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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

following an

**Inspection of the Further Education and
Work-Based Learning provision in**

North West Regional College

October 2013

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF THE NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE

The inspection in February and April 2012 identified strengths in the College's provision including: the good overall leadership and management of the curriculum; the broad and balanced curriculum provision in further education; the use of management information to aid quality improvement planning in further education; the good levels of economic engagement, particularly in further education; the good overall quality of the pastoral care for learners; the good or better quality of teaching and learning across the College; the good use of information and learning technology (ILT) in further education; and the good overall standards of work attained by the learners.

The inspection identified the need for further improvement in the following key areas:

- the quality of the leadership and management of the work-based learning provision;
- the inadequate quality of the provision in mechanical and manufacturing engineering;
- the limited range of the provision, and in particular the numbers of learners registered on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme; and
- the low outcomes and progression rates to further education and training on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the Training for Success programme.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the North West Regional College have taken place:

- the implementation, monitoring and review, of detailed action plans by management to address all of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report;
- a review of the processes for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning at individual school and whole-College level;
- the deployment of an external consultant to support the leadership and management in work-based learning;
- the development of a more effective data management and reporting system for the work-based learning provision;
- the implementation of an appropriate programme of staff development for work-based learning staff, including opportunities for lecturers to undertake work placements in industry;
- the implementation of a programme of classroom observations and mentoring to support improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in work-based learning and the essential skills; and
- a significant investment in ILT to support and enhance teaching and learning.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried an interim follow-up visit in December 2012, a second interim follow-up visit in the professional and technical area of mechanical and manufacturing engineering in April 2013, and a follow-up inspection in October 2013.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection in April 2012:

- the more effective leadership and management of the work-based learning provision including a better use of performance data and improved channels of communication between the head of school, curriculum managers and course teams, through the course review process;
- the improved quality of the provision in mechanical and manufacturing engineering and transportation operations and maintenance which are now very good, and in wood occupations which is now good;
- the improved outcomes on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the Training for Success programme;
- the improved outcomes in the essential skills, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT);
- the improved use of ILT by staff to support and enhance the quality of teaching, training and learning, particularly in work-based learning; and
- the wider range of work-based learning provision offered, through the implementation of the new Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

The area which requires further development is:

- the quality of the provision for the essential skills, which remains satisfactory.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the quality of the work-based learning provision in the North West College is now good, although the quality of the provision for the essential skills in further education remains satisfactory. The College has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

The inspection in February and April 2012 highlighted strengths in the provision including: the significant investment in the resourcing of the essential skills by senior management; the effective links and partnerships established, and maintained, with community organisations and key stakeholders to meet the needs of learners; the good progress made by the essential skills staff in supporting and developing the contextualisation of the essential skills; the good outcomes in literacy and numeracy in work-based learning; and the good outcomes in literacy in further education.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the review of the self-evaluation and the quality improvement planning processes to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the provision;
- the ongoing support and evaluation, by the senior curriculum managers, of the work of the middle managers with responsibility for the essential skills;
- the inconsistencies in the quality of the teaching and learning, and the timetabling arrangements, in the essential skills provision for further education; and
- the poor outcomes in the essential skill of ICT.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the North West Regional College have taken place:

- the review of, and significant investment in, the essential skills provision at whole-College level by the senior management team;
- the implementation of a dispersed leadership of the provision where the heads of school, supported by the curriculum managers, take full responsibility for the management of the essential skills in each of the schools;
- the higher profile and importance accorded to the essential skills provision across the College;
- the revised timetabling arrangements, and the strengthening of communication between the essential skills staff and the professional and technical staff, to facilitate the delivery of the essential skills;
- the development of a good range of relevant online learning materials, for all three of the essential skills;
- the introduction of a cycle of monitoring activities including the course performance meetings to identify and address any underachievement; and
- the appointment of three essential skills mentors and the development of an appropriate staff development programme to support staff delivering the essential skills.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the improvements in the delivery of the essential skill of ICT, including the implementation of appropriate fast track delivery arrangements;
- the improved accessibility of data, and its use by the essential skills tutors, to assist in the monitoring of key performance indicators;

- the strengthening of the tracking of the learners' progress and achievements; and
- the improved outcomes across the essential skills provision, particularly in ICT, which have improved from 56% to 89%, over the past two years.

The areas which require further development are the:

- implementation of strategies by senior management to address the significant inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning in the essential skills; and
- further development of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes within the provision to support more robust evaluation of the quality of teaching, training and learning.

