



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for  
Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Follow-up Inspection**

#### **Following an Inspection of the Further Education and Work-Based Learning provision in Belfast Metropolitan College**

**January 2015**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF BELFAST METROPOLITAN COLLEGE**

The original inspection in April 2013 highlighted strengths in the College's provision, including the effective strategic planning of the curriculum, the well-implemented strategy for economic engagement, the strong provision in the community, the effective care, guidance and support for learners and the quality of the accommodation and specialist resources.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to improve the quality of teaching and learning in 27% of the observed lessons;
- to strengthen quality management across the College, particularly the effective use of data and rigorous self-evaluation, along with more timely intervention strategies to address underperformance;
- to address the satisfactory quality of the provision in work-based learning;
- to clarify more explicitly the roles of the curriculum managers in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision;
- to improve the inadequate quality of the provision in transport operations and maintenance;
- to address areas of underachievement in work-based learning; and
- to strengthen the quality of leadership and management of the work-based learning provision, in particular the monitoring and tracking of the progress of trainees and apprentices, and the self-evaluation procedures including the work of sub-contracted training suppliers.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- the implementation of a wide range of interrelated strategic initiatives to improve the quality of the provision in the College, including leadership and management, the quality of teaching and learning, the use of management information and key business planning processes;
- the procurement and ongoing development of a management information system to provide 'real time' data on the progress of learners and their achievements, and to inform curriculum planning;
- participation by 37 managers on a bespoke Institute of Leadership and Management level 7 certificate/diploma course;
- the effective use of an interdisciplinary project management based approach to improve the performance of the College;
- the further strengthening of the performance review process through the introduction of monthly reviews across the College to enhance quality improvement planning;
- the review of the College's work-based learning provision and its realignment to the Directorate of Development and Corporate Services;

- the planned implementation of the use of electronic portfolios of evidence in work-based learning;
- the implementation of an extensive lesson observation process as part of the College appraisal system;
- the introduction of a tracking system to monitor the progress of trainees and apprentices in all elements of their training frameworks;
- arrangements to increase the proportion of trainees on the Training for Success programme with a work placement;
- the introduction of regular progress reviews by staff from the training department with the six academic schools that provide work-based training programmes; and
- a significant reduction in the scale of the work-based learning provision that is sub-contracted to other training suppliers.

The improvement plan produced by the College in response to the inspection findings was evaluated by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) as being good. The ETI carried out two interim follow-up inspection visits in October 2013 and March 2014, and a follow-up inspection in January 2015.

The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection:

- the more systematic and strategic approaches to quality improvement following the effective implementation of the key strategic initiatives across the College;
- the quality of leadership and management across the College, which is now good, particularly the strong collegial working, improved communications and enhanced performance management;
- the good or better progress made in all of the professional and technical areas involved in the follow-up inspection process;
- the improved quality of teaching, training and learning, with 87% of the observed lessons being good or better;
- the more effective use of management information to help identify and support those learners at risk of not meeting their full potential, which has led to a noticeable improvement in attendance rates in lessons and directed training sessions;
- the stronger role of curricular managers at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision across the College;
- the overall quality of the provision in work-based learning;
- the enhanced role of the training support officers in supporting trainees and apprentices in their work;
- the introduction of more effective systems to monitor the quality of the provision that is sub-contracted to other training suppliers in work-based learning; and

- the higher achievement rates (69%) on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the Training for Success programme.

The areas which require further improvement are:

- to further develop the capacity of course teams to undertake rigorous self-evaluation and to plan more effectively for improvement;
- to continue the significant investment in sustained improvement; and
- to further refine the use of management information in work-based learning to enhance the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes.

### **Conclusion**

In work-based learning, the overall quality of the education and training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now good. In addition, the quality of leadership and management at all levels in the College is also good. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION REPORTS**

### **ADVANCED (A) LEVEL: GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION PROVISION**

The original inspection highlighted strengths in the provision, including the varied A-level curriculum, the work of the head of school and curriculum area manager, the good or better teaching in a majority of sessions, and the very good retention rates.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to raise the standards for all of the students;
- to ensure that the learning is consistently good or better through the planning for, and the use of, a broader range learning and assessment strategies to meet the needs of all the students; and
- to use more effectively the available data to set realistic targets and demonstrate sustained improvement for all the students.

