



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Inspection of the Further
Education and Work-Based
Learning Provision in the
Northern Regional College

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Providing Inspection Services for
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¹ Each of these individual professional and technical reports are accessible through the appropriate weblink at the end of this report.

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Key Performance Indicators used by the Inspectorate to Evaluate Achievements and Standards

Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The proportion of learners enrolled who completed their courses or are still on their programme.
Achievement	The proportion of those learners completing their course who gained their full target qualification.
Success	The proportion of learners enrolled who gained their full target qualification.
Progression	Proportion of successful completers who progress to further/higher education/training or employment.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

ALC	Area Learning Community
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
CDP	College Development Plan
Department	Department for Employment and Learning
EF	Entitlement Framework
e-ILP	Electronic Individual Learner Plan
Inspectorate	Education and Training Inspectorate
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILT	Information and Learning Technology
IQ:RS	Improving Quality: Raising Standards
NI	Northern Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SLDD	Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
SMT	Senior Management Team
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WDF	Workforce Development Forum

PART ONE: SUMMARY

1. Background information and context

1.1 The Northern Regional College was established in 2007 following the merger of the previous legacy colleges, the Causeway Institute of Further and Higher Education, the East Antrim Institute of Further and Higher Education and the North East Institute of Further and Higher Education. The College has seven campuses, two in Ballymena, and one each in Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne, Magherafelt, and Newtownabbey. It shares its campus in Larne with an organisation offering sheltered employment, and it also has a community presence in a number of out-centres across the region. The Northern Regional College is the main provider of further education across 9 of the 26 Council areas in Northern Ireland, covering a population of 450,000 or 25% of the Northern Ireland total. As well as its further education provision, the College provides work-based learning through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes.

1.2 With the exception of the Moyle District Council area, the rate of unemployment (claimant count) in the district councils across the College's catchment area is below the Northern Ireland total of 5.5%²; there has, however, been a decrease in employment rates and in the number of employee jobs in over half of the council areas in the past 3 years. Two of the district council areas have lower rates of employment for people aged 16-64 than the NI average and in seven of the wards across the district council areas unemployment rates are in excess of 10%. In four of the district council areas more than 20% of people aged 16-64 have no formal qualifications.

1.3 In the current academic year 2012/13, the College has 11,987 learner enrolments across its further education provision; there are 3,333 full-time and 8,654 part-time enrolments. Level one courses account for 11% of the enrolments, 46% of the learners are enrolled on level two courses, and 28% of the learners are enrolled on level three courses. The proportion of enrolments on the Department's current priority skills areas is 15%, which is below the target set for the sector of 28%³. Over the past three years, enrolments to full-time courses have remained steady, however, the number of learners enrolling on part-time courses has shown a downward trend from 12,267 in 2009/2010 to 10,077 in 2011/2012.

1.4 At the time of the inspection, 412 learners were registered on Training for Success programmes; 47 learners were registered on the Skills for Work Strand and 365 learners were registered on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship Strand. There were 268 learners registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, with 135 level 2 learners and 133 level 3 learners. The majority (56%) of the learners are registered on construction training programmes, including electrotechnical services (electrical installation) with the remainder registered in engineering and motor vehicle. Just under one-third of the learners are registered on craft training courses in wood occupations.

1.5 At the time of the inspection, there were 2,332 and 744 enrolments in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in the further education and work-based learning provision respectively.

² Source: The October 2012 Northern Ireland Claimant Count.

³ Source: The Department for Employment and Learning PSA Delivery Agreement 2: 2008

1.6 A small number of apprentices registered with the College undertake their directed training with other training providers. Six apprentices in transport maintenance and operations undertake their training in Transport Training Services in Antrim. In addition, all of the training in hairdressing is undertaken in Seven Towers Training in Ballymena; at the time of the inspection, 13 level 3 apprentices were registered in this professional and technical area.

Table 1: Enrolments in the College

Type of provision	Number of learners enrolled
Total Enrolments (Further Education)	11,987
Further Education	Full time: 3,333 Part-time: 8,654
Entitlement Framework (14 – 19)	2,563
Work-based Learning (Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI)	680
ApprenticeshipsNI:	Level 2: 135 Level 3: 133
Training for Success:	Programme-Led Apprenticeships: 365 Skills for Work: 47

2. Scope and method of the inspection

2.1 In November 2012, the Inspectorate carried out an inspection of the College's further education and work-based learning provision. The further education provision covered a range of professional and technical courses up to and including level 3. In work-based learning, the inspection focused on the College's provision within the ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes.

