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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**



**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Survey**

### **Jobskills Provision**

### **Armagh College of Further Education**

**Inspected: February 2007**

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A number of quantitative terms are used in the report. In percentages, the terms correspond as follows:

More than 90%	-	almost/nearly all
75%-90%	-	most
50%-74%	-	a majority
30%-49%	-	a significant minority
10%-29%	-	a minority
Less than 10%	-	very few/a small minority

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Armagh College.

### Grading System

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) is piloting a new 6-point grading scale to replace the original 4-point scale as set out below. Where grades are recorded in this report, the grade is given on both the old and the revised scales.

ORIGINAL GRADE	REVISED GRADE	DESCRIPTOR
1	1	Outstanding characterised by excellence
1	2	Consistently good; major strengths
2	3	Important strengths in most of provision. Areas for improvement which organisation has the capacity to address.
2	4	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
3	5	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
4	6	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

## **SUMMARY**

### **1. CONTEXT**

1.1 Armagh College of Further Education (the college) supplies vocational training for the Department for Employment and Learning through the Jobskills Access, Traineeship and Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes. The college's main campus is located close to the centre of Armagh City, and it has two other smaller campuses, Lisanally Lane and Station Road, approximately 500 metres from the main campus. Lisanally Lane and Station Road campuses have construction, motor vehicle and engineering workshops and classrooms, which are used for the delivery of the Jobskills programme.

1.2 The latest statistics (February 2007) published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) indicate that the claimant count in the Armagh District Council Area is 1.7%, which is the fifth lowest and below the Northern Ireland average of 2.5%.

1.3 Most of the trainees recruited to the Jobskills programmes progress from secondary schools in the City of Armagh and surrounding areas of Markethill, Newtownhamilton and Keady. At the time of the inspection, all of trainees on the Access programme held less than four General Certificates in Secondary Education (GCSE) at grade C or above, but the majority (55%) had achieved grades D to G in English and mathematics. A significant minority (47%) of the trainees on the Traineeship and MA programmes held four GCSEs at grade C or above, and 39% had achieved at least a grade C in English and 40% in mathematics. All of the trainees registered on Jobskills programmes at the time of the inspection were males.

### **2. PROVISION**

2.1 At the time of the inspection, there were 242 trainees registered on Jobskills programmes. Twenty-four (10%) trainees were registered on the Access programme targeting National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 1 and an essential skills qualification. One hundred and sixty-four (68%) were registered on the Traineeship programme, targeting an NVQ at level 2 and the remaining 54 (22%) trainees were on the MA programme targeting an NVQ at level 3. Trainees on the Traineeship and MA programmes also complete a framework of essential skills at level 1 and level 2 respectively, and an appropriate technical certificate if required. Sixty per cent of the trainees were registered on programmes in the vocational area of building and construction, 34% in transportation operations and maintenance, and the remaining 6% in mechanical engineering.

2.2 The provision for building and construction comprises mechanical engineering services (plumbing), trowel occupations (brickwork) and wood occupations (carpentry and joinery). In carpentry and joinery, recruitment to the Traineeship programme is healthy with an average enrolment of 28 trainees each year. Recruitment to the MA programme has, however, declined, from 22 in 2003/04 to nine in 2006/07. The provision for plumbing commenced only in September 2004, and has a steady recruitment of approximately 15 trainees each year. The MA programme in plumbing has just commenced in March 2006 with its first cohort of eight trainees. In brickwork, recruitment is steady with approximately 15 trainees each year to the Traineeship and seven to the MA.

2.3 Recruitment in the vocational area of mechanical engineering (fabrication and welding) has declined significantly over the last three years. In 2003/04, 24 trainees were recruited to the Traineeship and MA programmes; however, by the time of the inspection only 12 trainees were registered on these programmes.

2.4 The provision for transportation operations and maintenance comprises light vehicle body repair, light vehicle maintenance and repair, and heavy vehicle maintenance and repair. On Traineeship programmes, recruitment is satisfactory and has grown slightly over the last three years, from 27 in 2003/04 to 34 in 2005/06. Recruitment to MA programmes, however, is low, with an annual average of only 13 trainees spread across the three motor vehicle programmes.

