



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
the South West College

Report of an Inspection
in October 2018



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

The South West College is a non-departmental public body and one of the six regional colleges of further education in Northern Ireland. It provides education and training across the Fermanagh and Omagh and Mid Ulster council areas. The college's main campuses are located in Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh. In Enniskillen, the college has a Technology and Skills centre located on the outskirts of the town. Work has commenced on a new campus in Enniskillen. The college provides a wide range of Training for Success (TfS) and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes¹ which are funded by the Department for the Economy (Department).

At the time of the inspection, 577 trainees and 993 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of: agriculture; barbering; child care, learning and development; customer service; electrotechnical services; engineering; financial services; health and social care; interior systems; land-based engineering; painting and decorating; plumbing; refrigeration; transportation operations and maintenance (automotive); vehicle sales; and wood occupations. Over 80% of all trainee and apprenticeship registrations are in the important skills areas of engineering (automotive, mechanical, and electrical) and construction.

A minority (12%) of the trainees have been identified as having a disability and/or additional learning support needs. Around 13% of the trainees and 59% of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GSCE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. At the time of the inspection, around 90% of the trainees were in a suitable work-experience placement.

2. Views of trainees and apprentices

As part of the evaluation of South West College's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people and adults at risk, almost all of the trainees and apprentices took the opportunity to complete a questionnaire prior to the inspection and 149 of them contained additional written comments.

The returns show that almost all (95%) of the trainees and apprentices who responded were positive about their learning experiences in the college and that it caters well for their needs. They report that they are well-supported by tutors, they make good progress and that they feel safe and secure. A small number of the trainees and apprentices reported the need for more investment in relaxation facilities or social areas.

In addition, inspectors met with several focus groups of trainees and apprentices across the provision. The trainees and apprentices reported that they enjoyed their courses and that the staff were approachable, encouraging and proactive in supporting them to achieve to their potential.

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.

¹ 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
Outcomes for learners	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
Training for Success	37%	Very good
ApprenticeshipsNI	63%	Very good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ² and the essential skills provision	
Electrotechnical services	Very good
Engineering	Very good
Essential skills	Good
Plumbing	Outstanding
Transportation operations and maintenance (automotive)	Very good
Skills for Work Level 1 (156 week)	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The outstanding, ambitious strategic leadership of the work-based learning provision which is meeting very effectively the needs of learners, staff, employers, other stakeholders and the local and wider economy.
- The significant, well-planned growth in apprenticeship provision, particularly in STEM³-related economically important areas.
- The good or better standards of work attained by almost all of the trainees and apprentices across the professional and technical provision inspected and the essential skills.
- The quality of the learning, teaching and training which was good or better in 84% of the sessions observed, and very good or better in 39% of them.
- The very good retention and achievement outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices, and the outstanding progression rates.

² A representative sample of professional and technical areas, agreed with the organisation, was selected for inspection.

³ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

- The proactive, effective involvement of employers, councils and other stakeholders in meaningful partnerships which inform to good effect the curriculum planning process and ensure that strong, appropriate progression pathways and employment opportunities exist for the trainees and apprentices.
- The flexible, responsive, outward-facing and fit-for-purpose curriculum which underpins the workforce development needs and economic growth in the region.
- The strong ethos of social responsibility and social inclusion, with the associated commitment and relevant partnerships, to meet the needs of those young people furthest from education, training and the workplace.
- The high value placed on impactful workforce development opportunities for staff at all levels, including, notably, those provided for part-time staff.
- The very good provision in automotive, electrotechnical, engineering, and Skills for Work level 1 (156) provision, and the outstanding provision in plumbing.
- The significant and ongoing investment in industry-standard accommodation and equipment to support the well-resourced curriculum provision.
- The provision of well-targeted, high quality care and welfare for the trainees and apprentices which impacts positively on the learning, teaching and training and the outcomes they attain.
- The high work placement rate for trainees on the Training for Success programme.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the quality of learning, teaching and training across the professional and technical areas and the essential skills.
- Develop further the whole-college data systems in work-based learning to effectively support more consistent tracking and monitoring of learner progress and to better inform benchmarking, measurement of value added and quality improvement planning.

5. Outcomes for learners

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, almost all of the trainees and apprentices engage with enthusiasm and motivation in the directed training and learning but also in their job roles within the workplace. They are well-settled, engage positively in practical workshop, classroom-based and workplace learning and develop to good effect their self-confidence and independence. Across the provision, almost all of the trainees and apprentices develop positive attitudes to their training and co-operate productively with lecturers, peers and workplace colleagues. They display strong levels of commitment to further advancement and most understand the career paths open to them and are motivated to progress into higher levels of training, education or employment.