2.2 The inspection focused on achievements and standards, the provision for learning and leadership and management, including the College's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation are available in the publication '*Improving Quality: Raising Standards*' which can be found on the Inspectorate's web site at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards.htm>.

2.3 Inspectors observed 207 lessons and directed training sessions. Discussions were held with the Principal, members of the executive, curriculum and senior management teams, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, heads of school, curriculum managers, course team leaders, lecturers, a sample of post-primary school principals, a sample of employers and learners. The inspection team also examined samples of the learners' work, progress reviews, personal training plans, minutes of team meetings, course planning and development documentation, self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans, and other relevant documentation, policies, and reports.

2.4 The inspection also focused on the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance, the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners, and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups.

2.5 The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the learners to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Table 2: Learner Pastoral Care Questionnaire Returns

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Learners	800	695	87%	180

The Inspectorate reported to the Principal and the Chair of the Governing Body the main findings emerging from the questionnaires and, where, appropriate, these have been commented upon within this report. In addition, inspectors carried out focus group meetings with a wide range of learners in the College.

3. Overall findings of the inspection

3.1 Further Education⁴ and Work-Based Learning Provision in the College

Overall, the quality of education and training provided by the College, across the areas inspected, is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, the quality of provision for learning and achievements and standards which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively.

3.2 Further Education Provision

In the areas inspected, the quality of education and training provided by the College is good. The College has important strengths in most of its education, training and pastoral provision.

3.3 Work-Based Learning Provision

In the areas inspected, the quality of the training provided by the College is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in leadership and management, the quality of provision for learning and achievements and standards which need to be addressed urgently if the College is to meet effectively the needs of all the learners.

4. Table of performance levels

Overall Effectiveness	Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision	Further Education	Work-Based Learning
	Satisfactory	Good	Inadequate

Contributory Performance Levels:	Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision	Further Education	Work-Based Learning
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory	Good	Inadequate
Quality of Provision for Learning	Good	Good	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory	Good	Inadequate

⁴ Further Education refers to provision up to and including level 3

Professional and Technical Areas (Further Education and Work-Based Learning)	
Essential Skills	Satisfactory
Professional and Technical Areas (Further Education)	
Business and Management	Very Good
Child Development and Well-Being	Good
Hospitality and Catering	Good
Media	Good
Sport, Leisure and Recreation	Very Good
Professional and Technical Areas (Work-based Learning):	
Electrotechnical Services (Electrical Installation)	Satisfactory
Engineering	Very Good
Mechanical Engineering Services (Plumbing)	Inadequate
Transportation Operations and Maintenance (Motor Vehicle)	Good
Trowel Occupations (Bricklaying)	Inadequate
Wood Occupations	Inadequate

5. Summary of main findings

5.1 The Governing Body are committed to the College and support well its key strategic initiatives.

5.2 The leadership and management of the curriculum in further education is good, however, the Principal and senior management team have been too slow to identify and remedy the very low outcomes on the Training for Success programme, particularly the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand.

5.3 The procedures for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are more effective in further education than in work-based learning. The Inspectorate has limited confidence in the College's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in work-based learning.

5.4 In further education, the use of reliable management information by staff to monitor performance at course team level is underdeveloped. The effective analysis of management information to enhance decision-making is a significant area for improvement for management and staff in work-based learning.

5.5 Across the further education provision inspected, with the exception of the essential skills, the quality of leadership and management of the curriculum is good or better; in the work-based learning provision, it ranges from very good to inadequate and is inadequate overall. The leadership and management of the provision for the essential skills are satisfactory.

5.6 The College gives a high strategic priority to economic engagement. While the extent, level of development and impact of economic engagement varies considerably across the College, they are exceptional in the school of engineering and science and good in a number of other professional and technical areas.

5.7 While the College engages appropriately with the communities it serves, management at all levels need to do more to increase the community education provision.

5.8 Most of the lecturers, across the professional and technical areas inspected, are well-qualified and experienced. Staff have appropriate opportunities to undertake relevant continuous professional development and enhance their professional and technical skills.