In the interval since the inspection the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- the restructuring of leadership roles and responsibilities, including the appointment of four year heads to monitor attendance and retention, and a curriculum co-ordinator to oversee student performance and improvement in learning and teaching;
- a tracking system for the A-level provision has been introduced to enable the lecturers to set individual targets for the students and to track and monitor their performance across all subjects;
- a student contract has been introduced which sets out clear expectations for the students in relation to attendance, compulsory self-directed study, homework and assessments;
- the lecturers have benefited from bespoke staff development opportunities from external providers and through the exchange of good practice events which have all been focused appropriately on the development of learning, teaching and assessment strategies; and
- the criteria for entry for A-level courses has been revised and remains under review.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the effective strategies, interventions and support that are in place to monitor and manage attendance, which have contributed to the steady increase in the attendance rates across the provision;
- the improved retention rate, which has increased over the past two years;
- the increased proportion of the students attaining pass grades at A-E;

- the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, with two-thirds of the lessons observed being good and the remaining one-third being very good;
- the more systematic and effective use of performance data by the lecturers to track the progress of the students and to support those students at risk of not meeting their full potential; and
- the effective strategic leadership demonstrated by the head of school and the curriculum area manager, and the high levels of collegiality and commitment of the middle managers and the lecturers to improving the provision.

The areas which require further improvement are:

- to continue to develop the processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of classroom practice and embed fully the very good practice identified in planning, teaching and learning and assessment; and
- to raise further the outcomes at grades A-C across the subjects, as identified appropriately by the College.

## **Conclusion**

In A-level, the quality of education and training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now good. The College has important strengths in this provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **APPLIED SCIENCE**

The original inspection identified strengths in the provision, including the commitment of the staff at all levels to improving the quality of the students' experiences and the standards they achieve, the quality of approximately one-third of the sessions observed which were very good or better and the good opportunities for the students to engage in extended investigative work.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to improve the quality of teaching, particularly on the level 2 courses, to engage the students more actively in their learning;
- to develop more effective strategies for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision; in particular, the quality of the planning, teaching and learning, and assessment, in order to identify the very good practice and to disseminate this practice across all of the courses; and
- to improve the retention rates in all of the courses, particularly to review the entry criteria to ensure that the students enrolled have the necessary skills and capabilities to undertake a course in applied science.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- a new curriculum model has been introduced for some courses to help increase student engagement;
- the implementation of a common template for the planning of teaching sessions across all of the courses;
- the entry requirements for courses have been modified appropriately and include specific reference to the minimum standards in science, literacy and numeracy; and
- the mentoring and evaluation of the quality of provision at individual course level has been formalised, in part, through the appointment of an area co-ordinator and the clarification of the role of the course co-ordinator.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the quality of teaching and learning has improved, with most of the sessions observed being good or very good;
- across all of the courses, planning and assessment practice has improved;
- the students demonstrate higher levels of engagement and motivation; their views are used well to adapt the provision to meet the interests and abilities of individual students;
- the rate of retention on level 3 courses has improved significantly from 54% to 74%, with achievement rates remaining consistently high;
- better use is made of management information to monitor the progress of the students; and
- the more coherent role for the middle managers in managing the provision to meet the needs of all of the students.

The areas which require further improvement are:

- to develop further the quality and rigour of self-evaluation at all levels, in particular, in relation to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the students' learning experiences; and
- to disseminate more effectively the very good practice in planning, teaching and assessment, across the courses and continue to support sustained improvement through the provision of staff development on high quality classroom practice.

## **Conclusion**

In applied science, the quality of education and training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now good. The College has important strengths in this provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **ELECTROTECHNICAL SERVICES**

The original inspection identified strengths in the provision, including the strong links with the employers and the good work placements for most of the trainees.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to enhance the pre-entry guidance and admissions process to ensure trainees are placed on the most appropriate strand and level of provision;
- to provide targeted staff development with a focus on effective pedagogy to improve the quality of teaching, training and learning;
- to develop more effective monitoring and tracking systems to inform quality improvement planning, and to make more effective use of the apprentices' personal training plans; and
- to implement strategies to improve the rates of retention and achievement.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- the implementation of a review of the course pre-entry guidance for trainees;
- the review of the course co-ordination and the curriculum area manager roles and responsibilities;
- the relocation of all Training for Success electrotechnical services provision and resources to the Castlereagh campus;
- the further development of industry links to inform the curriculum planning;
- the development of a trainee tracking and monitoring system; and
- the enhanced resources to facilitate the delivery of the programme.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the more effective pre-entry guidance and admissions process, with most of the trainees being placed on the most appropriate strand and level of provision;
- the improved quality of teaching, training and learning across the College which is now mostly very good;
- the enhanced links and partnerships with local industry leading to a greater number of relevant work placements, a curriculum matched better to industry needs, and very good opportunities for the trainees to progress to employment, further or higher education;
- the better integration and contextualisation of the essential skills within the training programme, resulting in a significant improvement in full framework achievements;



- the more effective trainee progress monitoring and tracking systems in place; and
- the significantly improved attendance and retention (86%) rates.

