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*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**

Northern Regional College

June 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF THE NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

The follow-up inspection in October 2014 highlighted strengths in: the improved provision for essential skills in both further education and work-based learning; the improved provision for mechanical engineering services (plumbing); the improved processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning; the improved performance management system including the better use of key performance indicators by management and staff; the improved outcomes and increased work placement rates for trainees on the Training for Success programme; the improved systems used to track and monitor the progress of the trainees and apprentices; and the improved provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance on work-based learning programmes.

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

- to develop a clearly articulated strategic plan for the future development of the work-based learning provision, particularly for electro-technical services (electrical installation), to meet more effectively the needs of the trainees, apprentices and employers across the region;
- to continue to improve overall outcomes in work-based learning which were still too low; and
- to further improve the overall quality of the provision in trowel occupations (brickwork) and wood occupations.

In the interval since the follow-up inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the Northern Regional College have taken place:

- a change management team has been put in place to review the internal College structure;
- a whole-college curriculum plan has been put in place and a strategic improvement plan is currently being developed;
- there has been a significant investment in the provision of computer hardware for staff and students across the College;
- a revised on-line enrolment system has been implemented; and
- a number of new staff have been appointed including an e-learning manager, an internal communications manager, and a student enrichment officer.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an interim follow-up visit in January 2015, and a follow-up inspection in June 2015.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the follow-up inspection in October 2014:

- the improved strategic planning for work-based learning which has resulted in a better balanced curriculum for the Training for Success programme, including appropriate progression pathways for trainees who want to progress to an electro-technical apprenticeship programme (electrical installation);

- the development of a number of pilot level 2 training programmes in professional and technical areas where the College previously had no work-based learning provision;
- the improved outcomes for trainees across both the level 1 and level 2 strands of the Training for Success programme;
- the very high (98%) proportion of the trainees who are now in a work-placement; and
- the improved quality of the provision in trowel occupations (brickwork) and wood occupations, which is now good.

The areas which require further development are:

- to ensure that the curriculum strategy is further developed and embedded for the work-based learning provision under the new management structure; and
- to continue to monitor and track the outcomes in work-based learning.

CONCLUSION

The overall effectiveness of the work-based learning provision inspected is now good. The Northern Regional College has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

WORK-BASED LEARNING CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMMES IN TROWEL OCCUPATIONS (BRICKWORK), AND WOOD OCCUPATIONS

The follow-up inspection in October 2014 highlighted strengths in: the processes used to track and monitor the progress of the trainees and apprentices; the increased number of trainees in a work placement and the revised curriculum offer to support trainees not in a work-placement; the improved overall achievement rates; and the more effective use of data to inform the self-evaluation process.

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

- the more effective use of qualitative and quantitative data, in order to make reliable, incisive and evidence-based judgements on the quality of the provision;
- the on-going low rates of retention in both professional and technical areas; and
- further engagement with employers and industry, to inform curriculum development, raise the awareness of the trainees and apprentices of the range of career progression pathways, and to motivate them further to achieve to their full potential.

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

- staff development has been provided for all staff on the effective use of data to inform and support the evaluations made in the self-evaluation report and the quality improvement plan;
- more regular reviews of the progress of the actions identified in the quality improvement plan have been carried out;
- the key features of best practice in the provision for mechanical engineering services (plumbing) has been shared across both areas;
- revised recruitment procedures have been introduced and the induction programme for new learners has been reviewed;
- there has been an increased focus on securing relevant work-placements for the trainees;
- a structured programme of employer engagement has been introduced on each campus, in each professional and technical area, and the trainees and apprentices now participate in internal and external competitions;
- the number of level 1 trainees recruited has decreased significantly across the training provision; and
- a well-populated virtual learning environment for wood occupations programmes has been developed and implemented on the Magherafelt campus.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the follow-up inspection in October 2014:

- the better understanding and use of data by the staff to strengthen self-evaluation and quality improvement planning;
- the increased collaborative working of the wood occupations teams across the campuses;
- the embedding of the procedures for tracking and monitoring the progress of the trainees to support them in their learning;
- the strengthening of the pre-entry guidance arrangements and the improved communication with parents/carers;
- the implementation of a planned programme of guest speakers and site visits on each campus and the involvement of the trainees and apprentices in internal and external competitions, which have enhanced the quality of the provision in the individual professional and technical areas;
- the very high proportion (98%) of trainees, across both professional and technical areas, who are now in a work-placement; and
- the good improvement in the retention and achievement rates across both programmes.

The areas which require further development are:

- to embed fully the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, particularly to improve further the retention rates; and
- to ensure that lecturers in both areas benefit from more industry relevant continuing professional development opportunities to support the development of the curriculum.

CONCLUSION

In trowel occupations and wood occupations, the quality of education and training provided by the Northern Regional College is now good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

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