The trainees and apprentices achieve good or very good standards of work across the professional and technical areas inspected. Employers report that the trainees and apprentices are progressively developing their occupational and employability skills. They are able to apply technical knowledge, understanding and practical occupational skills to industry standards. In plumbing, the trainees and apprentices develop the knowledge and understanding of the concepts, theories and processes of plumbing, they can measure and bend pipe accurately to fixed angles and to tight tolerances and connect pipe fittings to create a water tight seal. In the workplace, the apprentices can fit out complete first and second fix plumbing installations. In engineering, the trainees and apprentices undertake live production and maintenance tasks in the workplace, design and assemble control systems and undertake effective build, maintain and repair functions in complex manufacturing processing plants. In automotive, they can work effectively as part of a team in busy workshops, diagnosing faults to identify faulty components which they repair or replace as appropriate. In electrotechnical, they can design, install and test electrical systems in a wide range of built environments, following safe procedures with increasing confidence and independence.

Learning in the workplace is prioritised by the college and the quality of workplace learning across the professional and technical areas inspected is good or better; in the engineering disciplines and plumbing it is very good or outstanding. The college uses effectively its well-established partnership relationships with a large number of employers to ensure that, across all of the Training for Success provision, including the Skills for Work (156) level 1 trainees who require significant levels of additional support and mentoring, a high proportion of the trainees are in appropriate, productive work placements. As a result, the trainees and apprentices develop and apply a wide range of occupational skills, personal capabilities and wider employability skills. The trainees and apprentices are increasingly able to use their initiative with most developing well their problem-solving skills to solve complex problems logically and systematically in directed training and in the workplace.

For the minority of trainees not yet in work placement, the college provides good opportunities to further develop their wider employability skills and dispositions, through for example, additional project work one day per week. Consequently, for those who often face multiple barriers to engagement in education and training, appropriate support is in place to develop their social skills, self-esteem and self-confidence in preparation for a placement in the world of work.

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, most of the trainees and apprentices apply good literacy and numeracy skills. They engage well in their learning in the essential skills sessions, and demonstrate good standards of written work in their professional and technical portfolios. Most of the trainees and apprentices display good or better oral communication skills when working with their peers and colleagues both in the classroom and the workplace.

The trainees and apprentices are encouraged and supported to participate in local, national and international skills competitions. The apprentices have experienced good levels of success at national and international level, which has a confidence-enhancing impact right across all of the provision in the professional and technical areas.

The outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices are a strength of the work of the college. Overall, almost all (94%) of the trainees and apprentices who complete their training programmes achieve their targeted qualifications. Over the last three years, the achievement rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is outstanding at 95% and very good on the Training for Success programme at 92%.

The college staff, at all levels, work hard to ensure coherent progression pathways exist for trainees and apprentices. As a result, across the work-based learning provision, a high proportion of trainees and apprentices complete successfully their training and progress to higher training or employment. Over the last three years, the retention rate for the Training for Success programme is good (77%) and the progression rate to employment or further education or training outstanding (99%). The retention rate, over the same period, on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is very good (83%) and progression rate is outstanding (100%). Across the provision, a majority of the apprentices who achieve their level 2 framework progress to level 3 training or further education.

The outcomes attained by the trainees and apprentices in the essential skills are very good. Over the last three years, the average overall achievement rates in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are high at 87%, 86% and 95% respectively. The trainees and apprentices attained well at level 2 in the revised assessment arrangements in both literacy and numeracy, but the outcomes attained at level 1 require improvement, particularly in numeracy.

6. Quality of provision

The quality of the work-based learning provision is very good. The college has strategically developed and embedded a progressive, outstanding curriculum offer. Over time, strong partnership working has been forged and sustained with a large number of employers, the two local councils and other key stakeholders. A highly effective curriculum planning process, often through a co-design approach with industry, has been adopted in a number of professional and technical areas and is meeting very well the needs of the trainees and apprentices, employers and the region. This has resulted in a highly relevant, flexible industry-led curriculum. A number of targeted, STEM career initiatives have been used to good effect to raise the awareness of career opportunities in these economically important areas, including targeting females who are currently under-represented. Coherent progression pathways for trainees and apprentices underpin the curriculum planning decisions.

The college has creatively and effectively established brands, underpinned by quality provision, for key aspects of their curriculum provision, which include, for example, the Gold Apprenticeship programme and the Skills Academy. These are well-recognised, co-designed with employers and understood well by learners, employers, staff, and other important stakeholders. Progression pathways are clearly mapped out and these brands have helped to underpin the substantial increase in enrolments to apprenticeship provision in economically important areas such as the engineering disciplines.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training was good or better in most (84%) of the sessions observed; it was very good or better in 39% of them. The most effective practice is characterised by: high expectations by lecturers; productive relationships; effective planning for learning to ensure progress is made by all of the trainees and apprentices; use of varied and engaging training tasks and practical activities; a brisk pace of work; well-considered questioning techniques; collaborative group work; and high levels of engagement by the trainees and apprentices.

