



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in South Eastern Regional College

Report of an Inspection
in November 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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

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.

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

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

Eleven ETI inspectors and five associate assessors observed 401 trainees and apprentices in 46 directed training sessions; visited 23 in their workplace, and interviewed 82 in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the principal; director of curriculum and information services; chair of the governing body's education committee; chief training and contracts officer; head of quality, excellence and development; heads of school; curriculum managers; course co-ordinators; training programmes manager; assistant training programmes managers; pastoral care lead and general study support workers; head of learning academy; college teacher tutor; head of process transformation; training support officers; lecturers; technical support officers; employers and workplace supervisors. Samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work and personal training plans, and lecturers' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined; and the organisation's self-evaluation report and other relevant documentation were scrutinised.

As part of the evaluation of South Eastern Regional College's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people, the trainees and apprentices completed an online questionnaire prior to the inspection. Seven hundred and eight (52%) responses were received, including 48 with written comments. The questionnaire returns show that nearly all of the trainees and apprentices who responded reported a positive experience, and felt safe and well supported in the college.

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.

3. Context

South Eastern Regional College is a non-departmental public body and is one of six regional colleges of Further Education (FE) in Northern Ireland. It provides education and training opportunities in a wide catchment area across Ards, Down, Lisburn and North Down. The college has four main campuses located at Bangor, Downpatrick, Lisburn, and Newtownards, and smaller campuses in Ballynahinch, Holywood, and Newcastle. The college is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes².

A minority of the trainees (19%) and a significant minority (43%) of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. A significant minority (33%) of the trainees currently registered on the Training for Success programme were receiving additional learning support for a wide range of learning support needs, including special educational needs, and specific learning and physical disabilities. A majority of the trainees (71%), who have completed their induction and initial assessment, were in a suitable work-experience placement at the time of the inspection.

² Programme registration data provided by the organisation at the time of the inspection is included in the Appendix of this report.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
Training for Success	54%	Very good
ApprenticeshipsNI	46%	Very good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected³ and the provision for the essential skills	
Air conditioning and refrigeration	Outstanding
Catering	Very good
Electrotechnical	Good
Essential Skills	Very good
Hairdressing	Very good
Plumbing	Very good
Retail	Very good
Skills for Your Life	Very good
Transportation operations and maintenance	Very good

Strengths

- The outstanding quality of the leadership and management at both a strategic and operational level.
- The high priority given to planning and developing the work-based learning provision across the college, including the ongoing investment in accommodation and learning resources that are of a very good quality.
- The very good quality of almost all of the professional and technical areas inspected and the essential skills.
- The outstanding curriculum offer that is matched well to the needs of the trainees, apprentices and industry, and which supports economic engagement and social cohesion, and is informed effectively by the extensive range of links and partnerships the college has developed with key stakeholders at local, national and international level.

³ A representative sample of professional and technical areas, agreed with the College, was selected for inspection.

- The very good arrangements and processes in place to support ongoing quality improvement across the work-based learning provision including the comprehensive systems in place for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning.
- The highly committed and enthusiastic staff, at all levels, who work hard to support the trainees and apprentices and who are provided with excellent opportunities to undertake high quality continuing professional development.
- The very good quality of most of the learning, teaching and training observed.
- The outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support in place for the trainees and apprentices.
- The very good quality of the personal training plans including the implementation of a sector leading electronic personal training plan.
- The good or better standards of work, and occupational skills, demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices.
- The outstanding overall achievement rate (96%) for those trainees and apprentices who remain and complete their programmes.
- The good overall retention rate (77%) on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

Area for improvement

- To implement strategies to improve further the retention and progression rates on the Training for Success programme.

5. Achievements and standards

The achievements and standards are very good. Across the professional and technical areas most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate positive dispositions to learning, are motivated, and engage well in their learning and training. The standards of work achieved by them are good or better. For example, in electrical installation, plumbing, and transportation operations and maintenance, the trainees and apprentices are developing their knowledge, understanding, and practical occupational skills to industry standards and practice; in hairdressing and catering, the trainees and apprentices demonstrate very good standards of practical work in the college's commercial hairdressing and catering facilities; in retail, the trainees demonstrate very good customer service skills and work competently in their work-experience placements; and in air-conditioning and refrigeration, the standards and quality of the provision is sector-leading and is meeting very well the needs of the trainees, apprentices, and employers.

Most of the trainees and apprentices are making very good progress in their learning and development relative to their prior attainment and potential. For example, in the essential skills almost all of the trainees and apprentices are developing positive dispositions to their learning and are making good or better progress in their essential skills development; in catering the trainees and apprentices can showcase their skills with confidence, through an extensive range of external events and competitions; in hairdressing most of the trainees and apprentices are progressing well in the development of relevant occupational and employability skills; in plumbing the trainees and apprentices have the opportunity to

undertake additional industry recognised qualifications to enhance their learning experiences; and in air-conditioning and refrigeration almost all of the trainees and apprentices are challenged appropriately to work to high standards. In electrotechnical services, however, work-based assessment is underdeveloped and this impacts negatively on the rate of progression for a minority of apprentices.