5.9 The quality of most of the accommodation and resources for teaching and learning in the professional and technical areas inspected is variable; in response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a minority of learners expressed concerns about the cleanliness and overall maintenance of the College estate.

5.10 The provision for the Entitlement Framework, as reflected in the school links programme, is effectively led and managed; the College has established excellent working relationships with 52 post-primary schools across ten area learning communities.

5.11 The quality of the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners is good. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the College also has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding.

5.12 While the quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is good in further education, it is only satisfactory in work-based learning.

5.13 The College offers an appropriate range of full and part-time courses in a majority of the areas inspected in further education, although the number of learners enrolling on part-time courses is showing a downward trend over the past three years. The quality of the curriculum planning and its relevance in work-based learning ranges from very good to inadequate

5.14 While at the time of the inspection 60% of the learners on the Training for Success programme were placed with employers, there is considerable variation in workplace participation rates across the provision, ranging from 73% to 25%.

5.15 The quality of teaching, training and learning is good or better in most (81%) of the lessons and directed training sessions observed, with 34% of them being very good or better. The overall quality of the provision for learning in the essential skills is satisfactory, with an overly high proportion (38%) of lessons in which the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory or inadequate.

5.16 The use of ILT across the provision inspected is variable. It is good in further education, but is not used well in the essential skills and is underdeveloped in work-based learning.

5.17 The quality of the provision for SLDD is good. Most of the learners are confident, motivated and are making good progress in their learning.

5.18 In further education, outcomes on level 2 and level 3 courses have improved and are in line with the sector average. In the essential skills overall, the outcomes are below the sector averages and are mostly inadequate.

5.19 The average retention rate on the Training for Success programme is unsatisfactory and the overall outcomes are inadequate. The overall outcomes on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand are unacceptably low; over the past four years, only 8% of the 675 learners who commenced training achieved the full framework.

5.20 While the average retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is satisfactory, it is improving year on year leading to overall better outcomes.

5.21 In work-based learning, those learners without work placements have too few opportunities to develop an appropriate range of occupational skills. In the construction crafts, the arrangements for the assessment of the learners' occupational skills are not implemented effectively.

5.22 What does the Northern Regional College need to do to improve further?

There is a need to improve the quality of the provision, in particular the College should work to:

1. Establish more robust strategic quality improvement planning processes to inform more effectively curriculum planning across the College. The curriculum for the Training for Success provision in work-based learning needs to be urgently reviewed, in particular to address the significant areas for improvement in the current curriculum offer for the majority of the Programme-Led Apprentices.
2. Address the inadequate leadership and management and overall standards and achievements in work-based learning, particularly the Training for Success provision, and also take action to improve the satisfactory or inadequate overall quality of the provision for brickwork, electrical installation, plumbing and wood occupations.
3. Improve the quality of the provision for the essential skills across the College, with a particular focus on the quality of teaching and learning, and standards and outcomes in this area.
4. Implement an effective quality improvement planning process to address learners' underachievement, which is underpinned by accurate and reliable data and informed by a more effective process of self-evaluation. The College needs to ensure that managers are clear about the fundamental importance of outcomes for learners in their areas of responsibility, and that they are implementing effective strategies to tackle shortcomings in performance.
5. Build on the particularly good practice which exists in engineering, and a few other professional and technical areas, in order to broaden further the extent and impact of economic engagement across the College.

PART TWO: OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

6. Leadership and management

6.1 Overall, the quality of the leadership and management of the curriculum inspected is satisfactory; it is good in further education but is inadequate in work-based learning.

6.2 Since the establishment of the College, the Principal has, along with the senior management team, addressed sensitively and effectively a number of significant change management issues within the context of a range of challenging constraints, in the creation of a regional college which spans a wide and diverse geographical area. Recently, for example, the College reviewed and realigned the College management structure.

6.3 While the quality of the leadership and management of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, the inconsistency in this is a concern; it is good in the further education provision inspected but inadequate in work-based learning. There is evidence of appropriate recent actions to tackle key weaknesses in the work-based learning provision, notably by increasing the work placement rate of the learners. Senior managers, however, have been too slow to identify and remedy the very low outcomes, particularly for the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the Training for Success programme. The delay in implementing strategies to address this underachievement is a significant concern.

