

19. PLUMBING (MECHANICAL ENGINEERING SERVICES)

Performance Level: Good

Areas Inspected:

- ApprenticeshipsNI programme, the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success and part-time further education courses at levels 2 and 3.

CONTEXT

19.1 The provision for plumbing is delivered in the Castlereagh and Millfield campuses and there are a broad range of progression routes available to the learners. Over the past three years, due to the downturn in the construction industry, there has been a significant decline in recruitment to the level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI programme, from a peak of 31 apprentices in 2008/09 to just 4 in 2012/13. In addition, the recruitment to the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of Training for Success has declined from an average of 24 trainees each year to just 14 in 2012/13. The College, appropriately, also offers a part-time further education route for those learners who are not eligible for the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand. Currently, there are 60 learners registered on the plumbing provision; 42 (70%) on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand, 9 (15%) on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme and 9 (15%) on the further education provision.

The quality of the leadership and management is good.

19.2 While the leadership and management team for the plumbing provision is only recently in post, it has identified the shortcomings in the provision and started to take appropriate actions to address them. Consequently, a review of the curriculum has taken place and revised provision introduced. However, there is a need to ensure the sufficiency of this provision for the minority (20%) of learners without a work placement. The processes and arrangements for self-evaluation need to be developed further; while the reports highlight some of the weaknesses in the provision, there is a lack of reliable data to inform the action planning process and to set measureable targets which can be used to monitor progress and demonstrate sustainable improvement. The curriculum planning process is effective in identifying trends in recruitment and opportunities to develop the curriculum offer to better match government priorities and the emerging skills gaps. The level of economic engagement is very good; links and partnerships with employers and industry are used well to inform curriculum development. The quality of the accommodation ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. There are outstanding facilities in the newly opened e3 facility, however, the workshop accommodation in the Castlereagh campus is cramped and the classroom is poorly ventilated.

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

19.3 The quality of the teaching, training and learning is good or better; a minority (29%) is very good. A key feature of the very good sessions is the planning to meet the needs of all of the learners and the extension of their knowledge of new technologies. The provision could be enhanced further by extending the approaches to differentiation, the inclusion of more project-based learning activities in the theory sessions and the use of more interactive ILT resources. The arrangements for work placements are good, with most (80%) of the Programme-Led Apprentices placed with suitable employers. The College should review the arrangements for assessment of the NVQ component of the plumbing framework to ensure

that opportunities to assess the learners during their first year are not missed. The processes to monitor and review the learners' progress are inadequate; it is a concern that they are not visited and reviewed sufficiently in their work placement. The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance is good; the learners are aware of the progression pathways available to them and there is a good programme of guest speakers from industry and talks from past apprentices.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory

19.4 The standards achieved by the learners in practical training sessions and in the work placements are mostly good; they are, for example, able to install hot water cylinders, and cut and bend pipe to acceptable tolerances. The learners' verbal and written communication skills are mostly good. The retention and achievement rates on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand are inadequate at 54% and 59% respectively but the progression rate to further training or employment is very good at 88%. The retention rate on the level 2 ApprenticeshipsNI strand is just satisfactory at 64%, the achievement rate is good at 80% and the progression rate to further training or employment is outstanding at 100%. The retention rate on the part-time further education programmes is very good at 88% and the achievement rate is good at 83%.

Further Education: Table of Achievements (over the last two years)

Course Type	Completion Year 2011			Completion Year 2012			Two Year Average		
	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)	Ret (%)	Ach (%)	Succ (%)
Part-Time Courses at Level 2 and Level 3	67	75	50	95	85	81	88	83	74
Overall	67	75	50	95	85	81	88	83	74

Work-Based Learning: Table of Achievements (over the last four years)

Programme/Strand	Numbers registered who completed 4 weeks training	Retention rate %	Achievement rate %	Progression rate for those who achieved full award %
Programme-Led Apprenticeships	50	54	59	88
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2	47	64	80	100