



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Larne Skills Development
Limited

Report of an Inspection
in January 2016

Quantitative 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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning, on Leadership and management, and on the overall quality of professional and technical areas:

Current performance level	Previous performance level ¹
Outstanding	Outstanding
Very good	Very good
Good	Good
Important area(s) for improvement	Satisfactory
Requires significant improvement	Inadequate
Requires urgent improvement	Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness

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

Overall effectiveness outcome	Previous performance level
The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.	Outstanding and very good
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.	Good
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, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection.	Satisfactory
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, which includes the need to produce an improvement plan, which will be the basis for a formal follow-up inspection.	Inadequate and unsatisfactory

¹ The ETI performance levels were revised with effect from the 1 September 2015.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments at week 4 of year one who completed their occupational training framework, measured over the full duration of their course.
Achievement	The percentage of trainees/apprentices who completed their occupational training framework and who fully achieved their framework qualification.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who progressed to further/higher education/training or employment.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

A team of four inspectors and one associate assessor observed a total of 76 trainees and apprentices in 17 directed training sessions. Inspectors visited eight workplaces, and 18 trainees and apprentices were interviewed in focus group meetings. The inspectors held discussions with the directors, the centre manager, programme co-ordinators, and tutors. In addition, inspectors examined samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work and personal training plans, and the tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans. The organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

The inspectors evaluated the organisation's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people. The inspection included the opportunity for the trainees and apprentices to express their views on their training and learning experience by completing an online questionnaire prior to the inspection.

The questionnaire returns show that nearly all of the trainees and apprentices find that their training programme meets their needs and is preparing them well for further training or employment. Most of those who responded to the questionnaire were positive about their training experiences, although a minority did raise concerns about the quality of the recreation and changing facilities available to them in the organisation.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned (%)	Number with comments
Learners	100	61	61%	4

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the Achievements and standards;
- the effectiveness of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes;
- the quality of Provision for training and learning; and
- the quality of the Leadership and management of the organisation.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation and which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI's publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* <http://www.etini.gov.uk/improving-quality-raising-standards/improving-quality-raising-standards-igrs-further-education.htm>

3. Context

Larne Skills Development Limited (Larne Skills Development) is a privately owned training provider with its main training premises in Larne, and smaller training facility in Ballymena (Ballymena Skills). The organisation, was first established in 1991, and is managed by the centre manager, who is supported well by a team of ten professional and technical staff, two programme administration staff, and an office manager. The manager reports to two directors who are also actively involved in the everyday operation and delivery of the training provision.

The organisation is contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. At the time of the inspection, there were 57 trainees on the Training for Success 2013 programme; all were registered in the professional and technical area of engineering. Of these trainees: eight were on the Skills for Your Life strand; 12 on the Skills for Work level 1 strand; and 37 on the Skills for Work level 2 strand. There were 74 apprentices on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme in Engineering; 11 at level 2, and 63 at level 3. Three apprentices were registered in business and administration, one at level 2 and two at level 3².

Based on information provided by the organisation, 25 (19%) of the trainees and apprentices have an assessed and supported disability or additional learning support need. The organisation reports that many of the young people who present to them have a range of barriers to learning, including mental health issues, addictions, anger management problems and a range of other personal, social and emotional issues. Seven of the trainees and two of the apprentices have declared no formal qualifications on entry to their training programme. Around 28% of the trainees and 41% of the apprentices entered the programme with four or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, or equivalent. Approximately 30% of the trainees and 37% of the apprentices hold a GCSE qualification at grade C or better in English, and 33% of the trainees and 43% of the apprentices hold a GCSE qualification at grade C or better in mathematics.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Very Good

Professional and technical areas performance levels	
Engineering	Very Good
Essential Skills	Good

Going well

- The very effective systems in place to track and monitor the progress of the trainees and apprentices.
- The high quality of the pastoral care, including the mentoring and support arrangements in place for the trainees and apprentices.
- The very good standards of practical work achieved by the trainees and apprentices, both in directed training and the workplace.
- The very high levels of employer engagement and the very good quality of the work placements.

² The business and administration provision was not inspected due to the small numbers registered.

- The dedicated and committed staff who have good opportunities to undertake continuing professional development.
- The high achievement rates both in engineering and in the essential skills.
- The high progression rates to further training on both the Training for Success programme and the level 2 apprenticeship.

What does Larne Skills Development need to do to improve?

- Continue to expand the curriculum offer to meet more fully the needs of employers and to broaden the range of specialist skills developed by the trainees and apprentices.
- Continue to embed the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support and enhance the quality of teaching, training and learning.

