is often a strong sense of common purpose and a belief that future collaboration is sustainable. By contrast, smaller partnerships sometimes feel their involvement is dependent on additional funding.
 - ❑ Operational planning is good and has improved since the beginning of the programme.
 - ❑ Communication between institutions is sometimes unsatisfactory, particularly the exchange of information relating to students' prior achievements.
 - ❑ Staff development is still patchy in relation to the preparation of college staff to teach 14–16 year olds and in vocational applications for school teachers.
 - ❑ Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation of courses remain weak.
 - ❑ Costs vary greatly between subjects and between partnerships.
91. The leadership and management of partnerships have improved significantly over the two years of the survey and are good or better in around half the partnerships. They are still unsatisfactory in about a tenth, compared with one fifth in the first year. Partnership structures are generally fit for purpose and in some cases have strengthened in the second year. In the best partnerships a shared strategic plan has led to the provision of a wide choice of vocational courses available to all 14–16 students through partner institutions.
92. Most steering groups include representatives of all key stakeholders. In a few partnerships there are very good links between the IFP steering group and the local 14–19 strategy.

In one large urban partnership development has been initiated and co-ordinated by the LEA post-16 manager, who has also been responsible for drafting suitable protocols to ensure that the partnership operates smoothly. As a result of this lead all institutions feel fairly represented. In addition, partnership development has a clear place within the LEA 14–19 strategic plan.

93. Strategic planning of 14–16 provision was sometimes well established before the IFP. A minority of partnerships have clear strategic plans developed in response to community rather than particular institutional needs. Few of these plans are aligned with Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSC) and LEA development plans. Even in the better partnerships targets are frequently vague, and progress towards them is not easily measured. Strategic plans depend too often on the extent to which IFP will attract future funding rather than planning for long-term sustainability. Communication is generally good at a strategic level; however, a few schools are not fully involved.
94. The quality of leadership at senior level varies. In the best partnerships, senior leaders in schools, colleges and training organisations set clear and imaginative direction for the programme, often with a strong focus on inclusion, and have clear plans and precise monitoring of progress towards them. Partnerships sometimes rely too heavily for organisational work on the efforts of a small number of staff, or one individual, with insufficient resources to effectively manage a diverse programme. Whilst a very few post-16 providers have taken a strategic decision not to become involved in collaborative 14–16 ventures, in most colleges strategic planning of this provision is well-developed and given high priority.
95. Operational planning is generally good, having improved markedly over the two years. Many schools have adopted flexible and sometimes complex changes to maximise choices for students. Course-level planning is satisfactory overall. Good course leadership is characterised by enthusiastic and able teachers and co-ordinators with sufficient time to carry out their roles, adequate resources and effective support from line managers. In the best partnerships IFP timetables are well co-ordinated so in the second year students' timetables contained few conflicting commitments. Training organisations generally make a limited contribution to planning. Strategies to engage employers and develop new industry links remain undeveloped in most partnerships.
96. Communication between partners needs to be further improved. The transfer of information such as students' attendance details and transport arrangements, is usually effective. Too often however, this depends on goodwill and informal contact between individuals rather than established procedures. Reports about students' progress from colleges to schools often lack detail and associated systems are often not well developed. Communication of prior attainment data and details of learning support needs between schools and colleges continues to be inadequate. In the second year a few partnerships are beginning to tackle institutions that do not adhere to communication procedures.
97. Monitoring at course level continues to be weak. Few partnerships have identified who should hold responsibility for assuring the quality of teaching and learning. Procedures remain under-developed and fail to

review the quality of provision between institutions. In most partnerships, quality assurance systems used for the IFP are extensions of existing systems. In colleges most courses are evaluated using systems derived from the Common Inspection Framework for post-16 students; lesson observations are often based on criteria for teaching adults, not 14–16 year olds. Schools rarely have systems to check the quality of provision afforded their students when at college. In a few instances, teachers receive feedback from peers who observe teaching across institutions.

