



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in Riverpark Training and Development (NI) Limited

Report of an Inspection
in February 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Riverpark Training and Development (NI) Limited (Riverpark) is a private company which is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the ApprenticeshipsNI programme¹. The organisation delivers training from its premises in Mallusk and specialises in providing industry-standard training and professional development for the vehicle accident repair industry across Northern Ireland. At the time of the inspection, 91 apprentices were registered in the professional and technical area of transportation operations and maintenance. A small number (9%) of them have a disability and avail of learning support.

2. Views of apprentices

As part of the evaluation of Riverpark's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people, the apprentices completed an online questionnaire prior to the inspection. The returns were low (15%) and contained no written responses or comments. During the inspection, however, most of the apprentices reported positively on their experiences in the organisation.

In addition, inspectors met with apprentices in a focus group meeting. The apprentices reported that they were well supported in their learning and in the workplace and that they had good opportunities to develop their occupational skills and progress in their learning.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on the:

- outcomes for learners;
- quality of provision; and
- effectiveness of the leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

Overall quality of learning and training programmes		
ApprenticeshipsNI	100%	Very good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected and the essential skills provision	
Essential skills	Good
Transportation operations and maintenance	Very good

¹ Programme registration data provided by the organisation at the time of the inspection is included in the Appendix to this report.

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- the very good quality of the provision for transportation operations and maintenance and the good quality of the provision for the essential skills;
- the highly-regarded, professional partnerships with a wide range of employers which ensure that young people, in particular school-leavers, have access to apprenticeships that are valued highly and supported well by the vehicle body repair industry;
- the well-designed curriculum, which is matched closely the workforce development needs of employers and provides excellent opportunities for the apprentices to develop their occupational skills to industry standards, including opportunities to compete successfully in regional, national and international skills competitions;
- the very good or better standards of occupational skills and knowledge attained by most of the apprentices, who are progressing well in their learning;
- the good overall retention rate (75%), and the outstanding achievement (99%) and progression (97%) rates;
- the high outcomes in the essential skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), all of the apprentices who completed achieved their targeted qualification;
- the high quality of the care and welfare, guidance and support provided for the apprentices;
- the good to outstanding quality of the directed training, particularly the outstanding practical skills training where the apprentices engage readily in realistic repair projects that enable them to develop systematically contemporary occupational skills and techniques;
- the extensive learning and assessment opportunities available in the workplace for the apprentices to consolidate and apply their skills and knowledge, including their wider skills and capabilities; and
- the very good quality of the leadership and management including the high levels of commitment and ambition of the staff to continually develop the provision in order to meet to good effect the current and emerging training and development needs of the industry, particularly through high quality apprenticeships.

Areas for improvement

- increase recruitment levels to the light vehicle maintenance and repair programme and provide more detailed feedback to the apprentices in the development of their written work; and
- develop further the quality improvement planning process, particularly the clearer identification of the actions needed to support on-going improvement in the quality of the provision, and the use of more specific targets against which progress can be measured.

5. Outcomes for learners

Almost all of the apprentices are making good or better progress in the development of their occupational skills and underpinning knowledge. They are well-motivated, take a pride in their work, and are developing to good effect the organisational skills needed to ensure that tasks are completed within the required time constraints in the workplace. The standards of the apprentices' practical skills are mostly very good but on occasion outstanding. They can, for example, use contemporary technology and methods to replace damaged vehicle body sections and to refinish panels and vehicle bodies to industry standards. In the workplace, the apprentices are industrious, develop positive working relationships with their mentors, are able to follow accurately job card instructions and take the initiative to solve problems. They are able to use technical data sheets to, for example, mix paint systems to correct ratios, realign chassis legs and to apply correct welding and bonding procedures.

While most of the apprentices make appropriate progress in the achievement of their professional and technical qualifications, a minority are not diligent enough in completing job cards and portfolio write-ups in a timely enough manner. In addition, the quality of their written work is variable; while the content of the written responses is mostly accurate, a minority of the apprentices demonstrate limited confidence and competence in writing extended paragraphs with the required secretarial or grammatical accuracy.

In the essential skills, while the standards of the apprentices' oracy skills are mostly good or better, the quality of their written work is more variable but is mainly good. In numeracy, most of them demonstrate good or better levels of proficiency in the application of their skills whilst performing practical tasks in the workplace, particularly when reading scales and measuring.

Over the last three years, almost all (99%) of the apprentices who complete their training achieve their targeted qualifications. The overall retention rate is good (75%); it is good (70%) on the level two programme and very good (89%) on the level three programme. The progression rate from level two training to level three is outstanding (96%).

Over the same period, all of the apprentices who completed the essential skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) achieved their targeted qualification; most (89%) of the apprentices also progressed and achieved above their targeted level in literacy, although only a minority (17%) progressed and achieved at a higher level in numeracy. Outcomes to date in the revised essential skills assessments are largely positive; all of the apprentices achieved their targeted qualification in literacy and a majority (60%) of them have achieved in numeracy.

6. Quality of provision

The curriculum is well-designed, matched closely to the workforce development needs of employers and provides excellent opportunities for the apprentices to develop their occupational skills and knowledge. There is an appropriate focus on supporting the achievement of best practice through the apprenticeship programme along with a range of continuing professional development programmes for existing repair technicians across the vehicle body repair industry.