5. Achievements and standards

The achievements and standards are very good

The standards achieved by most of the trainees and apprentices range from good to outstanding, and are mostly very good. Most of them are well-motivated and are progressing well in their training; they develop quickly a good range of practical engineering skills to an appropriate standard. In directed training, through a well-considered, graduated range of practical training tasks, the trainees and apprentices steadily increase their competence and confidence levels in using technical information, hand tools and specialist equipment to perform a variety of engineering operations. They are, for example, able to read and interpret engineering drawings, mark out and remove material accurately, weld and fabricate steel plate structures. Consequently, they develop key employability skills, including an appropriate focus on health and safety awareness, which prepares them well for the workplace. In the workplace, the apprentices and those trainees with work-experience placements are able to apply and further develop their occupational skills to an acceptable industry standard. This includes, for example, fabricating and welding chassis structures for goods vehicles, machining high tolerance components for the oil industry, assembling engineering components, and maintaining and repairing production processing plant. They also develop a sound understanding of the related engineering principles, current manufacturing technology, and industry standards and conventions. Notably, the trainees and apprentices, over the duration of their training, adapt well to industry working patterns, develop effective team working and problem solving skills.

The trainees' and apprentices' oral communication skills are mainly well-developed and most of them are able to communicate confidently. The standards of their written skills are more variable, ranging from satisfactory to good, but are mainly good. There is evidence that most of their written skills are improving as they progress through their programme. In numeracy, they are able to measure, convert between different metric units and prepare a job costing. The trainees are all able to use ICT to a good standard, for example, using relevant software to create attractive and informative leaflets. While the work in their essential skills folders is of an appropriate standard and is mostly well presented, in it could be better organised. Assessment evidence in the apprentices' portfolios is presented to a very good standard; the drawings are neat with clear, succinct and accurate notation.

Appropriately, all of the trainees and level 2 apprentices with a grade D in GCSE English and mathematics are targeting level 2 essential skills. All of them who complete their programme achieve their targeted essential skills. A significant minority of the trainees, 41% in literacy and 31% in numeracy, are working at a level beyond what is required in their framework. For the apprentices, 45% achieve at a higher level in literacy and 33% in numeracy.

For the last three years, the retention rate on the Training for Success programme is good at 63% and the achievement rate is outstanding at 100%. Progression to further training or relevant employment is outstanding at 94%; the majority of the trainees who completed their training progressed to a higher-level training programme. Over the same period, the retention rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is very good at 84% and the achievement rate is outstanding at 100%. The progression rate is outstanding at 98%; almost all of the level 2 apprentices progress to level 3.

6. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

The engineering provision is well-planned; there is an appropriate balance between the theory sessions and practical workshop training. A suitable range of units enables the apprentices and trainees to develop a good range of engineering skills that are matched well to the needs of local employers. In particular, the trainees and apprentices have very good opportunities to develop bench fitting and welding skills using industry standard equipment.

The appropriately strong focus on off-the-job practical skills training increases the trainees and apprentices dexterity and confidence in using hand tools, welding and metal cutting equipment safely and competently. Subsequently, the trainees are able to identify and develop their personal capabilities and strengths, and these attributes are used effectively by the organisation to identify the most suitable workplace for them.

The organisation recognises the need to expand further its curriculum, to offer a wider range of option units that increases the employment and progression opportunities for the trainees and apprentices. It is timely that work has begun in developing learning resources for engineering assembly units.

The quality of the trainees' and apprentices' workplace training is mostly very good. They are provided with a good range of learning experiences. Most of the trainees and apprentices are rotated around the various engineering sections within their company. As a result, they develop a broad range of engineering skills which strengthens their employability and future progression opportunities.

The quality of the directed training sessions observed range from good to very good, and is mostly good. The sessions are consistently well-planned and supported with high quality learning materials to enhance the learning. The better sessions progress at an appropriate pace and include high levels of learning support and effective strategies to promote self-assessment and independent learning. In all of the sessions observed, the trainees and apprentices engage readily in the training activities and make good progress, questioning is used well to promote and consolidate learning, and they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. There is a need, however, in the engineering theory sessions to draw more effectively on the trainees' and apprentices' practical training and workplace experiences to underpin their understanding of engineering principles.

An appropriate system of lesson observations has been put in place by the centre manager to evaluate the quality of teaching, training and learning across the organisation, including the use of peer observation.

Whilst investment has been made to purchase electronic learning resources and interactive whiteboards, the use of ILT to support learning, teaching and training could be developed further; consideration should also be given to the development of a virtual learning environment to support programme delivery.

In the essential skills, the results of initial and diagnostic assessments are used well to create a profile for each trainee and apprentice that identifies the skills they need to further develop. The essential skills staff have developed good relationships with the trainees and apprentices and have a good understanding of their complex needs and barriers to learning. The directed training sessions observed were well planned, the tasks set were at an appropriate level to meet the needs of the trainees, were contextualised well to the engineering work they were undertaking, and there was evidence of marking for improvement to support them to develop their skills. The trainees engaged well, were well supported in their learning, and their behaviour was good. On a small number of occasions, more effective questioning techniques could have been used to help them come to a better understanding of the skills being developed, particularly when they produced different solutions to a specific problem. In addition, some opportunities to relate the work to real-life situations were missed.