In the less effective practice, in 16% of the sessions observed, the sessions are overly tutor-led, questioning techniques are narrow and the pace of learning is too slow. In these sessions, there is a lack of stimulation, active learning is constrained and the levels of learner engagement are too low, resulting in insufficient progress in learning by the trainees and apprentices.

The care and welfare provided for the trainees and apprentices impacts positively on the learning, teaching, training and the outcomes they attain. A strong ethos of care and welfare, underpinned by a firm commitment to social responsibility and social inclusion is embedded consistently across all the work of the college. A collaborative, coherent team approach is clearly evident across lecturing and support staff which focuses on empowering and enabling the trainees and apprentices to gradually and appropriately take responsibility for their own learning and on promoting their independence in learning. Tailored individual support and mentoring services are provided sensitively but effectively to those trainees and apprentices who require additional help with their learning.

The college places a high priority on the provision of a curriculum which meets and addresses the holistic needs of the trainees. For example, on the Training for Success programme, the staff work hard to provide a well-planned employability and personal development programme for the trainees that increases their confidence, engages them well in learning and challenges them to tackle the wide range of personal, social, financial and educational issues that many of them face. External support services, such as counselling provision, are used to very good effect to provide the trainees with access to an appropriate range of care and welfare support services. The college needs to ensure, however, that all trainees and apprentices, across all campuses, are made more aware of the wide range of support services and activities that are available to them.

Through its strong ethos of social responsibility, the college remains committed to those young people furthest from education, training or employment. A range of externally-funded projects is used creatively and innovatively to develop provision, with relevant progression pathways, which is appropriate for those young people who face multiple barriers to engagement in education and training. The programmes help to engage the young people, to address their individual barriers and to raise their confidence to enable them to successfully progress to mainstream programmes such as Training for Success. The impact of all of the projects is monitored closely and a majority of the individuals who engage with them progress positively to Training for Success, further education or employment.

The careers education, information, advice and guidance provision is highly effective and underpins to good effect the coherent progression planning for the trainees and apprentices. Almost all of the trainees and apprentices are well-informed of the range of progression pathways and career opportunities which are available to them. The careers provision is enhanced well by the wide range of workplace experiences, participation in skills competitions and international exchange opportunities. Through outstanding employer engagement and a fit-for-purpose curriculum, a wide range of career progression pathways and employment opportunities exist for the trainees and the apprentices. A college-wide focus on progression, concentrated on economically important curriculum areas in the local and regional economy, has resulted in an outstanding STEM-related curriculum offer from level 1 through to level 5. The employability programme for the trainees is well planned and mostly matched to their needs; they work well on the tasks set and produce a good standard of work in their portfolios. The programme would be enhanced further by stretching and challenging the more able trainees on the programme.

The quality and effectiveness of the personal training planning process is inconsistent across the professional and technical areas inspected and at times across the campuses; overall, the process requires improvement. In the better practice, the plans contain appropriate information including initial assessment and succinct, evaluative detail on any barriers to the trainees' and apprentices' learning and progression. In these plans, the reviews are comprehensive, incorporate feedback on their progress in the workplace and in the essential skills and there is good clarity around the milestones already completed. In a majority of the professional and technical areas, however, such as engineering, electrotechnical and

automotive, initial assessments are not consistently recorded and used, including for those trainees and apprentices with weaker academic profiles. In addition, too many of the reviews are minimal and overly generic, the quality of the content varies across the campuses and too many of them lack the level of meaningful detail that is required. Consequently, in these plans the progress by trainees and apprentices is not well enough tracked or evaluated and there is the potential for learners at risk not to be identified in a timely enough manner.

7. Leadership and management

The strategic leadership of the college is outstanding. This is characterised by: an ambitious, shared strategic vision which is delivered through an effective, comprehensive short, medium and longer-term college development planning process; the ongoing curriculum innovation which is delivering a responsive, flexible and growing high quality work-based learning curriculum offer in key STEM-related economically important areas to meet local and regional need; strong, well-informed, supportive but challenging governance; well-targeted workforce development which aligns with curricular and employer needs and includes the staff's digital skills; high levels of employer engagement and effective links and partnerships with other key stakeholders; systematic, continuous attention to quality improvement; and significant investment in industry-standard equipment, technology and resources to support its ongoing work. Consequently, the trainees and apprentices attain high outcomes in key curriculum areas that align with Government priorities, most progress to further education and training and the college is meeting well the needs of the employers and wider community in the two council areas it serves, but also much wider.