6.4 The current College Development Plan is overly focused on the College's estates planning (an Outline Business Case to improve its estate has been prepared and submitted to the Department) and consequently curriculum planning at a strategic level is not sufficiently well-defined or developed.

6.5 The Governing Body are committed to the College and support well its key strategic initiatives. Through the Education Committee they undertake an effective challenge function to senior managers with regard to the quality of the further education provision across the College. There is a need for the Governing Body to strengthen this scrutiny role in work-based learning.

6.6 Comprehensive systems and procedures for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are in place across all professional and technical areas, including the cross-College functions, management and the work of the Governing Body. They are more effective in further education than in work-based learning. Across the College, the quality and rigour of the self-evaluation reports are much too variable, leading to action plans for improvement which are overly general and lacking in specific, challenging targets to bring about the necessary improvements.

6.7 In work-based learning, the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are ineffective, including the use of management information to identify and address underperformance. Managers and lecturers need more professional development on what constitutes effective self-evaluation and quality improvement planning. The Inspectorate has limited confidence in the College's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes in work-based learning.

6.8 In further education, the senior managers have access to reliable management information. However, the effective analysis and use of data and management information to inform and effect continuous quality improvement planning needs to be further developed at course team level across the professional and technical areas inspected.

6.9 The use of performance management information to enhance decision-making is a significant area for improvement in work-based learning. The management information systems are not sufficiently robust to either track the progress of learners, or to measure their attainments across all of the key elements of their training frameworks. The collation and sharing of information by lecturers in the professional and technical areas, the essential skills and the training support officers are inadequate.

6.10 Across the further education provision inspected, the quality of leadership and management of the curriculum is good or better; it is very good in business and management and sport, leisure and recreation. In the work-based learning provision, it ranges from very good to inadequate. It is very good in engineering and transport operations but is inadequate in the remaining professional and technical areas inspected. In the best practice, the key features include strong leadership by the heads of school and curriculum managers, high levels of economic engagement and cohesive team-working across campuses. In those professional and technical areas where the quality of the leadership and management of the curriculum is inadequate, the key shortcomings include ineffective curriculum planning to meet the needs of the learners, poor use of data to identify and address underperformance and ineffective quality improvement planning.

6.11 Overall, the leadership and management of the provision for the essential skills is satisfactory. While a comprehensive review of the provision has been carried out by senior managers, and a high proportion of the learners who are retained achieve an essential skills qualification, there are some key areas for improvement, which include the variability in timetabling arrangements and the inadequate outcomes which are below the sectoral averages. There is a need for more rigorous self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to address these areas for improvement.

6.12 The College gives an appropriately high strategic priority to economic engagement; appropriate systems and staffing are in place to facilitate and support the various schools and course teams to engage with employers and other key stakeholders. The College has well-established links and partnerships with a wide range of employers and other relevant organisations. Employers report positively about the ongoing work of the College to engage with them and to determine their training and support needs. While the extent, level of development and impact of economic engagement varies considerably across the College, they are exceptional in the school of engineering and science, largely as a result of the leadership and vision of the head of school, underpinned by effective support and encouragement from senior management. In this school, over a long period of time, many highly effective economic partnerships have been established with significant employers, including large multinational organisations. There is also good evidence of innovative models of economic engagement with local and international businesses, including the sharing of staff, customised training programmes, apprenticeship bursary programmes and employer specific engineering curriculum development and provision. The learners and staff benefit greatly from these wide-ranging partnerships through access to high-specification equipment, placements, training and expertise. The College has lead responsibility for advanced engineering and advanced materials under the Employer Support Programme and is engaging to good effect with an increasing number of small-to-medium sized enterprises.

6.13 A number of other schools in the College are making progress in extending their involvement in, and further development of, economic engagement activities. The College has used to good effect the Employer Support Fund. The school of the built environment has continuously engaged well with employers, has led a number of key curriculum projects, and its learners have had sustained success in a range of local and national skills competitions. The Acumen centre, within business and management, has been created recently in order to provide a suite of relevant leadership and management programmes, at a range of levels and delivered in a flexible manner to meet the needs of learners and employers. While there

are instances of effective economic engagement, more needs to be done by management to broaden and deepen the levels of engagement across more of the College provision, and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of economic engagement across most of the professional and technical areas. The College strategy for economic engagement also needs to be reviewed in light of the changes to the College management structure, the absence of a strategic workforce or employer liaison forum, the challenges posed by the economic strategy for NI and the ongoing impact of the economic recession.

