



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Larne Skills Development Limited

Report of an Inspection
in January 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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1. Context

Larne Skills Development Limited (Larne Skills) was established in 1991 as a provider of vocational training. Larne Skills is led by two directors, a manager who is supported by a management committee, an office manager, two administrative support staff and seven tutors.

Larne Skills provides professional and technical training under the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes¹ on behalf of the Department for the Economy (Department). At the time of the inspection, 57 trainees and 56 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of: business administration; engineering and warehousing and storage. Training is delivered in the organisation's premises in Ballymena and Larne.

A small number (2%) of the trainees and a minority (20%) of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GSCE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. The organisation reports that a significant minority (30%) of the trainees and a minority (14%) of the apprentices present with barriers to learning and/or a complex range of personal and social issues. For the minority (18%) of the trainees and apprentices who have been identified as having a disability and/or additional learning support needs, there are well-established links with a range of external specialist support providers which are used effectively to support their personal development.

At the time of the inspection, 86% of those trainees in their second year were in a suitable work-experience placement, with all of the trainees having been in placement at some stage. The organisation only place trainees in the workplace when they are ready, with a good awareness of health and safety and having developed a range of practical skills. Consequently, at the time of the inspection, only a minority (18%) of the first year trainees were considered ready for a work placement.

2. Views of trainees and apprentices

As part of the evaluation of the organisation's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people and adults at risk, most (80%) of the trainees and apprentices took the opportunity to complete an online questionnaire prior to the inspection; a small number of them provided additional written comments.

The returns show that almost all of the trainees and apprentices who responded are positive about their learning experiences and that their needs are well catered for. All of them report that they feel safe and secure in the organisation. In addition, almost all of them report that they received accurate information about their choice of courses, found their induction programme useful and that the course is preparing them well for their next steps.

Inspectors also met with twelve trainees and two apprentices in focus group meetings. The trainees and apprentices reported that care and welfare is a high priority in the organisation and commented that they valued greatly the support and guidance provided by the staff who care about their progress and help them to achieve to their full potential.

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

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

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

4. Overall summary of key findings

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Training for Success	51%	Good
ApprenticeshipsNI	49%	Good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected and the essential skills provision	
Engineering	Good
Essential skills	Good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The very good retention rate (88%) for the ApprenticeshipsNI programmes and the outstanding achievement rate across the provision, with almost all (98%) of the trainees and apprentices who complete their programme achieving all of their targeted qualifications.
- The good or better standards of work attained by most of the trainees and apprentices, particularly in the workplace where they are often very good.
- The very good progress the trainees and apprentices make in the development of their occupational skills and wider skills and capabilities, including the outstanding progression (95%) to higher level programmes and/or employment.

- The positive ethos and culture that has been fostered by staff all levels, particularly the strong commitment to providing high levels of effective support for the trainees and apprentices that enables and empowers most of them to achieve successful outcomes.
- The effective initial assessment and induction processes, including a focus on developing the trainees' practical engineering skills in preparation for their work-experience placement.
- The good quality of most (82%) of the learning, teaching and training observed, with a strong focus on developing trainees' and apprentices' occupational skills and ensuring well-planned assessment opportunities.
- The effective strategic management of the provision that meets well the training needs of industry through the good standards of the physical accommodation and equipment, the broad range of learning, teaching and training resources and the well-qualified and experienced staff.
- The strong, well-established and well-managed links with a wide range of employers which provide very good experiences for the trainees and apprentices and are used well to ensure that the curriculum is appropriately matched to their needs.

Areas for improvement

- Strengthen the quality improvement planning process through a more in-depth use and analysis of key performance data to make it more rigorous along with an appropriate improvement plan that includes specific targets that will bring about the desired improvements.
- Improve the retention rate (60%) on the Training for Success programme, particularly on Skills for Work at level 2, which is too low for those trainees who do not progress early to the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.
- Develop further the skills and capacity of the middle managers, particularly to support the recently revised middle management structures and develop a holistic system for tracking the progress the trainees and apprentices are making on all aspects of their programme.

5. Outcomes for learners

Most of the trainees and apprentices develop well their wider skills and dispositions for learning, including personal, social and employability skills. Most of them are well-motivated, demonstrate very good standards of behaviour and are developing the skills to enable them to work both independently and as part of a team. They report that their self-confidence has improved, which enables them to be adaptable in the workplace, as many of them are required at times to move to different manufacturing processes which involves working in different teams.

In the directed training sessions observed, the trainees and apprentices make very good progress in developing their confidence and competence in the use of relevant hand tools, precision measurement standards and procedures, reading drawings and welding using manual metal arc and metal active gas techniques. They also develop a sound understanding

of welding principles and the causes and remedies of weld defects. Consequently, over an extended induction period and beyond, they are able to, with a steadily increasing level of competence, read and interpret engineering drawings, set up a metal active gas welder to be operationally safe, carry out a range of material removal and cutting tasks to the acceptable level of accuracy required in the workplace.