CONCLUSION

In the essential skills, in further education, the quality of education and training provided by the North West Regional College remains satisfactory. The strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

MECHANICAL AND MANUFACTURING ENGINEERING

The original inspection in February and April 2012 highlighted strengths in the provision including: the good quality of the work-based training; the well-designed maintenance engineering apprenticeship programme; and the good standards of the trainees' and apprentices' practical skills.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the inadequate design of the curriculum to meet well the needs of the trainees on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand;
- the satisfactory retention rate (63%) over the last three years;
- the satisfactory or inadequate quality of just over one-half of the directed training sessions observed;
- the limited range of modern equipment and technology to enhance the trainees' and apprentices' employability skills;
- the inadequate standards of mathematical skills achieved by a minority of the trainees on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand; and
- the unsatisfactory health and safety arrangements in the engineering workshops.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the North West Regional College have taken place:

- the benchmarking of good practice in another regional College;
- the professional development of three tutors through short placements in industry;
- the provision of a staff development programme to enhance the quality of the teaching, training and learning;
- the redesign of the curriculum to meet better the needs of the learners and employers, including the embedding of the careers and employability provision;
- the significantly improved health and safety arrangements in the workshops to ensure a safer working environment;
- the provision of additional learning support for learners with weaknesses in mathematics;
- the development of the ILT infrastructure and resources, including the introduction of electronic assessment portfolios to enhance the quality of the provision; and
- the significant investment in additional equipment to ensure the practical skills training provided for the apprentices and trainees reflects industry standards.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the curriculum offer, which now provides the apprentices and trainees with a broad and balanced range of learning experiences, which are matched well to their needs and the work they are undertaking with their employer or work experience placement provider;
- the quality of the teaching, training and learning which is now very good;
- the very good range of modern equipment, which is used to good effect to develop the apprentices' and trainees' practical engineering skills to a very good standard; and
- the retention and achievement rates which are now very good (88%) and outstanding (100%) respectively.

The area which requires further development is:

- the further embedding of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to sustain continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

In mechanical and manufacturing engineering, the quality of education and training provided by North West Regional College is now very good. The College has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor North West Regional College's progress on the area for improvement.

TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The original inspection in February and April 2012 highlighted strengths in the provision including: the very good quality of the trainees' practical training; the very good quality of the training workshops; the good or better quality of the work-based training; the good standards of the apprentices' and trainees' work; the good development of the Skills for Work provision; and the good ongoing development of the information and learning technology.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the further sharing and development of good practice between the campus teams, particularly in securing more employer placements for body repair trainees;
- the satisfactory retention (60%) and achievement rates (62%) over the last three years, and the poor progression rate (15%) to level 3 apprenticeship programmes;
- the insufficient use of questioning in theory lessons to consolidate learning and inform the planning of future learning; and
- the inadequate design and planning of the careers and employability provision for the trainees on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand of the Training for Success programme.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the North West Regional College have taken place:

- the appointment of three new full-time tutors;
- the enhancement of the light vehicle body repair provision through the addition of a refinishing unit;
- the provision of a staff development programme to enhance the quality of the teaching, training and learning;
- the introduction of electronic assessment portfolios across the provision;
- the redesign of the careers and employability provision;
- the increased employer engagement to secure work experience placements for trainees and to inform curriculum development;
- the significant investment in high quality information and learning technology infrastructure and resources; and
- the requisitioning of additional training vehicles and specialist equipment to upgrade the training facilities to current industry standards.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the significant increase in work experience placements for the trainees on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship strand, with 98% of them currently in suitable placements;
- the retention and achievement rates, which are now very good (81%) and good (80%) respectively;
- the quality of the teaching, training and learning across the provision, which is now very good;
- the skilful use of a wide range of ILT resources to enhance and support the apprentices' and trainees' learning; and
- the effective embedding of the careers and employability provision within the trainees' vocational training.

The area which requires further development is:

- the further embedding of the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to sustain continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

In transportation operations and maintenance, the quality of education and training provided by North West Regional College is now very good. The College has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the College has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor North West Regional College's progress on the area for improvement.

WOOD OCCUPATIONS

The original inspection in February and April 2012 highlighted strengths in the provision including: the training and learning which was good or better in the majority of the practical sessions observed; the good levels of motivation and positive attitudes to training of most of the trainees; the good quality of the personal training plans and the monitoring and review processes; the good start made to the review of the pre-entry guidance and provision which takes account of the mixed ability levels of the trainee intake; and the good standards of occupational skills demonstrated by the majority of the Programme-Led Apprentices in the directed training.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the average retention and achievement rates which were satisfactory at 60% and 65% respectively;
- the lack of appropriate work placements for a minority of the trainees; and
- the development of effective questioning and other assessment for learning strategies in the theory sessions.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the North West Regional College have taken place:

- the implementation of an effective mentoring programme to support the tutors' pedagogic skills in lesson planning and training and learning;
- the refinement of the recruitment and selection processes to ensure the trainees are placed on an appropriate training programme which best matches their learning needs;
- the additional time allocated for staff to facilitate a more detailed review of the trainees' progress;
- the introduction of electronic assessment portfolios for the collation, assessment and verification of evidence; and
- the establishment of focus groups to gain the views of the trainees about their training programmes.

The following are the most important improvements that have taken place since the original inspection:

- the improved quality of the teaching, training and learning;
- the implementation of "live projects" and engagement with external contractors to develop innovative approaches for the provision of work-related learning for those trainees not yet in a work placement;
- the high levels of investment in ILT equipment to support teaching, training and learning; and
- the improvements in retention and achievement rates which are now 70% and 83% respectively.

The areas which require further development are:

- the more effective use of the ILT resources to enhance further teaching, training and learning; and
- to improve further the retention and achievement rates.

CONCLUSION

In wood occupations, the quality of education and training provided by the North West College is now good. The College has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the progress on the areas for improvement.

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