6.14 The College engages appropriately with the communities it serves; it is involved in a number of projects and leads the well-managed Living and Learning Together project covering the Antrim and Magherafelt areas. With the exception of the essential skills and learners with SLDD, however, enrolments to community education across the College are low overall. Consequently, the College has revised appropriately its community strategy, which links well to a number of Government priorities and seeks to address the current low levels of engagement with the communities in the Carrickfergus, Larne, Moyle and Newtownabbey District Council areas.

6.15 Most of the lecturers, across the professional and technical areas inspected, are well-qualified and experienced. Across the College, staff development is well-managed and lecturers have appropriate opportunities to enhance their professional and technical skills. In a few professional and technical areas there are good examples of lecturers benefiting from well-planned participation in relevant and challenging industry projects. In a few areas, including electrical installation and child development and well-being, there is a need to upskill and broaden the occupational experience of some of the lecturers.

6.16 Across most of the professional and technical areas inspected, there are significant variations in the quality of the accommodation and access for learners to specialist resources. While a significant upgrade in connectivity and access to contemporary software is imminent, across the College, much of the ILT infrastructure and equipment are dated. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a minority of learners expressed concerns about the cleanliness and overall maintenance of the College estate.

6.17 The provision for the Entitlement Framework is effectively led and managed; the College has established excellent working relationships with 52 post-primary schools across ten area learning communities. The post-primary school leaders report a high regard for the College in supporting their pupils, notably its commitment to quality, the high levels of pupil achievement, and the rigorous tracking and reporting of the pupils' progress. The provision in the College is comprehensive and includes a good range of academic, applied and practical courses. Much progress has been made by the College in making an important contribution to social cohesion in the community, through the integrated approach taken to the delivery of the Entitlement Framework provision.

7. Quality of provision for learning

7.1 Overall, the quality of the provision for learning is good; it is good in further education but is satisfactory in work-based learning.

7.2 The quality of the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the learners is good. The student support team have developed effective links with a range of external support organisations and agencies to provide support to learners on a wide range of personal, social, financial and educational issues. Good individual support is also provided to most of those learners who require additional help with their learning, including the provision of specialist equipment; clear targets are set for them and regular reviews ensure

that their progress is closely monitored. Most of the lecturers, across the provision inspected, provide good support and guidance to the learners and are aware of their individual personal and learning needs. In work-based learning, the lecturers need to provide more consistent levels of support and guidance to the learners so that they can achieve to their full potential. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the College has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding.

7.3 The learners' responses to the Inspectorate's pastoral care questionnaires, and the feedback from a majority of them during discussions in focus group meetings, raised concerns about a number of issues including the lack of College-wide social activities, the slow progress being made in constituting the student council, and the limited physical resources available for a number of courses, particularly those in media and art and design.

7.4 The quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance in further education is good. The careers officers are responsive to the needs of learners and provide impartial careers advice and guidance to help them make informed choices about career options. They have also established good working relationships with the marketing team and attend parents' evenings and other school events. While it is noteworthy that learners registered on the Training for Success programme undertake a certificated course in employability, overall, in work-based learning, the quality of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. For those learners not in a work placement, the provision of planned job search activities is not good enough across nearly all of the professional and technical areas. The learners on the Skills for Work strand have insufficient opportunities to undertake appropriate site visits or to benefit from regular guest speakers from industry. The careers officers would benefit from opportunities to undertake further continuous professional development in careers education.

7.5 In further education, the College offers an appropriate range of full and part-time courses across a majority of the professional and technical areas inspected, which provide good progression pathways. Particularly, the curriculum offer in business and management and sport, leisure and recreation is extensive. In business and management, the provision is broad encompassing courses from level 1 through to level 7, and in sports, leisure and recreation, a number of innovative sport academies in soccer, Gaelic games and golf have been successfully established. In contrast, it is a concern that the curriculum provision for hospitality and catering is underdeveloped, for example, the number of learners enrolled is low and has decreased by nearly 25% over the past three years. Work-related learning is well developed across nearly all of the professional and technical areas inspected, where the learners have appropriate access to industrial visits and guest speakers. The number of learners enrolling on part-time courses across the College has shown a downward trend over the past three years.