The area which requires further improvement is to:

- sustain and build on the improvements to date through more reflective self-evaluation focused more sharply on the trainee learning experiences, achievements and progression.

## **Conclusion**

In electrotechnical services, the quality of training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now very good. The College has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the area for improvement.

## **ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

The original inspection identified strengths in the College's provision, including the very good quality of the essential skills provision for adults, the good leadership of the head of school, and the commitment to improvement by staff at all levels.

The inspection identified the need for further improvement in the following key areas:

- the enhancement of the leadership and co-ordination roles to include an appropriate emphasis on the development of teaching, training and learning including the more innovative use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning;
- the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes at all levels to ensure that all of the key evaluations of improvement are evidence-based and that all improvement planning is informed by a more robust use of data;
- a more systematic review of the timetabling arrangements to provide more timely and appropriate access to the provision for a minority of learners;
- the further development of the range of teaching, training and learning strategies to meet the needs of all learners;
- an improvement of the transition arrangements for monitoring progression from year one to year two and the improvement of the information flow to staff covering for absent colleagues; and
- to improve levels of attendance in the further education provision.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- significant resourcing has been allocated to the development of the management structure to support the leadership and delivery of the provision;
- the co-ordination roles of key staff have been appropriately enhanced to focus on the development and improvement of teaching, training and learning across the provision;
- through collaboration with another College, training in mentoring for the development of a wider range of more effective teaching, training and learning strategies has been provided for the subject leads;
- the collation of key data to underpin more robust self-evaluation to inform quality improvement planning;
- a “staff assist” programme has been introduced which identifies the need for interventions around quality and performance issues and provides support; and
- an effective review of assessment tools, timetabling and delivery models.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- an investment in the essential skills provision which has resulted in improved leadership and management which is now very good at head of school and curriculum area manager levels;
- a significant improvement in the quality of teaching, training and learning across all three essential skills;
- the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, which are better informed by the appropriate use of a good variety of qualitative and quantitative data;
- improved timetabling arrangements resulting in a variety of models of delivery to suit the needs of different learner groups;
- the revised timetabling arrangements have also resulted in a pilot of more innovative approaches to ‘fast track delivery’ for those learners who enter the College with a GCSE grade D; and
- the better attendance rates in lessons across most of the provision.

The areas which require further improvement are:

- the further embedding of the co-ordination roles to provide ongoing support for the lecturers;
- the further development of the range of teaching, training and learning strategies to build on the most effective practice and to continue to improve the achievements of the learners; and

- the ongoing monitoring of the revised models of delivery to ensure that all learners progress appropriately, reach their target qualification, and achieve their full potential.

## **Conclusion**

In the essential skills, the quality of education and training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now good. The College has important strengths in this provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **PERFORMING ENGINEERING OPERATIONS**

The original inspection identified strengths in the provision, including the good levels of engagement by the trainees and apprentices in their project work, the high level of work placements for the trainees and the good ongoing careers information, advice and guidance provided by the lecturers.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to improve the co-ordination of the level 3 apprenticeship programme, particularly the tracking of the progress of the apprentices across all elements of their framework;
- to develop more robust quality assurance arrangements, including the systems to monitor the quality of provision that is sub-contracted to other training suppliers;
- establish regular monitoring visits to the workplace for the trainees and apprentices recruited by the College;
- to develop more fit-for-purpose progress reviews in the workplace;
- to improve the overall quality of teaching, training and learning in the directed training sessions; and
- to develop strategies to expand the provision in this area.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- the appointment of a curriculum area manager, a vocational training support officer and a manager to oversee the sub-contracted provision;
- a range of employer engagement activities have taken place;
- the arrangements for workplace monitoring and the processes to review the progress of trainees and apprentices have been strengthened, including the use of standardised electronic tracking sheets and the introduction of a system to monitor attendance;

- regular meetings take place with the sub-contractor to monitor and review the apprentices' progress to ensure that they have appropriate opportunities to complete all of their units;
- quality assurance arrangements have been reviewed including those with the sub-contractor; and
- the lecturers have been provided with appropriate pedagogical and specialist professional and technical development opportunities.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the good management and co-ordination of the provision, including the sub-contracted provision;
- the more effective workplace monitoring by the training support officers, leading to improved employers' knowledge about the programme and of the progress of the trainees and apprentices;
- improved tracking of the trainees' and apprentices' progress in all aspects of their framework through the regular reviews that are informed by the relevant staff;
- the improved retention on the Training for Success programme, which is now good at 76%; and
- the good or better quality of the teaching, training and learning observed, including the good use of group work, active learning strategies and guest speakers.

The areas which require further improvement are:

- to strategically review the provision to ensure that the numbers recruited match the needs of the local and wider economy; and
- to further improve the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes by building the team's capacity to more effectively evaluate the provision.