2.5 Directed training is provided for the trainees at the college's Lisanally Lane and Station Road Campuses. Trainees on the Access programme attend directed training two days each week, and are in workplacement for the remainder. The directed training for Access trainees comprises essential skills development, development of their social and life skills through Opportunity Youth sessions and a personal mentoring programme, and development of their chosen vocational skills. Trainees on the Traineeship programme attend directed training two days each week, and are in workplacement for the remainder. Trainees on the MA programme attend directed training one day each week. Directed training for trainees on the Traineeship and MA programmes comprises practical workshop sessions to develop their craft skills, theory sessions to develop understanding of related technical knowledge, and discrete sessions to develop their essential/key skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT).

### **3. THE INSPECTION**

3.1 This report is based on an inspection of the trainees' practical and written work, of their work-based training, and of their directed training. The inspection focused on the Traineeship and MA programmes across the vocational areas of carpentry and joinery, light vehicle maintenance and repair, heavy vehicle maintenance and repair, and plumbing. The area of preparation for life and work, which includes the Access programme, essential/key skills, trainee support, and career education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), was also inspected. These areas, in total, account for 72% of the 242 trainees registered at the time of the inspection.

3.2 During the inspection, a team of four inspectors and an associate assessor observed 144 trainees in 26 directed training sessions, and 24 trainees were visited in the workplace. Discussions were held with the Director, Assistant Director (quality) and student services manager, head of school, careers and ICT co-ordinators, monitoring officer, course co-ordinators, lecturers, employers and trainees. The inspectors examined samples of the trainees' work, vocational and essential/key skills portfolios, internal and external verifiers' reports and other relevant documentation.

3.3 Prior to the inspection, a large sample of the trainees completed a pastoral care questionnaire, which provided them with the opportunity to comment on the arrangements for pastoral care within the college, and on the quality of their learning experiences. The college management also completed a questionnaire relating to its pastoral care arrangements.

#### 4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Armagh College has major strengths in its educational and training provision. The educational, training and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met, along with the needs of the community and the economy. The parents and the community can have confidence in the college's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- standards of work achieved by the trainees in both the workplace and in directed training;
- retention, success and progression rates, which have improved steadily over the last three years to 80% for retention and 100% for success and progression in 2005/2006 ;
- quality of trainees' directed and workplace training;
- quality of learning support, especially the individual support provided for trainees with weaknesses in literacy and numeracy; and
- quality of leadership and management at all levels;

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- layout of the training accommodation; and
- trainees access to, and use of, the virtual learning environment (VLE) to support the development of their technical knowledge.

#### 4.4 GRADES

Provision	Overall	
	No of trainees	Grade
	242	2
Contributory Grades:		
Standards and Outcomes		2
Learning and Training		2
Leadership & Management		1

<b>Areas of Learning</b>	<b>No of trainees</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Building and Construction	103	2
Contributory grades:		2
- Plumbing	42	2
- Carpentry & Joinery	61	2
Transportation Operations and Maintenance	49	3
Preparation for Life & Work	All	2
Contributory grades:		
- Access	24	2
- Literacy – Key and Essential Skills	All	2
- Numeracy – Key and Essential Skills	All	3
- Information, Communication Technology (ICT)	All	3
- Trainee Support	All	2
- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)	All	2

## **OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION**

### **5. STANDARDS AND OUTCOMES**

5.1 Most of the trainees are highly motivated and committed to their training programme. Their attendance and timekeeping in directed and workplace training are generally good. They are able to work independently and as part of a team, and have established excellent working relationships with their tutors and workplace supervisors. They have a positive attitude to their training programme.

5.2 The standards of the practical skills demonstrated in the workplace by almost all of the trainees are excellent to good. The trainees develop an appropriate range of skills to industry standards, which they are able to perform efficiently and effectively, with minimal supervision. In building and construction, the trainees are able to work as part of a team to prioritise and complete practical tasks, at an appropriate pace. These practical tasks include first and second fixing in joinery, and the installation of domestic and industrial heating systems in plumbing. In transportation operations and maintenance, the trainees are able to carry out competently maintenance and repair tasks to heavy or light vehicles, which include pre-delivery inspections, annual services and complex diagnosis and repair. They can complete these tasks within prescribed time allocations.

5.3 The trainees' understanding of the technical knowledge relating to their vocational area is mostly excellent. They are able to describe accurately the principles underpinning their practical tasks. A number of the plumbing trainees, for example, have a detailed understanding of the new technologies required to make use of renewable energy sources in domestic and industrial heating systems, which they are able to use and apply in the workplace.