In the workplace, the trainees and apprentices quickly develop their confidence and competence to undertake an increasing range and complexity of engineering tasks. These include: fabrication and welding of architectural steelwork; coach-building and fit out; servicing and maintenance of process manufacturing plant; and the manufacturing and fitting of stainless steel food production cabinetry. The employers report very positively on the trainees' aptitude for engineering, their adaptability to work across a range of engineering roles and ability to work with others in order to complete tasks to the required timelines. In engineering, particularly in the workplace, the standard of the trainees' and apprentices' occupational skills are often very good and they can carry out a range of engineering manufacturing and maintenance tasks to a high standard.

In the essential skills, the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good or better standards of work. Most of them engage positively in the classes and make good progress in their learning. In numeracy, they are able to work out the area and perimeter of various shapes. The trainees and apprentices understand the concept of scale and can manually work out the size of an object, scale it up and down appropriately, and importantly, understand why this is relevant to the work they are undertaking in engineering and the related engineering drawings. In literacy, they develop well their oral and written communication skills. The trainees and apprentices can recognise and understand well the concepts of verbal and non-verbal communication and demonstrate effective speaking and listening skills to discuss and explore how to interpret visual cues in real-life and workplace situations. In ICT, they can use a range of office software competently to design and develop leaflets on various topics. The trainees use the internet well to access and research information and they understand why they need to keep themselves safe online.

The work in the apprentices' portfolios is largely extensive, well-presented and represents a varied range of work completed competently and to an industry standard. The entries are mostly systematically recorded, checked and authenticated by a workplace supervisor and quality assured by an internal verifier.

Overall, nearly all (98%) of the trainees and apprentices who are retained complete their training programmes and achieve their targeted qualifications. Over the last three years, the overall achievement rate on the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is outstanding at 100% and 97% respectively. Over the same period, the retention rate across the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes is very good at 82%; on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme it is 88%, but the retention rate on the Training for Success programme is too low at 66% and an important area for improvement. On the Training for Success programme, the progression rate to employment or further education or training is very good at 80%.

The outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices in the essential skills are a particular strength with all them achieving them over the last three years. Over the same period, there are also good progression rates to higher level training across all three of the essential skills, with 30% of the trainees and apprentices progressing in literacy, 45% in numeracy and 35% in ICT. To date, all of the trainees and apprentices who have completed their essential skills qualifications under the revised assessment arrangements have been successful.

6. Quality of provision

The engineering curriculum is flexible, well-planned and provides the trainees and apprentices with the appropriate knowledge and skills to meet well the needs of the majority of employers spoken to. The trainees have good opportunities to develop and apply their practical skills in preparation for work-experience placements. Optional units and training are provided, such as tungsten inert gas welding and electrical units at level 3, which meet specific requests from employers. There is also evidence of enrichments to the curriculum, including abrasive wheels training and computer-aided-design techniques. Further opportunities exist, however, to broaden the curriculum offered to ensure it meets more fully the varied engineering training needs of local employers. The timetabling arrangements are well-planned and meet the needs of the trainees and apprentices, with a strong and appropriate focus on developing their occupational skills.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed was good or better in most (82%) of the sessions observed; it was very good or outstanding in just under one-quarter (24%) of them. The most effective practice is characterised by: high levels of personal support for the trainees and apprentices leading to good engagement and motivation; good planning for learning and training; highly effective and varied learning and teaching approaches used to develop and support progress in learning; good use of information and learning technology (ILT) to enhance the learning; effective marking for improvement and well-planned assessment opportunities. In the less effective practice, in almost one-fifth of the sessions observed, there is insufficient differentiation in the learning to meet the needs of all the trainees and apprentices, missed opportunities to further develop their literacy and numeracy skills and the pace of learning is too slow. In the essential skills, there is a need to improve further the quality of the learning, teaching and training and to better integrate and contextualise the essential skills training with the trainees' and apprentices' professional and technical training.

In the engineering provision, the organisation tracks to good effect the progress and achievements of each trainee and apprentice against realistic time-based milestones. The information is used well by the tutors to intervene where gaps in progress are identified. There are deficiencies, however, in the tracking of the trainees' and apprentices' progress in the essential skills of numeracy and ICT, which need to be addressed. Overall, the quality and impact of the personal training planning process is good. The plans are used appropriately to record the trainees' and apprentices' prior achievements and additional learning support needs, and they are regularly updated. The monitoring reviews are detailed and informative, contain good input from employers and set progressive targets for improvement. There is clear evidence of systematic internal verification processes and record-keeping.

The care and welfare impacts positively on the learning, teaching and outcomes for the trainees and apprentices. A strong ethos of care and welfare is embedded across the work of the organisation; the staff at all levels work hard, and to good effect, to provide a safe, caring and supportive learning environment. A key strength of the provision is the strong emphasis on meeting the care and welfare needs of the trainees and apprentices through the provision of high levels of tailored and often one-to-one mentoring support. The relationships across the organisation are positive, the trainees and apprentices are motivated and respectful and the staff are well aware of their individual needs. All of the trainees and apprentices interviewed reported that the staff were approachable, encouraging and supported them well.