7.6 In work-based learning, while the provision is mostly focused in construction and engineering, the College has worked effectively to sustain its ApprenticeshipsNI provision, during challenging economic circumstances with the significant decline in the construction industry. While there has been a marked increase in its provision under the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success, the ApprenticeshipsNI programme still accounts for 40% of the College's total work-based learning provision.

7.7 The quality of the curriculum planning and relevance in work-based learning ranges from very good to inadequate. In engineering and transport operations, the training programmes are well-designed, match the needs of industry and provide good progression pathways to further education and training; learners make good use of industry standard equipment and practices. In both areas, there is a very good balance between workshop skills development and theory sessions. Significantly, in the remaining professional and

technical areas, the quality of the curriculum planning and relevance is inadequate. In electrical installation, for example, the trainees do not have access to a sufficiently broad curriculum that matches the needs of industry. The range of extended activities for those trainees without placements is limited and support arrangements are poor. In brickwork, plumbing and wood occupations, recurring weaknesses in curriculum planning include underdeveloped links with industry, and undue delays in the assessment of the learners in their NVQ units. Those learners without a work placement are not provided with adequate opportunities to undertake additional training in the College to develop and apply their occupational skills.

7.8 The training support officers provide good support for learners in work-based learning programmes. They have worked effectively, within the context of a downturn in the local economy, to increase the proportion of learners who have a work placement in industry. While at the time of the inspection 60% of the Training for Success learners were placed with employers, across the provision there is considerable variation in the workplace participation rates. The training support officers also provide effective support to learners through their participation in timetabled tutorial sessions. The quality of work-based training for those learners who are in a work placement and for those on ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is mostly good or better across the professional and technical areas.

7.9 The quality of teaching, training and learning is good or better in most (81%) of the lessons and directed training sessions observed, with 34% of them being very good or better. The high quality of teaching, training and learning is a feature of the provision in business and management, engineering, transport operations and sport, leisure and recreation. The key features of the most effective lessons include good planning, an appropriate mix of teaching and learning strategies, contextualised learning experiences, the use of industry standard equipment and practices, appropriate pace and challenge, and high expectations from the lecturers. In the remaining minority (19%) of the lessons and directed training sessions, most are satisfactory. These lessons are characterised by an overly narrow range of teaching and learning approaches, an ineffective range of questioning techniques, missed opportunities to extend learning through the use of ILT and insufficient pace or challenge.

7.10 The overall quality of the provision for learning in the essential skills is satisfactory. A majority (62%) of the teaching and learning is good or better, but it is a concern that an overly high proportion (38%) of it is not good enough. The less effective essential skills lessons are characterised by insufficient formative assessment, low levels of challenge, insufficient differentiation, and a prolonged emphasis on learning techniques with too little context.

7.11 The use of ILT across the provision inspected is variable. The lecturers make good use of ILT in further education; it is used particularly well in business and management and sports, leisure and recreation. It is not used well in the essential skills and, with the exception of engineering and transport operations, the use of ILT is underdeveloped in work-based learning. In addition, across the College, much of the ILT equipment and infrastructure is dated.

7.12 In work-based learning, the personal training plans are well set out with clear, measurable milestones for achievement and progress which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the training support officers. However, in order to address specifically the low outcomes on the Training for Success programme, there is a need for the lecturers and the training support officers to use the personal training planning process more effectively to identify and support those learners most at risk of not completing their training framework.

7.13 The quality of the provision for SLDD is good. The manager of this provision has a sound knowledge of, and vision, for the future development of College programmes to best support the personal, social and employability skills of the learners. The staff show a strong commitment to the care and welfare of the learners and have developed effective links and partnerships with a wide range of appropriate external organisations to support their needs. Most of the learners are confident, motivated and are making good progress in their learning. They take pride in their work, show enjoyment in their learning, and celebrate each other's achievements well. Most of the lecturers set realistic, high expectations for the learners and value their contributions. There is a need, however, for staff to share examples of good practice, particularly with regard to effective teaching strategies which keep learners engaged, consolidate learning and manage challenging behaviours.

8. Achievements and standards

8.1 Overall, achievements and standards are satisfactory; they are good in further education but are inadequate in work-based learning.