5.4 In essential skills, most trainees are highly motivated and engage well in their learning activities. Their written and oral communication skills are good, enabling them to take instructions from supervisors, and to read and understand drawings and instruction manuals. Their numeracy skills relating to their vocational area are well-developed, particularly in the use of measurement and performing basic arithmetic functions. In carpentry and joinery, for example, the trainees understand and use trigonometric functions to assist in the setting-out of roofs and stairs. Most trainees make good progress towards the achievement of their targeted qualification.

5.5 Over the last three years, of the 59 trainees who started the Access programme, 38 completed the programme and 37 gained the full award. Taking into consideration the 5 trainees who were still on training at the time of the inspection, these figures represent a good retention rate of 73%, and an excellent success rate of 97% for those who complete their programme.

5.6 Over the last three years, of the 262 trainees who started Traineeship programmes, 115 completed them and 97 gained the full award. Taking into consideration the 75 trainees who were still on training at the time of the inspection, these figures represent a satisfactory retention rate of 73%, and a good success rate of 84% for those who complete their programme.



5.7 Over the last three years, of the 131 trainees who started MA programmes, 45 completed them and 41 gained the full award. Taking into consideration the 49 trainees who were still on training at the time of the inspection, these figures represent a satisfactory retention rate of 72%, and an excellent success rate of 91% for those who complete their programme.

5.8 Over the last three years, progression of trainees to further training or relevant employment is consistently excellent at 87% for the Access programme, at 93% for the Traineeship programme, and at 100% for the MA programme. On the Access programme, 76% of the trainees who successfully completed their programme progressed to a Traineeship programme. On the Traineeship programme, 80% of the trainees progressed to MA programmes.

5.9 Over the last three years, the overall retention, success and progression rates have improved. The retention rate improved from modest (65%) in 2003/04 to good (80%) in 2005/06. Success and progression rates for 2005/06 were both excellent at 100%, resulting in 80% of the trainees who commenced their training during this period achieving their targeted qualification and progressing to further training or employment.

## **6. LEARNING AND TRAINING**

6.1 Across all the programmes inspected, just over 80% of the trainees reported through the trainee questionnaires that they enjoyed being at the college and found the work interesting and challenging, with almost all (97%) indicating that they would recommend the course to a friend. Approximately a third of the respondents, however, reported that the training buildings are not in good condition, and there are insufficient facilities to relax with friends.

6.2 There are good arrangements for trainee initial assessment, diagnostic assessment and induction. On application to a Jobskills programme, all trainees undergo an initial assessment to inform both the trainee and the local DEL careers officers of the trainee's level of ability. During the induction programme, trainees on the Traineeship and Access programme undertake further diagnostic testing, which informs the nature of any additional learning support required. The induction programme, also includes an introduction to the safe use of basic hand tools, to student services available within the college, to vocational career pathways, and to the assessment arrangements.

6.3 The quality of the directed training provided for the trainees ranges from good to sound. In just over one third (38%) of the directed training sessions observed, the quality of the training was judged to be consistently good with major strengths. In the remainder of the sessions observed, the training was at least sound, with half of these sessions judged to have important strengths. The directed training sessions are always well-planned and are matched well to the trainees' workplace training. The lecturers organise and prepare thoroughly for each session to ensure the training activities are appropriately challenging and stimulating, and are differentiated to meet the learning needs of all the trainees. The range of practical training activities, particularly in plumbing and carpentry and joinery, to develop the trainees' practical skills is excellent. These practical activities are also used well to support the development of the trainees' underpinning knowledge. In some theory sessions, information and learning technology (ILT) is used to enhance the trainees understanding of related technical knowledge. In transportation operations and maintenance, for example, the trainees

benefit significantly from computer-based learning programmes to support their learning, which explain and illustrate effectively the principles of engines, transmissions, and related systems. There is a need, however, to develop further the use of ILT, particularly the use of the college's VLE to support the trainees' learning, both within the college and at home. On occasions, assessment for learning is underdeveloped; there is insufficient use of formative assessment and oral questioning to promote and reinforce learning.

6.4 Almost all of the trainees are provided with excellent work placements, which provide them with good opportunities to develop and apply their practical occupational skills, technical knowledge, and essential and key skills. Most of the trainees' workplace supervisors are provided with a generic training plan. There is, however, a need to refine these training plans to ensure they are effective in setting short term training targets for individual trainees, and guide trainee reviews.

