



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Strabane Training Services Limited

Report of an Inspection
in September 2016

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

Seven ETI inspectors and one associate assessor observed 139 trainees and apprentices in 26 directed training sessions; visited 16 in their workplace, and interviewed 32 of them in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with the chairman of the management board, the general manager, the training manager, and the tutors. Samples of the trainees' and apprentices' work and personal training plans, and tutors' 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 Strabane Training Services arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people, the trainees and apprentices completed an online questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the 164 questionnaires issued, 32 (20%) were returned, including one with written comments. The questionnaire returns show that nearly all of the trainees and apprentices who responded reported a positive experience in the organisation, and felt safe, secure, and well supported.

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 publication *Improving Quality: Raising Standards Work-based Learning* <https://www.eti.gov.uk/publications/improving-quality-raising-standards-igrs-further-education-and-work-based-learning>

3. Context

Strabane Training Services is a private training organisation with charitable status and operates from three sites in Strabane. The organisation has recently been restructured and a new senior management team is now in place that includes the board chairman, the general manager, the training manager, the human resource manager and three other members of staff who are involved in the delivery of the programmes.

Strabane Training Services is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes².

A minority of the trainees have a disability and/or additional learning support needs. A further 23% have significant barriers to learning. A minority of the trainees and apprentices entered their programme with four or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics.

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

A majority (71%) of the trainees, who have completed their induction and initial assessment, were in a suitable work-experience placement at the time of the inspection.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
Training for Success	57%	Good
ApprenticeshipsNI	43%	Good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ³ and the provision for the essential skills	
Active leisure, learning and well being ⁴	Good
Barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing	Very good
Children's care learning and development	Important areas for improvement
Construction	Good
Essential skills	Good

Strengths

- The outstanding overall retention (94%) and achievement (92%) rates.
- The good or better standards of work demonstrated by most of the trainees and apprentices.
- The very good pastoral care and additional learning support provided by all the staff for the trainees.
- The very good quality of the provision in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing.
- The good range of external links and partnerships that are used effectively to support the delivery of the training programmes.
- The good or better quality of learning, teaching and training in most (85%) of the lessons observed including the effective use of information and learning technology.

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

⁴ Training for Success provision only inspected in this area.

- The very good quality of the strategic leadership and management.
- The committed and experienced staff who are provided with good opportunities to undertake continuing professional development.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the overall quality of the children's care, learning and development provision.
- Develop further the opportunities for the trainees and apprentices in active leisure, learning and well being; children's care, learning and development; and construction to develop their speaking and listening and extended and independent writing skills in their professional and technical work.
- Strengthen further the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes across the professional and technical areas and the essential skills, including better use of data to inform evaluations that result in clear actions and targets to ensure sustained improvement.

5. Achievements and standards

In the professional and technical areas of barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing the standard of the trainees' and apprentices' work is very good. Almost all of them demonstrate high levels of motivation and engagement; they develop relevant occupational skills, to modern industry standards, and are progressing well in their learning and training. In addition, they are able to show case their skills with confidence and to a high standard at external events and competitions.

In the remaining professional and technical areas inspected the standards of work for most of the trainees and apprentices are good. In construction almost all of the trainees and the apprentices are developing their professional and technical skills at an appropriate pace, and most demonstrate good or better standards of work in line with their prior experience and abilities.

Most of the trainees and apprentices are making good or better progress in their learning. They engage well in both their professional and technical area and in their essential skills. There is clear evidence that their confidence, motivation and capacity for independent learning have improved significantly as a result of participating in their programmes. Their behaviour and attitude to learning in the directed training sessions and in the workplace was mostly good or better. The progress being made by the apprentices in children's care, learning and development is slower than expected at this stage in their training.

In the essential skills, most of the trainees and apprentices are progressing well in the development of their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The quality of their talking and listening skills is mostly good and the standard of their written work ranges from good to satisfactory. There are insufficient opportunities for them to develop and apply their extended and independent writing skills in their professional and technical work in the areas of active leisure, learning and well being; children's care learning; and development and construction. The quality of most of their numeracy and information communication work is good with evidence of them being able to apply these skills in their professional and technical work to an appropriate standard.

Over the last three years, the average retention and achievement rates on the Training for Success programme are outstanding at 94% and 92% respectively. Most of the trainees (86%) progress either to employment or to higher training or education programmes. In the area of children's care learning and development, retention is lower at 72% and in need of improvement.

Over the same period, the average retention and achievement rates on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme are also outstanding at 92% and 96%.

In essential skills nearly all of the trainees and apprentices achieved their targeted essential skills qualification, with a significant minority achieving more than one level in literacy, numeracy and information communication technology.

6. Provision for learning

The Training for Success programme is well planned with a broad and balanced curriculum that provides appropriate learning and progression opportunities for the trainees and apprentices. The sessions are timetabled thoughtfully to ensure the trainees can access a range of interesting and challenging activities each day. The trainees also have opportunities to complete a comprehensive range of relevant enhancement programmes including health and safety and food hygiene courses.

The ApprenticeshipsNI programme is very good in meeting the learning, training and development needs of the apprentices in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing. In the area of construction, while the provision is good, the numbers of apprentices are too low. In children's care, learning and development the provision lacks a systematic and structured approach for the delivery of both the professional and technical and the essential skills training.

The quality of the learning, training, and teaching in most (85%) of the sessions observed was good or better. In particular, the sessions in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing were consistently very good or outstanding. The more effective sessions are well planned with a broad range of strategies being used, such as effective questioning, that result in high levels of engagement and good learning. In contrast, in a minority of the sessions with important areas for improvement, there is limited planning, assessment of prior learning, assessment for learning, insufficient use of effective questioning, and a lack of differentiation of learning.