98. The quality and extent of staff development vary. In some partnerships it has been extensive and directly relevant to the needs of college and school staff. In colleges the focus has been on developing the skills needed to teach 14–16 year olds and in schools on updating teachers' industrial skills, knowledge and experience. Partnerships are gradually establishing practitioner groups to enable teachers to share good practice. In the best partnerships college staff with expertise in vocational subjects teach in schools or provide professional support to teachers new to vocational courses. However, such close co-operation is rare. In the second year of the programme there are still college and training organisation staff who have not received training to teach 14–16 year olds, on child protection or the more general duty of care for this age group. At the same time, the rate at which school teachers are undertaking industry placements or similar vocational professional updating lags behind the introduction of GCSEs in vocational subjects. In most instances there are limited opportunities for good practice to be shared across the partnership or within organisations.
99. The weaker partnerships continue to have ineffective steering groups which operate without clear terms of reference, meet infrequently, and demonstrate little foresight in strategic planning. In some partnerships the involvement of key stakeholders, such as the LEA and the LLSC, is limited. This is attributed to a lack of commitment by some schools, disagreements about provision and funding, and frustrations with decision-making processes. A number of weaker partnerships lack appropriate procedures and are slow to resolve operational problems, causing dissatisfaction amongst teaching staff. In a few cases senior managers in partner schools know little of the IFP.
100. Overall, the development of a sense of community and sustainable partnership is uneven. The large, diverse and well-established partnerships tend to have well-developed strategic and operational plans, good monitoring procedures, effective business planning and a strong sense of community.

This large urban partnership was established four years before IFP. It has a clear strategy and sense of community. Partner schools and the college share an energetic approach, and the partnership actively encourages participation by many groups of young people who would

otherwise lack opportunities for vocational training. The steering group is well-attended and meetings are purposeful. Progress against strategic and community objectives is carefully monitored.

101. Most partnerships regard the IFPs as sustainable in the medium term. Larger partnerships often benefit from several funding sources and a commitment from both the LEA and LLSC, making them less vulnerable to changes. Virtually none see partnership as sustainable without at least some continuing additional funding. Many smaller partnerships regard their continued existence as entirely dependent on additional funding.
102. A very small number of schools have either withdrawn, or intend to withdraw, from partnerships and college provision. Reasons for this include the transfer of students to more competitive providers, dissatisfaction with the quality of provision and timetabling difficulties. In a very small number of instances, students report being actively discouraged from going to college.
103. In a significant number of partnerships, schools are using the opportunities of joint course development and teaching to develop their own vocational provision. In due course these may retain their own students, more often for GCSEs in vocational subjects than for NVQ/VRQ courses.
104. There are great variations in the costs of IFP courses. Most college-based courses cost £600 to £800 per place for one day a week. To this must be added the expense of co-ordination and publicity; transport, including travel to work experience; and for summer schools, residential events and study visits to business and industry. In some instances additional resources are allied to the IFP grants and provide economies. Within schools, where most IFPs are based on GCSE vocational subjects, money usually comes from schools' budgets.
105. Costs are high for other reasons. For example, group sizes are often small and disciplines such as engineering require access to modern equipment and support from skilled technicians. Students often need new text books and protective clothing. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the cost per pupil for one day a week for the year can be as high as £900.
106. The level of take-up by students suggests that additional resources are being used besides the IFP funding. Partnerships are using resources from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), Excellence in Cities and LLSC, local initiative funds, as well as school and college resources.
107. In some partnerships colleges have made no charge to schools for the courses that they receive through the IFP. These colleges are now planning to introduce fees to schools to enable the partnerships to be sustained once IFP funding is withdrawn. The most effective partnerships

have introduced sliding scales of fees which increase over two or three years to enable schools to adjust their budgets.

Annex A. Background to the programme

The IFP was established following the White Paper, *Schools: Achieving Success* (July 2001).

It funds the formation of partnerships between colleges of further education, schools and work-based learning providers. These partnerships seek to enhance vocational and work-related learning opportunities for 14–16 year olds, including provision of courses leading to GCSE awards in vocational subjects.

The aims of the IFP are to:

- raise the attainment in national qualifications of participating students
- increase their skills and knowledge
- improve social learning and development
- increase retention in education and training after the age of 16.

Partnerships have the following targets:

- one third of the young people involved in the project to gain at least one GCSE in a vocational subject at Level 2 (over and above their predicted GCSEs)
- one third to gain at least one National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 1
- three quarters of the young people involved to progress into further education or training
- attendance rates of the young people involved to match the average for the Key Stage 4 cohort.