6.5 The quality of the provision to develop the trainees' essential skills has important strengths in numeracy and ICT, and it is consistently good in literacy. The lecturers make effective use of the results of the trainees' initial and diagnostic testing to ensure that the training provided addresses their identified weaknesses. The training activities are well-planned, in consultation with the trainees' vocational tutors, and are often contextualised within the trainees' chosen vocational area of learning. A minority of the trainees, however, are not developing their ICT skills to the level of which they are capable of. There is an effective programme of additional one to one learning support for trainees who struggle to meet learning outcomes, particularly for trainees on the Access programme.

6.6 There are appropriate arrangements in place to monitor and review the trainees' progress and achievements in the workplace. The majority of trainees are visited regularly, and are provided with detailed feedback on their progress. For a significant minority of trainees, however, due to inadequate staffing levels, their reviews are not completed in the workplace.

6.7 The quality of the training accommodation is variable. The majority of the workshops and classrooms are spacious and provide good access to specialist equipment. A minority of the workshops and classrooms are, however, cramped and/or provide inadequate access to ILT resources.

## **7. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

7.1 The quality of the management and coordination of the training provision, at all levels, is excellent. The senior management team responsible for vocational training, comprising of the head of school, and a recently appointed deputy head of school, together with the colleges assistant director (quality) deputy director and Director, provide excellent leadership and direction in the development of the training provision to meet the training needs of young people and employers.

7.2 There are good links with employers, the local community, and local secondary schools. These links are used effectively to provide occupational skills programmes for 14-16 year olds from local schools. There are regular meetings with representatives from local employers, and with other training providers, to develop the training programmes in line with local industry requirements.

7.3 The college has in place an appropriate policy and procedures in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Reference to the policy and procedures is, however, not included in the trainees' course handbook.

7.4 The CEIAG has major strengths. All trainees receive timely and appropriate information regarding progression pathways within their vocational area, and have access to a careers officer within the college for individual advice and guidance. Comprehensive careers information regarding further career options and opportunities are posted on the college's VLE. There is a need for senior management to promote and encourage all the trainees to make effective use of these good resources, including improved access to the VLE within directed training workshops and classrooms.

7.5 Across the programmes inspected, the staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. They have participated in a range of staff development activities, which have contributed well to their own personal development and to their capacity to provide effective and relevant vocational training.

7.6 The quality of the self-evaluation and development planning is good. Within each vocational area, the course teams have identified the strengths and areas for improvement, which are a good match with the findings of the inspection. There are effective strategies at senior management level to review rigorously vocational self-evaluation reports and put in place suitable development plans. Senior management prioritise, monitor and evaluate regularly the actions to bring about improvement within the development plan, through the college's balanced score card.

## AREA OF LEARNING REPORTS

### 8. BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION – WOOD OCCUPATIONS

**Programme inspected: Traineeship and Modern Apprenticeship in Wood Occupations**

Number registered	Grade	
	Original Grading System	Revised Grading System
61	1	2

8.1 In wood occupations the organisation has major strengths in its educational and training provision. The educational, training and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met, along with the needs of the community and the economy. The parents and the community can have confidence in the organisation's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-inspection is required.

8.2 The main strengths are the:

- standards of occupational skills demonstrated by most of the trainees in the workplace and directed training;
- levels of motivation and positive attitudes to training for the majority of trainees;
- success rates on the Traineeship and MA programmes, which are excellent at 93% and 96% respectively;
- progression rates on the Traineeship and the MA programmes, which are excellent at 100%;
- quality of the directed training, with a good balance of planned theory and practical work;
- effective structures for the coordination and management of the provision; and
- effective procedures to monitor and evaluate the trainees' progress in directed training and the workplace.

8.3 The main area for improvement is the:

- retention rates on the Traineeship and MA programmes, which are satisfactory at 70% and 74% respectively.

9. **BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING SERVICES - PLUMBING**

**Programme inspected: Traineeship and Modern Apprenticeship in Plumbing**

Number registered	Grade	
	Original Grading System	Revised Grading System
42	1	2

9.1

In plumbing, the organisation has major strengths in its educational and training provision. The educational, training and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met, along with the needs of the community and the economy. The parents and community can have confidence in the organisation's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-inspection is required.