The personal training plans are of a good quality. They are comprehensive and capture well the trainees' and apprentices' qualification profile on entry, the outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessments, and their learning and support needs. The plans are working documents and are updated regularly to reflect the trainees' and apprentices' on-going achievements and progress in their learning.

Well developed recording and tracking arrangements are in place and are used effectively to regularly monitor and review the progress of the trainees and apprentices. The outcomes of the reviews are detailed and used well to measure progress against the detailed milestones in the trainees' and apprentices' personal training plans. The progress reviews inform accurately any necessary remedial action needed to address insufficient progress or to identify any additional training opportunities.

The quality of the care, guidance and support provided for the trainees and apprentices is very good. The system for identifying and managing individual support needs is effective, well-planned, and sensitively managed; it includes individual mentoring and a tailored one-to-one support system, with a focus on supporting the trainees and apprentices to successfully overcome barriers to learning and to achieve to their full potential. Very effective arrangements are in place for pre-entry advice and guidance, and induction. Good links have been also been established with a wide range of external organisations to support the trainees and apprentices throughout the duration of their programme.

The quality of careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is very good. The management have a clear strategy for the delivery of CEIAG, including the provision of a dedicated careers resource area. A time-tabled programme of employability, life skills and careers guidance is in place, which is an important part of the provision and meets well the needs of the trainees. The well-considered curriculum is tailored to their individual needs and effectively supports their personal and life skills development. The trainees are provided with a good range of enrichment activities to develop their experience and knowledge of the engineering sector, including industry visits and guest speakers. Careers information is well embedded in the employability programme to inform the trainees about the necessary skills and qualifications needed to progress to further training, apprenticeships, or employment.

The careers support is related well to the trainees' and apprentices' professional and technical programme. The organisation has developed a range of up-to-date and relevant resources to support and sign-post the trainees and apprentices in their career planning and progression. It also works well with employers to support the development of the trainees' and apprentices' interview skills.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is very good

The training provision is managed very effectively by the centre manager, who oversees the operational management of both training centres, and works closely with the directors to plan the strategic direction of the company. Good relationships exist between all staff, roles and responsibilities are clear, and there are open and clear communication channels. Very effective management systems have been developed to support the delivery of the training programmes and to monitor and track the overall progress and development of the trainees and apprentices.

Management and staff are committed to continuous improvement and well-developed self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes are in place, which are underpinned by the effective use of data. The self-evaluation report, although descriptive in places, identifies key areas for development across the provision. The format of the quality improvement plan has been recently reviewed and now includes key targets against which improvement can be measured; the plan is reviewed regularly and is an effective working document. More work needs to be done, however, to ensure that there is a better match between the areas for improvement identified in the self-evaluation report and those included in the quality improvement plan. While management have a clear understanding of the areas for improvement needed and have taken actions to address them, there is insufficient reference to this in the self-evaluation report or quality improvement plan.

Staff are appropriately qualified and have extensive experience in delivering engineering programmes and essential skills. They have good opportunities provided for them to undertake relevant continuing professional development.

The quality of the accommodation and learning resources is consistently good or better. The workshops and classrooms are well-equipped, clean and well-maintained with a suitable range of industry standard equipment. The workshop training is managed well with a constant focus on maintaining safe systems of work. In all of the classrooms there is very good trainee and apprentice access to ICT resources to support teaching and learning. Recently, all of the classrooms have had interactive whiteboards installed and the tutors are developing the use of these to enhance learning. In order to meet the planned expansion of the curriculum offer, there is a need for the organisation to review and match its specialist learning resources to the revised curriculum.

Very good links have been developed with a wide range of employers, and other industry bodies, to support the delivery of the programmes. The employers support the trainees and apprentices well and very good relationships exist between them and Larne Skills Development. While the organisation has begun to develop links to higher education institutions, the links with the further education colleges are underdeveloped. There is a need to establish better links and partnerships with the colleges in order to further improve progression from level 3 apprenticeships to level 4 and level 5 programmes.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, Larne Skills Development has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding. The learners' responses to the ETI's questionnaires and the feedback from the learner focus group meetings held during the inspection were very positive regarding their experiences in the organisation. All of the learners reported that they felt safe and well supported in the organisation.

8. Overall effectiveness

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing any areas for improvement through its annual scrutiny inspection.

APPENDIX

Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	77	57
Training for Success (2008)	-	-
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	8	6
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	12	9
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	37	28

Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Engineering	57	43
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Engineering	74	55
Business and Administration	3	2

Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	Training for Success (%)	Apprenticeships NI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	19	30
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	28	41
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	30	37
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	33	43
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	57	83
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	13	3

Note: All data was sourced from Larne Skills Development at the time of the inspection.

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