



*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 Training for Success
and ApprenticeshipsNI provision in**

South Eastern Regional College

January 2013

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

Professional and Technical Area: Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering

The original inspection in March 2011 identified strengths in the provision, including: the very good specialist resources and equipment; the innovative polymer apprenticeship programme; and the good or better quality of the provision on the Bangor campus.

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

- the unsatisfactory provision for craft mechanical and manufacturing engineering;
- the inadequate leadership and management of mechanical engineering at all levels; and
- the inadequate quality of the training for mechanical engineering on the Lisburn campus, which was characterised by the poor standards of the trainees' and apprentices' work.

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

- the appointment of new staff, including three full-time and three part-time lecturers, a part-time work place assessor, a course co-ordinator for the provision in Lisburn, and an additional three technical support officers;
- the restructuring of the curriculum provision to include a new Skills for Work strand, increased practical training and project workshops for the Programme-Led Apprenticeship trainees, and a new level 2 technical certificate;
- the development of an electronic trainee personal training plan and a more robust six-weekly review process;
- the further development of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the enhanced communication with local employers through site visits and employer engagement forums to inform curriculum planning and development; and
- the increased and ongoing staff development to improve the quality of the teaching, training and learning, particularly to support the new lecturers.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out two interim follow-up visits in October 2011 and May 2012 and a follow-up inspection in January 2013.

The improvement plan produced by the organisation in response to the inspection findings was of a good quality.

The organisation's quality improvement plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

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

- the responsiveness of the leadership and management team to plan and implement appropriate actions to bring about sustained improvement;

- the good provision of realistic engineering manufacturing projects for Programme-Led Apprenticeship trainees not yet in work placements;
- the well-balanced timetable of practical training and theory sessions to ensure that the trainees develop a good range of craft and employability skills;
- the well-planned work placement assessment arrangements for the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, which are now good;
- the extended training provision that now includes the good quality Skills for Work strand of Training for Success;
- the regular and rigorous whole-team reviews of trainee progress, resulting in effective interventions bringing about significant improvements in trainee outcomes; and
- the retention and achievement rates, which are now very good (81%) and outstanding (100%) respectively.

The areas which require further development are:

- to continue to improve the quality of the curriculum planning and delivery on the Lisburn campus, which is now satisfactory;
- the need for increased opportunities for lecturers to benchmark good practice, particularly in fabrication and welding; and
- the low recruitment of apprentices to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

CONCLUSION

In mechanical and manufacturing engineering, the quality of education and training provided by South Eastern 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 Inspectorate will monitor South Eastern Regional College's progress on the areas for improvement.

Professional and Technical Area: Wood Occupations

The original inspection in February 2011 highlighted strengths in the provision, including the: good or better quality of training and learning in most of the lessons observed; excellent accommodation and physical resources where the trainees and apprentices develop a suitably broad range of practical skills; good quality of the work placements; sourcing of work placements for the majority of the Programme-Led Apprenticeship trainees in Newtownards; and very good support and encouragement provided for most of the trainees and apprentices by the tutors and technicians.

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

- poor average retention rate on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success and level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI programme, and the poor success rate on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand on the Lisburn and Downpatrick campuses;
- the limited curriculum offer which does not provide sufficient opportunities for the Programme-Led Apprenticeship trainees to develop their occupational skills and knowledge; and
- the ineffective arrangements for overall management and monitoring of the trainees' and apprentices' programme.

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

- the high priority given by the senior management team to improve the quality of the provision;
- the further development of the quality assurance and improvement planning processes;
- the implementation of a programme of case conferences to monitor and review the progress of the trainees and apprentices;
- the engagement of six technical support officers to supervise and support the trainees participating in the vocational projects;
- the development and implementation of online tracking systems to monitor the trainees' and apprentices' progress in all aspects of their programme;
- the targeted development of the lecturers' pedagogic practice through session observations and effective staff development; and
- the further development of the virtual learning environment to support the trainees and apprentices.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried one interim follow-up visit in October 2011 and a follow-up inspection in January 2013.

The improvement plan produced by the organisation in response to the inspection findings was of a very good quality.

The organisation's quality improvement plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

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

- the very good processes for quality assurance and improvement planning, which are informed by the effective use of reliable data;
- the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the training and learning;
- the rigorous review of the progress of the trainees and apprentices and the implementation of supportive and effective intervention strategies;
- the significant improvement in the retention rates on the Skills for Work strand, and the level 2 and level 3 ApprenticeshipsNI programme, which now range from good to very good;
- the enriched and coherent curriculum provided for the Programme-Led Apprenticeship trainees without work placement through the development and embedding of innovative vocational projects; and
- the high percentage of trainees in appropriate work placements on the second year of the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success.

The areas which require further development are:

- to continue to develop strategies to further increase the number of work placements available to the trainees; and
- to continue to improve the retention and achievement rates on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success.

CONCLUSION

In wood occupations, the quality of education and training provided by South Eastern Regional College is now very good. The organisation is meeting very effectively the training and pastoral needs of the trainees and apprentices; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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