Most of the trainees are developing well their personal, social and employability skills. In catering and retail, for example, the trainees on the skills for work 156 strand of the Training for Success programme are developing well their confidence, oral communication, and interpersonal skills through the work being undertaken in their professional and technical programme. In addition, the trainees on the skills for your life strand are provided with a wide range of enrichment and enhancement activities to support their personal development.

In the essential skills, most of the trainees and apprentices report positively on their learning experiences. Almost all of them are achieving good or better standards in their oral communication skills, and most are achieving good standards of literacy and numeracy in their written work, both in their professional and technical programme and in their essential skills.

Although a significant amount of work has taken place to address retention issues and there is an improving trend across the college, the Training for Success average retention rate⁴ (65%) across the period 2013-2016 is an important area for improvement. More needs to be done to improve this further, particularly at level 2. The achievement rate, for those trainees who remain and complete their programme, is very good (92%). The progression rate to further training or employment is low (49%) and also requires improvement across all strands of the programme.

Over the same period, on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, the retention rate is good (77%). The achievement rate, for those apprentices who remain and complete their programme, is outstanding (99%).

Over the last three years, in the essential skills, the average overall achievement rates in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, are outstanding at 99%; it is positive that the college encourages the trainees and apprentices to progress to higher level qualifications in their essential skills and, across the professional and technical areas inspected, the achievement rates in literacy and in numeracy, at level 2, are 41% and 38% respectively.

6. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is very good. An outstanding curriculum offer is in place which is broad and balanced; matched well to the needs of the trainees, apprentices and industry; supports economic engagement and social cohesion; and is informed well by the extensive range of links and partnerships the college has developed with key stakeholders at local, national and international level. The college is proactive in supporting and leading the implementation of new initiatives and developments across the further education and work-based learning sectors.

⁴ Retention, achievement and progression rates are for the representative sample of professional and technical areas inspected only.

Almost all of the learning, teaching, training and assessment observed was good or better; just over one-half of the lessons observed were very good or outstanding. The more effective lessons were characterised by the use of a range of effective classroom management approaches, the use of a wide variety of strategies to engage and motivate the trainees and apprentices, an appropriate focus on project-based learning, and a particular strength was the innovative and appropriate use of information learning technology to support the trainees' and apprentices' learning and training. The quality of the learning and training resources used was very good or better. In the small number of lessons that were less effective, there was limited evidence of differentiation, the pace was slow, and the trainees and apprentices were not well-engaged in their learning.

The college has invested significantly in the development of project-based learning, including the appointment of 14 project-based learning mentors across a range of professional and technical areas to support lecturers develop and embed the approach within their own practice. The development of links across professional and technical areas, to support project-based learning, is a key strength of the provision; examples of effective practice were observed in hairdressing, catering, retail, and motor vehicle, including the use of 'live' projects to support the trainees in their learning.

The college plans effectively to develop the trainees' and apprentices' employability skills. Very good links have been established with a wide range of employers to support the delivery of the work-based learning provision and provide work-experience placements and employment opportunities for the trainees and apprentices. The training support officers work hard to find placements and effective strategies are in place to source employers willing to offer trainees a work-experience placement opportunity. Overall work-experience placement rates are high (71%) across the provision inspected. Most of the placements are of good quality and provide opportunities for the trainees to develop their professional and technical, and employability skills. Those trainees not in a workplace undertake appropriate in-house projects, external projects with community and voluntary organisations, or other work-aspiration activities.

The provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding and impacts positively on the experiences of the trainees and apprentices while in the college. Staff at all levels are fully committed to meeting the care and welfare needs of the trainees and apprentices to support them in their learning, to remain on their programme, and to succeed. The role undertaken by the training support officers in liaising with tutors and reviewing individual trainees' and apprentices' progress in the college and in the workplace is a particular strength of the provision. During focus group meetings in three of the college campuses almost all of the trainees and apprentices interviewed reported that they would feel comfortable to seek help and support from the training support officers and from their tutors. The college's self-evaluation of pastoral care identifies appropriately the need to analyse the attendance, progress and achievements of the learners referred through the "cause for concern" system to measure more effectively the impact of the pastoral care interventions.