9.2 The main strengths are the:

- excellent retention and success rates on the traineeship programme, at 93% and 90% respectively;
- excellent progression rates on the traineeship programme at 100%;
- good work placements, based on the lecturers' relationships with local firms; and
- excellent planning of workshop activities to develop the trainees' skills and knowledge.

9.3 The main area for improvement is the:

- staffing level to ensure quality of provision and pastoral care is maintained.

10. **TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE**

**Programme inspected: Traineeship in Light Vehicle Maintenance & Repair  
Traineeship in Heavy Vehicle Maintenance & Repair  
Modern Apprenticeship in Light Vehicle Maintenance & Repair  
Modern Apprenticeship in Heavy Vehicle Maintenance & Repair**

Number registered	Grade	
	Original Grading System	Revised Grading System
49	2	3

10.1 In transportation operations and maintenance, the organisation has important strengths in most of its educational and training provision. The inspection has identified a number of areas for improvement which need to be addressed if the needs of the learners and those of the community and the economy are to be fully met. The organisation has the capacity to bring about the improvements required.

The organisation's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed-up by the College's District Inspector.

10.2 The main strengths are the:

- standards of work demonstrated by most trainees in the workplace and in directed training;
- attitudes of the trainees to training and employment;
- progression rates to further training and to employment, which are excellent at over 90%; and
- success rate for trainees who complete their training programme, which is good at 82%.

10.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- retention rate, which is satisfactory at 73%; and
- use of formative assessment and oral questioning, within directed training, to promote and reinforce learning;

## 11. PREPARATION FOR LIFE AND WORK

**Programmes inspected: Essential and Key skills**

**Access programme**

**Trainee Support**

**Careers education, information, advice and guidance**

Provision	Number registered	Grade	
		Original Grading System	Revised Grading System
Overall	all	1	2
Contributory grades:			
- Literacy	all	1	2
- Numeracy	all	2	3
- ICT	all	2	3
- Access	24	1	2
- Trainee Support	all	1	2
- CEIAG	all	1	2

11.1 In preparation for life and work, the organisation has major strengths in its educational and training provision. The educational, training and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met, along with the needs of the community and the economy. The parents and the community can have confidence in the organisation's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

11.2 The main strengths are the:

- good standards of work achieved in essential skills by most trainees;
- good standards of work and high levels of motivation demonstrated by most Access trainees;
- excellent success and progression rates on the Access programme at 94% and 87% respectively;
- excellent success rates in essential skills, for trainees who complete their training programme, at over 90%
- well-managed Access provision, including the good provision of trainee mentoring and community relations programmes;
- detailed and well-designed CEIAG provision;
- high levels of pastoral care and trainee support provided by both essential skills and vocational tutors.

11.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- more effective use of ILT to enhance the quality of training and learning in essential skills; and
- need to ensure that all trainees in ICT are working at a level commensurate with their ability.

## **KEY PRIORITIEIS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Armagh College needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following priority for development:

- the provision of accommodation to facilitate fully modern training needs, including greater access to, and use of, the college's VLE.



## TABLES

## JOB SKILLS ACCESS

Year	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to Traineeship %	Progressed to relevant employment %
2003/2004	22	68%	93%	93%	0
2004/2005	18	72%	100%	54%	15%
2005/2006	19	79%	100%	80%	20%
	<b>Average</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>11%</b>

2005/06 – 5 trainees still on training

## JOB SKILLS TRAINEESHIP

Year	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to Modern Apprenticeship %	Progressed to relevant employment %
2003/2004	78	68%	89%	98%	2%
2004/2005	83	75%	81%	88%	12%
2005/2006	101	74%	-	-	
	<b>Average</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>7%</b>

2005/06 – 75 trainees still on training

## JOBSKILLS MODERN APPRENTICESHIP

Year	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to relevant employment %
2003/2004	51	59%	90%	100%
2004/2005	45	70%	93%	100%
2005/2006	36	92%	-	
	<b>Average</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>100%</b>

2004/05 – 16 trainee still on training

2005/06 – 33 trainees still on training

## JOBSKILLS OVERALL SUMMARY

Year	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to further training or relevant employment %
2003/2004	151	65%	90%	99%
2004/2005	145	72%	83%	73%
2005/2006	156	80%	100%	100%
	<b>Average</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>88%</b>

2004/05 – 16 trainees still on training

2005/06 - 117 trainees still on training

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