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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 Training for Success  
and ApprenticeshipsNI provision in**

**Seven Towers Training**

**November 2012**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF SEVEN TOWERS TRAINING, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT42 3AH**

The original inspection in January 2011 highlighted strengths in the provision, including the: very good quality of the provision for hospitality and catering, and for the engineering provision in The Wrightbus Group (Wrightbus); good standards of work demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices; good quality of most of the work placements; and the excellent success and progression rates across most of the provision.

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

- the unsatisfactory quality of the provision for engineering in a sub-contracting organisation, Larne Skills Development Limited (Larne Skills Development);
- the inadequate leadership and management of the engineering provision by Seven Towers Training Limited (Seven Towers Training), particularly the arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the sub-contracted training;
- the quality of the training and learning in a significant minority of the directed training sessions observed, which was just satisfactory across the professional and technical areas inspected;
- the lack of appropriate work placements for a majority of the trainees on the Training for Success programme; and
- the modest overall retention rate across the professional and technical areas inspected.

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

- the implementation of a revised curriculum offer, health and safety and sub-contracting arrangements;
- enhanced arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate sub-contracted provision;
- revised and improved internal quality assurance and management information systems;
- the more active involvement of the Board of Directors in the quality improvement process;
- a review of staffing and management structures, including the appointment of a qualifications manager;
- the recruitment of new specialist tutors in retail and painting and decorating;
- a significant investment in targeted continuous professional development to further improve the quality of teaching, training and learning;
- high levels of investment in resources and accommodation; and
- the implementation of a revised retention strategy.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out two interim follow-up visits in June 2011 and March 2012 and a follow-up inspection in November 2012.

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 good arrangements now in place to manage and evaluate provision which is sub-contracted;
- the improved mechanical and manufacturing engineering ApprenticeshipsNI provision, which is now consistently very good;
- the improved provision for construction, which is now good;
- the enhanced quality of teaching, training and learning, which is now good or better in the majority (71%) of sessions observed;
- the improved retention rates across most of the provision, which are now good overall (70%).

The areas which require further development are the:

- development of strategies to sustain the recently improved retention rates, particularly for the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the Training for Success programme;
- quantity of appropriate work placements for Training for Success trainees; and
- quality of the essential skills provision, which remains satisfactory.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by Seven Towers Training 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 Seven Towers Training's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **Professional and Technical Area: Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering**

The original inspection in January 2011 highlighted strengths in the provision, including the: very good quality of the ApprenticeshipsNI provision in Wrightbus; good quality of directed training provided for Wrightbus apprentices; very good to excellent quality of the workplace training provided for the apprentices; and the very good standards of work achieved by most of the apprentices in Wrightbus.

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

- inadequate leadership and management of the engineering provision by the contract holder, Seven Towers Training;
- unsatisfactory quality of the training provision within Larne Skills Development, particularly the poor design of the apprenticeship programmes, the unsatisfactory workplace assessment arrangements, and the inadequate quality of the directed training and learning facilities; and
- unacceptably high levels of risk to the apprentices' and trainees' health and safety while they are using practical training equipment in Larne Skills Development.

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

- a review of the sub-contracting arrangements and the subsequent decision to end the sub-contracted training with Larne Skills Development;
- the implementation of revised and enhanced continuous professional development arrangements for vocational tutors delivering the Wrightbus apprenticeship provision;
- the upgraded information and learning technology (ILT) resources to enhance the learning experiences for the Wrightbus apprentices;
- the development and introduction of two new specialist coach building qualification units for the Wrightbus apprenticeship provision, aligned to the organisation's operational needs;
- the provision, by Wrightbus, of additional practical occupational skills training for the apprentices; and
- the further enhancement of the care, support and guidance arrangements for apprentices employed by Wrightbus.

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

- the further development of the leadership and management of the Wrightbus apprenticeship provision to sustain ongoing quality improvement;
- the well-targeted continuing professional development for the Wrightbus tutors that successfully builds their capacity to implement improvements in the quality of the apprentices' training, learning and assessment;

- the improved retention rates for the ApprenticeshipsNI provision, which are now very good (84%);
- the effective use of the electronic assessment portfolio by Wrightbus tutors to track, monitor and review their apprentices' progress and achievements; and
- the revised and extended practical occupational skills training provided for Wrightbus apprentices to build their confidence for working effectively in engineering production environments.

The area which requires further development is the:

- need for Seven Towers Training to review the revised mechanical and manufacturing engineering provision to ensure that it meets well enough the training needs of all young people, particularly those not yet in employment.

## **CONCLUSION**

In mechanical and manufacturing engineering, the quality of education and training provided by Seven Towers Training is now very good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor Seven Towers Training's progress on the area for improvement.