In the directed training observed, there is an appropriate emphasis on developing the apprentices' practical hand skills to ensure that they build their competence to enable them to function confidently in the workplace. Consequently, the apprentices spend a significant proportion of their training time in the training workshop completing realistic accident repair projects, practising and applying key occupational skills.

The quality of the learning, training and teaching observed varied from good to outstanding; most of it was good. The quality of the theory sessions observed were mostly good; while a broad range of learning approaches were deployed, most of the apprentices were reticent to engage fully and, as a result, questioning and responses were at times stilted and didn't extend their learning sufficiently. In contrast, the quality of the practical sessions were mostly outstanding; the practical tasks were well-planned, matched closely to the varying stages of the apprentices' development and promoted the development of their critical thinking and evaluation skills. Expectations for the apprentices to achieve high standards of occupational skills were evident and they were given continuous constructive feedback to help them to improve further.

The quality of the directed training observed in the essential skills was good overall. It was characterised by effective planning with a good range of stimulating activities used well to engage the apprentices in their learning. The tutors have developed good working relationships with the apprentices and support them well in their learning and skills development. There is a need, however, for the professional and technical tutors to provide further opportunities for the apprentices to practice and consolidate their skills through planned, coherent activities in their professional and technical work. In addition, the initial assessment process needs to be reviewed to ensure that more of the apprentices who enter the programme with a GCSE grade D target the appropriate essential skills at level 2.

In the workplace, the apprentices are provided with an extensive range of learning and assessment opportunities in order for them to consolidate and demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Workplace mentors provide them with effective support, guidance and challenge to enhance their confidence and competence, including the development and application of their wider skills and capabilities.

The assessment arrangements are mostly well-developed. An electronic portfolio underpins robust recording, tracking and reviewing of the apprentices' progress; consequently, they are very aware of their overall progress. In addition, the apprentices and employers are provided with detailed written progress reviews with any actions for improvement clearly articulated. While the apprentices are provided with comprehensive feedback on the quality of their practical work both in training and in the workplace, the quality of feedback on their written work is mostly insufficient. There is a need to provide the apprentices with well-targeted marking for improvement that underpins more effectively steady improvement in the quality of their written responses.

The care and welfare impacts positively on the learning, teaching and training for the apprentices. Staff work hard, in collaboration with employers, to provide training in a safe and supportive manner. All of the apprentices interviewed reported that the staff were approachable, encouraging and proactive in supporting them to achieve to their potential. Appropriate links have been established with a range of external agencies to support the apprentices in their learning.

7. Leadership and management

The quality and impact of leadership and management, at both strategic and operational levels, is very good. Senior managers and staff have established an excellent reputation for delivering high quality training and have established highly-regarded, professional partnerships with a wide range of employers. As a consequence, young people, particularly school-leavers, have access to apprenticeships that are valued highly by the vehicle body repair industry. The meaningful engagement with employers ensures that the training programmes are flexible, contemporary and aligned well to the needs of the industry.

The quality of the training facilities is mostly outstanding. Riverpark has invested heavily in providing well-equipped industry-standard training workshops. The workshops, in conjunction with the provision of modern vehicles to repair, provide the apprentices with an industry-standard training facility to develop their practical skills to a high standard.

The tutors are well-qualified, experienced and engage regularly in continuous professional development. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and ambition to continually develop the provision in order to meet well the current and emerging training and development needs of the industry, particularly through high quality apprenticeship programmes. They often go the 'extra mile' to ensure each apprentice progresses at the most appropriate pace, including extensive support for the more able apprentices to participate in competitions. To date, Riverpark has enjoyed continued high levels of success in regional, national and international skills competitions; it is noteworthy that in 2013, 2015 and 2017 three apprentices achieved bronze medals in body repair and refinishing at World Skills, and in 2017 three apprentices achieved gold and silver awards in body repair and refinishing at the United Kingdom national finals.

In the revised ApprenticeshipsNI 2017 programme, Riverpark's contract was enhanced to include a light vehicle maintenance and repair programme; only one apprentice, however, has been recruited to this programme, to date. Consequently, there is a need to increase recruitment to a more sustainable and viable level as soon as possible.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding apprentices reflects broadly the guidance issued by the Department. Senior managers need to ensure that relevant updated safeguarding training is provided for all staff within the specified timescale.

9. Overall effectiveness

Riverpark Training and Development (NI) Limited demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all apprentices. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI L2	55	60%
ApprenticeshipsNI L3	36	40%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices		% of total registrations
Transportation operations and maintenance	Level 2	Level 3	100%
Light vehicle maintenance and repair	1	0	1%
Vehicle accident repair body	23	19	46%
Vehicle accident repair mechanical electrical trim (MET)	1	2	4%
Vehicle accident repair paint	26	13	43%
Vehicle accident repair parts	4	2	6%

Table 3 - Qualifications of current apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	38%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	48%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	41%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	51%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	98%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	0%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk.

Three ETI inspectors observed 21 apprentices in eight directed training sessions. They also visited 19 apprentices in their workplace and interviewed six in focus group meetings. In addition, discussions were held with nine employers. Samples of the apprentices' work and personal training plans, and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on Outcomes for learners, Quality of Provision and on Leadership and Management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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