The strategic planning for the use of information learning technology is well developed in the organisation. A good start has been made across the professional and technical areas to use it creatively to engage the trainees and to support and develop their learning. It is used most effectively in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing.

The induction programme is well-developed and includes a good range of varied activities to support the trainees and apprentices to ensure they are on the correct programme and that they are well informed about the content and expectations. Consequently strong relationships between the trainees and the tutors are established at an early stage in their programme.

Most of the trainees receive effective careers education, advice, information and guidance with regular guest speakers and interesting relevant industry visits, that broadens their awareness and understanding of possible progression pathways and career opportunities. In children's care, learning and development the provision could be improved with better information about progression pathways beyond level 3.

The quality of the care guidance and support provided for the trainees and apprentices is very good. A wide range of external agencies and organisations are engaged to provide high quality targeted support for the trainees and apprentices. An effective process is in place to identify the trainees' support needs which includes liaising with the local feeder schools to share appropriate information. The organisation provides effective one-to-one support and has introduced a tutorial system to support the essential skills learners. There is also an effective mentoring system in place for the trainees. In the areas of barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing effective additional support is provided in the salon to ensure the trainees and apprentices practical skills are developed to appropriate levels. The organisation celebrates the trainees and apprentices success at an annual awards ceremony.

The quality of the majority of the essential skills provision is good. A wide variety of learning, teaching, and training strategies, including information learning technology, are used well in literacy and ICT. In numeracy, the planning for learning requires further development in order to make more effective use of a wider range of pedagogy. Effective planning is in place to strengthen the links between the professional and technical tutors and the essential skills tutors for the development and embedding of the essential skills. In children's care learning and development the delivery of the essential skills does not start early enough to enable the apprentices to benefit fully from their professional and technical training.

The quality of most of the personal training plans is good. There are opportunities to further refine them so that they reflect better the information from the tracking systems for both the professional and technical area and the essential skills, and to more effectively capture feedback from employers.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of the strategic leadership and management is very good. The management board demonstrate high levels of commitment and have an appropriate five year strategic plan in place that is implemented well through five strategic projects. The management board works effectively to develop a diverse range of funding streams in order to build financial stability and sustain good quality provision.

The senior management team provide good quality leadership and management to the organisation. Management at all levels demonstrate a strong sense of social purpose and commitment to the local community, the trainees and the apprentices. The new roles and responsibilities following the recent restructuring are currently being embedded at operational level.

New management information systems are being developed to replace a number of separate processes currently used to track and monitor the trainees' and apprentices' progress. The present system is overly cumbersome and does not track the holistic progress of the trainees and apprentices across all aspects of their training framework well enough.

The quality of the leadership and management in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing is very good; the programmes are well co-ordinated with effective communication with employers to fully exploit all training opportunities. In the essential skills, temporary co-ordination arrangements are currently in place to manage the provision but greater clarity is needed around roles and responsibilities to improve the overall co-ordination of the provision and to improve further the consistency in the quality of the delivery across the three essential skills.

There are well developed self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes at organisational level that are used effectively to identify most of the strengths and areas for improvement. A well planned and comprehensive observation system is in place to evaluate the quality of the learning, teaching and training. The self-evaluation reports and quality improvement plans for the professional and technical areas and for the essential skills need to be improved further with clearer actions and targets for improvement. In active leisure, learning and well being the evaluation of pedagogical practice is not rigorous enough, to assess ongoing improvements in the quality of the learning, teaching, training and assessment.

The quality of the accommodation is good or better with high levels of investment in specialist facilities and learning resources, for example the modern industry standard hairdressing and beauty salon and the crèche facility which is currently under construction. The staff are suitably experienced and the organisation places a high value on good quality continuing professional development for the staff that includes supporting them to access higher education programmes. Effective staff mentoring has been introduced to support the tutors, with peer mentoring taking place in construction to improve the quality of learning, teaching and training.

Links and partnerships are good with particularly strong links having been developed with most local post-primary schools that are used to good effect to inform transition and support arrangements for the trainees, where appropriate. There are good links with a wide range of support agencies and other organisations that are used to provide the trainees with a good range of enhancement programmes including money management and sports coaching opportunities. The organisation has developed strong links with employers that are used effectively to provide work-placements for the majority of the trainees.

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, Strabane Training Services has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people and adults at risk. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department, but further development is required to bring the organisation's procedure for updating policies in line with best practice.

8. Overall effectiveness

Strabane Training Services demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all of the learners. The ETI will monitor the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement in the Children's Care, Learning and Development provision. There will be a formal follow-up inspection of the Care, Learning and Development provision in 12-18 months.

APPENDIX

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI	70	43
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	14	8
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	19	12
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	15	9
Training for Success (2013) Induction and initial assessment	46	28

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Active leisure, learning and well being	19	20
Barbering	17	18
Beauty therapy	12	13
Business administration	4	4
Children's care learning and development	11	12
Construction	14	15
Hairdressing	11	12
Health and social care	1	1
Information technology	3	3
Retail	2	2
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Active leisure, learning and well being	12	17
Barbering	12	17
Beauty therapy	6	9
Business administration	5	7
Children's care learning and development	5	7
Construction	3	4
Customer services	4	6
Hairdressing	8	11
Information technology	2	3
Retail	13	19

Table 3 - Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	Training for Success (%)	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	6	23
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C	7	23
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	16	21
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	12	23
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	31	37
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	47	31

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