## **Professional and Technical Area: Construction Operations**

The original inspection in January 2011 highlighted strengths in the provision, including the: very good standard of the apprentices' and trainees' work in wood occupations; good opportunities for apprentices in decorative and wood occupations to achieve additional qualifications beyond the minimum requirements of the framework; inclusion of qualifications in career planning and personal development for the Skills for Your Life, and Skills for Work programmes to enhance the personal development skills of the trainees; and the good support from voluntary, community and public sector agencies to address the trainees' barriers to education and training.

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

- the narrow range of training strategies and limited use of ILT in directed training sessions;
- the lack of appropriate work placements for a majority (68%) of the decorative occupations trainees and for most (80%) of the wood occupations trainees; and
- the formalised involvement of employers in the planning of on-the-job training.

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

- the appointment of a co-ordinator for the construction provision, a new decorative occupations tutor, and the qualifications manager;
- the further development of the quality assurance processes;
- the implementation of a revised retention strategy and monitoring systems to track the trainees' progress in achieving their qualifications;
- the targeted development of the tutors' pedagogic practice through directed training observations and effective staff development to improve the quality of the teaching, training and learning; and
- the engagement with a range of external agencies to develop innovative approaches for the provision of work-related learning for the trainees not yet in a work placement.

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

- the improved quality of the teaching, training and learning, which is now good or better;
- the high levels of investment in good quality accommodation, tools, specialist, and ILT equipment, that support well the delivery of the wood occupations' curriculum;
- the development of innovative strategies to provide realistic work-related learning and assessment opportunities that meet the requirements of the awarding bodies, for trainees not yet in work placements; and
- the increased involvement of employers in the planning of the apprentices' and trainees' on-the-job training.

The areas which require further development are the:

- more effective use of ILT resources to further enhance teaching, training and learning;
- pace of implementation of the proposed programme of industrial visits, guest speakers, and other events to further motivate and inform trainees and apprentices of the career opportunities available to them; and
- engagement with additional employers and external agencies to continue to increase the number of work placements, particularly in decorative occupations.

In construction operations, the quality of education and training provided by Seven Towers Training 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 Seven Towers Training's progress on the areas for improvement.

## Essential Skills

The original inspection in January 2011 highlighted strengths in the provision, including the: good quality of the workplace training in the essential skills for the apprentices, including the opportunities provided to achieve at a level beyond the minimum requirement of their programmes; highly supportive ethos and the good quality of the behaviour management strategies employed by Seven Towers Training, including the effective one-to-one support provided in almost all of the Training for Success sessions inspected; opportunities for professional development afforded to staff in order to improve continuously the training and learning process; and excellent outcomes at 100% in the essential skills.

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

- the insufficient use of the outcomes of the initial and diagnostic assessments to plan for differentiated learning, and the limited collaboration between the essential skills tutors and the professional and technical tutors to facilitate contextualisation and integration in the Training for Success provision;
- the limited range of training and learning strategies used in the majority of the Training for Success sessions inspected, and the poor organisation by a minority of the trainees of the work in their essential skills folders;
- the generic nature of a minority of review documents, which lack appropriate detail and focused, incremental targets; and
- the inadequate quality of the management and co-ordination of the essential skills across the providers.

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

- a review of the staffing structures in Seven Towers Training, including the allocation of additional time to the essential skills co-ordinator resulting in the more effective co-ordination of the provision;
- a qualifications manager has been appointed to promote and support the development of teaching, training and learning;
- additional training for staff has been provided in the more rigorous use of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- continuing professional development has been provided for essential skills staff in differentiation, contextualisation, active learning, the use of ILT, and in the writing of reviews;
- training in the use of the Rickter diagnostic methods was provided for the essential skills co-ordinator and one essential skills tutor;
- essential skills staff have been facilitated to undertake the Certificate in Teaching programme and the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Further Education) programme; and
- there has been additional investment in ILT resources to support training and learning, including the installation of additional computers in the essential skills classroom.

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

- the improving quality of the leadership and co-ordination of the essential skills provision, which is now satisfactory;
- the improving use of the outcomes of the initial and diagnostic assessments to plan for differentiated learning;
- the improving range of teaching, training and learning strategies in the Training for Success sessions inspected; and
- the improving nature of the recording of targets in the trainee progress review documents

The areas which require further development are the:

- overly slow pace of implementing actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection;
- embedding of the role of the co-ordinator and the qualifications manager within the essential skills provision to sustain ongoing improvements in key processes, particularly the self-evaluation process;
- more effective contextualisation of the essential skills within the Training for Success provision to engage and interest reluctant literacy and numeracy learners; and
- ongoing development of a range of training and learning strategies to engage, motivate and support learners, particularly those learners with low achievement profiles on entry.

In the essential skills, the quality of training provided by Seven Towers Training remains satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The organisation has demonstrated some evidence of improvement but significant areas for improvement remain to be addressed if the needs of all trainees and apprentices are to be met effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the progress of Seven Towers Training in addressing the remaining areas for improvement.

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