8.2 In the further education provision inspected, most of the learners participate well in class and demonstrate good or better standards of work; they have a good knowledge and understanding of their professional and technical areas. Most of the lecturers expect high standards of work from the learners who are developing an appropriate range of technical skills and competences. Across most of the areas inspected, the standards of the learners' written work and verbal communication skills are good or better, and most of them demonstrate good ICT skills, which they apply regularly and effectively in their lessons and assignment work.

8.3 In work-based learning, most of the learners are well-motivated and are developing appropriate skills in their practical training sessions. The apprentices and those Training for Success learners who have a work placement attain good occupational skills. However, those learners without work placements have too few opportunities to develop an appropriate range of occupational skills. Across the provision in construction, the arrangements for the assessment of the learners' occupational skills are not implemented effectively; as a consequence, these learners are making slow progress in completing and achieving their professional and technical units.

8.4 In the essential skills, the standards of written work in the learners' folders range from very good to inadequate. Where the work is satisfactory or inadequate there is insufficient progression in learning; it is poorly organised with limited signposting for improvement, too little evidence of extended writing and application of new learning in mathematics. There are also insufficient opportunities to combine with work in the learners' professional and technical areas. Where the standards are good or better there is clear evidence of progression in learning, effective contextualised tasks, helpful lecturer feedback and evidence of independent research and learning. The standards of the learners' spoken skills are good or better; almost all of them recognise the benefits of achieving their essential skills in improving employability. In work-based learning, the learners' attendance, behaviour and progress in their learning are satisfactory and require improvement.

8.5 Over the period 2009/10 to 2010/11, the outcomes on level 2 and level 3 courses in further education have increased. Retention rates on level 2 courses are very good and have increased from 81% to 86%. The achievement rates on level 2 courses are now good and have improved from 70% to 83%. The overall outcomes on level 2 courses have improved

from 56% to 71% and are in line with the sector average of 70%. Over the same period, retention rates on level 3 courses have improved from 87% to 92%. The achievement rates are good and have also improved, from 83% to 88%. Consequently, overall outcomes on level 3 courses have improved from 73% to 82%, which is above the sector average of 71%.

8.6 Over the last four years, overall outcomes on the Training for Success programme are very low; the average retention rate is unsatisfactory at 32% and the achievement rate is inadequate at 50%. The average retention rate on the Skills for Work strand is inadequate at 49% and the average achievement rate is satisfactory at 65%. The overall outcomes on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand are unacceptably low; over the same period, only 8% of the 675 trainees who commenced training successfully achieved the full framework. In construction, this is partly due to the low proportion of trainees who had work placements to meet the assessment requirements of the NVQ. Nevertheless, the achievements for the technical certificate are also low, ranging from 29% in brickwork to 41% in plumbing.

8.7 Over the last four years, the average retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is satisfactory at 68% and the average achievement rate is very good at 94%. The overall achievements on both strands of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme have increased over this period, mostly due to sustained improvements in retention rates.

8.8 In the essential skills the achievements are below the sector averages and are mostly inadequate. In further education, over the last three years, the average achievement rates in the essential skills of literacy and numeracy are inadequate at 64% and 61% respectively, and are satisfactory in ICT at 70%. In work-based learning, over the past four years, the average achievement rates in the essential skills of those who are retained are very good; in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT they are 88%, 86% and 82% respectively.

PART THREE: PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

9. [**Business and management**](#)
Performance Level: Very Good
10. [**Child development and well-being**](#)
Performance Level: Good
11. [**Electrotechnical services \(electrical installation\)**](#)
Performance Level: Satisfactory
12. [**Engineering**](#)
Performance Level: Very Good
13. [**Essential skills**](#)
Performance Level: Satisfactory
14. [**Hospitality and catering**](#)
Performance Level: Good
15. [**Mechanical engineering services \(plumbing\)**](#)
Performance Level: Inadequate
16. [**Media**](#)
Performance Level: Good
17. [**Sport, leisure and recreation**](#)
Performance Level: Very Good
18. [**Transportation operations and maintenance \(motor vehicle\)**](#)
Performance Level: Good
19. [**Trowel occupations \(brickwork\)**](#)
Performance Level: Inadequate
20. [**Wood occupations**](#)
Performance Level: Inadequate

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