The careers education, information, advice and guidance provision is mostly effective overall. The trainees and apprentices are provided with an appropriate programme of careers education. The induction process is well co-ordinated and effective, including appropriate pre-entry advice and guidance for the trainees and apprentices. The careers information provided on the notice boards and across the organisation is of a good quality, providing relevant employment information, case studies and feedback from current and previous

learners about their job roles. The organisation needs to strengthen the opportunities provided to trainees to engage at an earlier stage in industry visits and the use of guest speakers and to further support the apprentices' career planning to better inform them of the range of progression pathways available, and how they can be accessed.

Effective planning is in place to develop the trainees' employability skills through the delivery of an appropriate employability and personal development curriculum. The quality of the employability provision is good overall, with positive relationships between the staff and the trainees, the use relevant resources, including ILT to build the trainees' confidence and enhance their communication skills, including speaking and listening skills.

The well-established and effectively managed links and partnerships with a wide range of local engineering and manufacturing employers are used well to ensure high quality work-experience placements are provided for the trainees, with two-fifths of them transferring successfully to the apprenticeship programme prior to completing their Training for Success programme.

7. Leadership and management

The senior leaders (directors) provide good strategic leadership across the work of the organisation and demonstrate high levels of commitment to providing training that meets the needs of the local engineering industry. They take an active role in all aspects of the training and are able to discuss knowledgeably the strengths of the work the trainees and apprentices but are also well-informed around the challenges and barriers to learning and progression that many of them face. The senior leaders have extensive knowledge and experience in the engineering and the work-based training sectors, which they use well to ensure the curriculum meets well the needs of the trainees and apprentices and in turn supports the workforce supply needs of industry.

The middle management team has been recently restructured and a management committee established. As a result, the management functions are distributed across the management committee members, which has improved the channels of communication between the staff and management. The roles and responsibilities of all staff in the organisation are clearly defined. While the new management structure is largely working well, some of the recently appointed middle managers need to be better supported to help them carry out their new roles to best effect. There is effective co-ordination for both the engineering and essential skills provision. The staff are all well-experienced and have appropriate qualifications.

While there are comprehensive systems in place to track and monitor the progress of the trainees and apprentices, especially in the engineering aspect of the provision, there is a need to develop a more holistic tracking system to make all the relevant key performance indicators more accessible to the managers, including the essential skills information.

Larne Skills has well-established and effectively managed links and partnerships with a wide range of local engineering and manufacturing employers. These links are used well to support the training with an appropriate curriculum that is matched appropriately to the needs of industry and to provide high quality work-experience placements for the trainees. Communication with the employers is effective and regular with good opportunities for them to inform curriculum planning and further develop the curriculum. Effective links have also been established with a number of external stakeholders who provide a range of relevant services for the trainees and apprentices. The organisation is working to develop further their links with feeder post-primary schools and it regularly participates in careers fairs and other events to promote their programmes. Recruitment to business administration, information technology and warehousing and storage provision, however, remains very low and further strategies need to be developed to recruit trainees and apprentices to these areas.

The quality of the accommodation is good. The premises are well-maintained, the workshops are suitably equipped and the classrooms provide a good learning environment. Personal protective equipment is used fully in all practical classes and the workshops are very well-organised.

The organisation's self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes require improvement. The use and analysis of key performance data is insufficient and needs to be strengthened to better inform the evaluations. There is also a need to improve the evaluation of the standards of work and the quality of the learning, teaching and training. In addition, the action planning process needs to be sharpened to ensure that the actions taken to address the key areas for improvement are clearer and include more specific and measurable targets in order to sustain improvement.

8. Safeguarding

On the basis of the evidence provided during the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people and adults at risk reflects broadly the current legislation and practice. However, the organisation needs to:

- review and update its policies and procedures for safeguarding young people and adults at risk; and
- ensure that staff at all levels receive safeguarding training which is comprehensive, up-to-date and appropriate to their role and responsibilities.

9. Overall effectiveness

Larne Skills Development Limited demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the trainees and apprentices. There are areas for improvement that the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2	49	43%
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 3	7	6%
Training for Success Skills for Your Life	9	8%
Training for Success Skills for Work (Strand 1)	18	16%
Training for Success Skills for Work (Strand 2)	30	27%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Business administration	*	*
Engineering	55	96%
Information technology	*	*
Storage and warehousing	*	*
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Business administration	*	*
Engineering	54	96%
Information technology	*	*
Storage and warehousing	*	*

* Less than 5

Table 3 - 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	2%	20%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	14%	38%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	16%	37%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	10%	35%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	37%	56%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	25%	2%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Five ETI inspectors observed 83 apprentices and trainees in 17 directed training sessions. They visited 31 trainees and apprentices in their workplace and interviewed 48 of them in focus group meetings and training sessions. Discussions were held with eight employers/supervisors in the workplace. Samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work and personal training plans, and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined. The organisation's quality improvement plan 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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