## **Conclusion**

In performing engineering operations, the quality of training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now good. The College has important strengths in this provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE**

At the time of the original inspection, the quality of the training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College in transportation operations and maintenance was inadequate; the inspection identified significant areas for improvement to be addressed. These included:

- the development and implementation of more robust assessment, recording, tracking and monitoring arrangements;
- the implementation of more rigorous planning and organisation of the trainees' and apprentices' training and assessment activities;
- the provision of an appropriate range of modern training resources, equipment and vehicles;
- the provision of regular and frequent monitoring and assessment of the trainees' and apprentices' progress and achievements in the workplace;
- the provision of staff development on more effective teaching, training, and learning, and assessment strategies, including the use of ILT;
- the development of more effective communication and collegial working within the curriculum team; and
- the development of robust and coherent quality assurance arrangements, including assessment standardisation and quality improvement planning.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- a review of the curriculum offer, leading to the cessation of the heavy vehicle repair and motor sport training programmes, the closure of the Mallusk training facility and the provision of a new level 1 programme in light vehicle repair;
- the appointment of a new curriculum area manager;
- the implementation of a management information system to record and track the trainees' and apprentices' attendance, progress and achievements;
- updated training resources, equipment and vehicles, including ILT to support learning and assessment;
- the provision of a staff development programme to improve the quality of teaching, training and learning;
- the implementation of more robust quality assurance arrangements; and
- the recent appointment of an additional training support officer to carryout workplace assessments.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the provision of a more manageable and relevant curriculum to meet the needs of the trainees, apprentices and employers, aligned better to the current capacity of the College;
- the much improved leadership and management of the provision, underpinned by the more effective use of data to track and monitor the trainees' and apprentices' progress and achievements;
- the quality of the teaching, training and learning, particularly the improving use of ILT to support learning and assessment;
- the increased engagement of the trainees and apprentices during directed training, leading to better responses and a higher standard of work;
- the more effective collegial working across the curriculum team, with a greater focus on improving the quality of the learning experiences provided; and
- the achievement rate for the Training for Success programme, which increased to 89%.

The areas which require further improvement are:

- the clarification of the arrangements for assessing the trainees' and apprentices' occupational skills in the workplace, to ensure their progress is timely, recorded, tracked and monitored against agreed targets;
- to strengthen the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, particularly to identify, share and promote best practice in teaching, training and learning;
- a further refinement in the use of data to inform more incisively the monitoring and evaluation of learner progress in all aspects of their programme, through regular case-conferencing; and
- the retention rate for the Training for Success programme, which was just satisfactory over the last two years.

## **Conclusion**

In transportation operations and maintenance, the quality of education and training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now good. The College has important strengths in this provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **WOOD OCCUPATIONS**

The original inspection highlighted strengths in the College's provision, including the good or better quality of most of the teaching, training and learning observed, and the very good retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI level 3 provision.

The inspection identified the following areas for improvement:

- to use more effectively the available data to set realistic targets and demonstrate sustained improvement for all the trainees and apprentices;
- to ensure that the learning is consistently good or better through the planning for, and the use of, a broader range of learning and assessment strategies to effect improvement in retention and achievement rates; and
- to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the revised curriculum offer for those trainees without a work placement.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the College have taken place:

- a review and revision of the course pre-entry guidance for trainees;
- a reduction in staffing from seven to four vocational tutors;
- the appointment of two vocational training support officers;
- the further development of employer links to inform curriculum provision and to secure further work placements;
- the review of the course co-ordination and the curriculum area manager and training support officer roles and responsibilities;
- the development and implementation of a trainee and apprentice tracking and monitoring system;
- new, improved ILT resources and materials to support the delivery of the programme; and
- the further engagement in the Skillbuild competitions to raise the profile of wood occupations.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the more effective pre-entry guidance and admissions process, with almost all of the trainees being placed on the most appropriate strand and level of provision;
- the very good leadership, management and co-ordination of the provision which has effected improvement;
- the more effective tracking systems in place to evaluate the trainees' and apprentices' progress across the full framework;
- the improved quality of teaching, training, learning and assessment which is now mostly very good;

- the enhanced links and partnerships with employers leading to almost all of the trainees being in relevant work placements; and
- the achievement rates at 100% on all programmes.

The area which requires further improvement is:

- to sustain and build on the most effective practices and improvements to date through continued robust self-evaluation that has a clear focus on the trainees' and apprentices' learning experiences, achievements and progression.

## **Conclusion**

In wood occupations the quality of training provided by the Belfast Metropolitan College is now very good. The College has important strengths in this provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the College's progress on the area for improvement.



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