The induction processes in the college are strong and effective systems have been established to collect and collate information on barriers to learning and progression, as well as achievements to date on individual trainees and apprentices. Professional working relationships with local schools and the Department's careers officers ensure that for almost all of the trainees appropriate information is shared at an early stage and this information is captured well in their personal training plans. The college has developed and implemented a highly effective on-line application to support the development of the trainees' and apprentices' personal training plans and the overall quality of the plans is very good. Most of the progress reviews are undertaken regularly and the review of the trainees' and apprentices' progress are individualised, demonstrating the progressive development of their skills, and the appropriate short-term targets set for their further development. The plans for

trainees with more complex needs, however, need to use more effectively the information collated on their particular barriers to learning and progression. This information needs to identify strategies and to set short-term targets to address these barriers, to inform better the trainees' learning and training, and to demonstrate more clearly the progress being made by them through their programme. Learning support assistants are used effectively in the college and are deployed well to support lecturers and trainees, particularly on level 1 programmes. Working relationships between learning support staff, training support officers and lecturing staff are excellent and are focused on meeting the individual needs of the trainees and apprentices.

Independent, impartial careers education, information, advice, and guidance is available to all trainees and apprentices across the college. The members of the college's careers team are well qualified and experienced and provide tailored one-to-one and group advice and guidance sessions that support well the trainees in making career choices, both at pre-entry, and throughout their time at the college. External speakers are used effectively by the careers team to provide up-to-date careers information and to help trainees explore careers options. When required, the careers team support the development of wider employability skills with groups of trainees through support in the development of their curriculum vitae, the completion of application forms and preparation for interviews. Across most of the professional and technical areas inspected, however, the trainees and apprentices are not sufficiently aware of the career pathways beyond level 3 to higher education or higher level apprenticeships. The careers information provided to trainees and apprentices at professional and technical level should continue to be developed to raise further their aspirations and inform better their career progression opportunities.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management, at both a strategic and operational level, is outstanding. Work-based learning is highly-valued by management and given a high strategic priority in the college. Senior management are well informed about best practice at national and international level and have a very good strategic overview of key government strategies and current cross-sector initiatives. The governing body are very well-informed about current developments in work-based learning, and play a pro-active role in the college's on-going strategic development.

A suite of high quality electronic management processes and systems have been developed to support the management and delivery of the work-based learning provision. The systems are fully integrated and are examples of best practice. All of the professional and technical areas inspected are managed very effectively. There is effective communication between management and staff underpinned by collaborative working practices, particularly the integrated approach to monitoring the progress of most of the trainees and apprentices to overcome barriers to learning and progression, through regular meetings, case conferencing and other supportive interventions.

The ETI have a high level of confidence in the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning across the college. A strong culture of quality improvement is well embedded and the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are continually reviewed and developed. The quality processes impact positively on the overall quality of the college provision and improve the outcomes for trainees and apprentices. A highly effective and sector-leading electronic platform has been developed and implemented to support the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes. Data is used and analysed well to set key strategic priorities and operational targets, and feedback from key stakeholders is used well to inform future planning for improvement.

Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Staffing across the professional and technical areas inspected is very good. Although the recent voluntary exit scheme has resulted in recruitment challenges in some professional and technical areas, effective planning has meant that there has been no adverse impact on the quality of the provision for the trainees and apprentices. Staff are provided with very good opportunities to undertake industry relevant continuing professional development, both internally and externally. The online in-house staff training materials are of a very high quality, for example, the online resources used for the induction for full-time and part-time lecturing staff.

The excellent quality of the learning and training resources and the industry standard accommodation are key strengths of the work-based learning provision. Examples include, the commercial training facilities in catering and hairdressing; the sector leading refrigeration facilities; and the bright, modern, well-equipped training workshops in transportation operations and maintenance. A high priority is given to the on-going investment in industry standard equipment and learning resources to meet current and emerging curricular needs. The accommodation and facilities are very well maintained, with lecturers supported well by technical support staff.

The arrangements for safeguarding young people and adults at risk in the college are comprehensive and reflect well the guidance issued by the Department. There is a strong commitment at all levels to supporting learners, including trainees and apprentices, during their time in the college to overcome their barriers, to remain on their programme and to succeed. The lead safeguarding team, comprised of senior staff, are experienced and responsive to all reported safeguarding issues and they refer or signpost learners to a wide range of external statutory, community and voluntary organisations with whom they have well established professional working relationships. Safeguarding and awareness training for all staff is given an appropriately high priority in the college.

8. Overall effectiveness

The South Eastern Regional College has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners.

APPENDIX

Table 1 - Overall college registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	551	46
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	20	2
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	167	14
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	457	38

Table 2 - Registrations by professional and technical area inspected

	Number enrolled	% of total registrations
Air conditioning and refrigeration	54	5
Catering	61	5
Electrotechnical	125	10
Essential Skills	395	33
Hairdressing	103	9
Plumbing	123	10
Retail	48	4
Skills for your life	20	2
Transportation operations and maintenance	271	23

Table 3 – Overall qualifications of 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	43
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	14	33
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	33	78
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	38	79
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	81	81
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	12	1

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