Each partnership is expected to form a steering group to decide on the strategy. Such a group should be made up of senior representatives of the participating schools, colleges, training organisations and other agents, with Local Learning Partnerships, Connexions Service and Education/Business Links consortia invited to join in an advisory capacity. The partnership is required to nominate an individual or individuals to take responsibility for the planning, organisation and day-to-day operation of the student placements in colleges, which would be part of the programme.

Schools continue to have overall responsibility for registered students participating in the provision and need to satisfy themselves that the curriculum offered to their students meets the statutory requirements.

Funding of up to £100,000 per partnership was available from 2002, with its allocation decided locally among partners. This amount covers the costs of part-time vocational placements with further education colleges and training organisations, meeting the cost of students' travel between schools and colleges or work placements, equipment costs and learning materials, and funding for specialist courses such as those introduced to emphasise work-related learning.

More than 260 IFP partnerships were formed in the first year, involving around three quarters of all colleges of further education, almost half of all secondary schools and a small proportion of work-based learning providers. During the second year the number rose to above 280. A few schools left partnerships, while others joined, resulting in an overall increase. Almost all the partnerships were led by colleges of further education, apart from two that were led by universities and one by an education/business partnership.

Annex B. The survey

Ofsted conducted a two-year survey at the request of the DfES, publishing an interim report in May 2004.² This report focuses on progress in the second year of the programme. It evaluates the impact on the curriculum, attainment, progress, learning and social development of students on IFP courses. In addition, the survey has evaluated aspects of work-related learning, work experience, careers education and guidance and, in the autumn of 2004, the experiences of young people during their transition to their first post-16 destination.

From summer 2002 to summer 2004 HMI visited more than 100 colleges, over 200 schools and about 20 training organisations. They interviewed more than 1,500 students, their teachers and trainers, careers education staff, senior managers of schools, colleges and training organisations. They scrutinised written and practical work and held discussions with students about their progress, assessment, expectations and ambitions for the future. Over 350 lessons were observed in schools, predominantly in courses for GCSE in vocational subjects. Around 300 lesson observations in colleges spanned GCSEs in vocational subjects such as health and social care, leisure and tourism, engineering, electronics, law, and applied art and design, and a wide range of VRQs and NVQs in areas such as business administration, conservation, hairdressing, construction and retail administration. The inspection of training organisations focused on work-related qualifications, including NVQs.

Additional evidence was gathered from Section 10 inspections of secondary schools. More than 400 inspection reports were trawled for evidence about the formation of IF partnerships and developments in the Key Stage 4 curriculum.

A separate report about work experience was published in 2004.³

A key aim of the IFP is to encourage young people to continue in education and training after the age of 16; HMI gathered evidence about their future by interviewing young people, their teachers and careers advisers. Ofsted also conducted a postal survey of more than 10,000 young people during the autumn after they reached the end of compulsory schooling. Evaluation was also obtained from just over 200 personal advisers in ten Connexions partnerships working to support young people during transition from school to post-16.

² *Increased Flexibility Programme at Key Stage 4: evaluation of the first year* (HMI 2074), Ofsted, 2004.

³ *Increased Flexibility Programme: improving work experience* (HMI 2220), Ofsted, 2004.

Annex C. Further information

Ofsted

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Increased Flexibility Programme at Key Stage 4: Evaluation of the first year (HMI 2074), Ofsted, May 2004

Increased Flexibility Programme: improving work experience (HMI 2220), Ofsted, May 2004

Developing new vocational pathways: Final report on the introduction of new GCSEs (HMI 2051), Ofsted, July 2004

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

www.qca.org.uk

National Foundation for Educational Research

www.nfer.ac.uk

Learning and Skills Council

Increased flexibility case studies: Improving Practice

www.lsc.gov.uk

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/ImprovingQuality/GuidanceandGoodPractice/flexstudiespracticemar04.htm>

DfES

www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications

www.14-19reform.gov.uk

Association of Colleges

www.aoc.co.uk

Learning and Skills Development Agency

www.llda.org.uk

www.vocationallearning.org.uk