The senior leaders, supported by the Governing Body, place a strong focus on social inclusion to meet the needs of the people in the catchment area who are furthest away from education, training and employment. To support and enhance this work, and the mainstream provision, they access successfully substantial additional external funding streams around social inclusion which adds coherence and depth to the curriculum offer.

The management of change is a strength of the senior leadership of the college. An extensive review of the current management structure of the college has been undertaken and a re-structuring process is well underway. The consultation and communication around this process has been systematic, sensitive and inclusive of the views of staff and a wide range of stakeholder groups. The process has been transparent, responsive, sensitively led and managed and has not impacted adversely on the current operation of the core business of the college.

The college places a high value on workforce development. The strategic impetus for this comes from the college development and annual development plans. There is strong evidence of extensive and flexible development opportunities at all levels in the college, including at the highest levels of management, but also the part-time staff. Staff are supported through a range of innovative, often bespoke initiatives, including international experiences, to further develop competence in a range of areas, many of which are linked to employers' skills needs. The college has worked strategically and collaboratively to develop a coherent, forward-looking digital skills strategy; this is now at the early implementation stage and involves, for example, all staff undertaking an externally accredited level 3 digital skills qualification which has been designed and developed by college staff. Plans are well-advanced for the implementation of an internal 'lecturers into industry' initiative to ensure professional and technical staff are kept informed of contemporary practices in industry.

The quality of the accommodation and specialist resources is mostly very good or better. Almost all of the training areas and workshops are tidy, well-presented and maintained to a high standard. The trainees and apprentices have access to industry-standard equipment to support their learning and development. Through well-judged strategic planning at middle and senior leadership levels, the college has coped well with the significant growth in apprenticeship numbers and continues to ensure they undertake their training in well-equipped workshops. The college continues to invest heavily in estates, contemporary engineering and automotive equipment and other specialist resources.

The senior leadership team has worked hard to embed a culture of reflection and targeted planning for improvement across the work of the college, with a sharp, appropriate and successful focus on providing an economically-relevant curriculum to meet the needs of the region. The quality improvement planning process has been reviewed appropriately in light of evaluative feedback on the most recent submission to the Department. As a result, the reporting arrangements at middle leadership level are more streamlined and align better with the team operating plans. In addition, the course teams across the professional and technical areas use to good effect real-time, accurate data on retention to ensure timely interventions to support trainees and apprentices to stay on their training programmes. Going forward, there is a need for the quality improvement planning process, however, to be more reflective on the quality of the learning and teaching across the work-based learning provision.

The middle leaders in the college are very effective. They work hard, build good relationships with the course teams, are supported well by the senior leadership team and the lines of communication throughout the college are open and transparent. The deputy heads of department and curriculum managers have a sound operational oversight of the provision and engage well with employers and other stakeholders in the curriculum planning process.

While the college has a range of systems to collect and collate data, and an extensive amount of data is accurately captured and mostly well used, the systems are not sufficiently joined-up in order to provide the high-level collated data which can be used to inform staff, at all levels, about the progress being made by the learners in all aspects of their training. There are inconsistencies in the baselining of the learners and in the tracking and monitoring of their progress across professional and technical areas, the essential skills and also how the analysis of data is carried out across the main campuses. Consequently, there is a need to strategically develop further the whole-college data systems in work-based learning to: support more consistent tracking and monitoring of learner progress; improve standardisation of the collation and use of data across the campuses; and align with the personal training planning process to better inform benchmarking, the quality improvement planning process and the measurement of value added.

8. Safeguarding

On the basis of the evidence provided during the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding young people and adults at risk reflect broadly the guidance from the Department. However, the college needs to:

- review, rationalise and contemporise its policies and procedures for safeguarding young people and adults at risk and to more rigorously track, monitor and follow-up the staff training in safeguarding to ensure maximum uptake and impact.

9. Overall effectiveness

The South West College demonstrates a high level of capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the trainees and apprentices.

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	993	63%
Training for Success Skills for Your Life	14	1%
Training for Success Skills for Work (strand 1)	182	11%
Training for Success Skills for Work (strand 2)	381	25%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Agriculture	*	
Barbering	11	1%
Customer service	*	0%
Engineering	80	5%
Health and social care	6	0%
Plumbing	40	3%
Refrigeration	*	0%
Skills for Work 1	182	12%
Transportation operations and maintenance	135	9%
Wood occupations	108	7%
Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Child care, learning and development	6	0%
Electrotechnical services	362	23%
Engineering	262	17%
Financial services	16	1%
Health and social care	10	1%
Interior systems	21	1%
Painting and decorating	*	0%
Plumbing	42	3%
Refrigeration	11	1%
Transportation operations and maintenance	161	10%
Vehicle sales	9	1%
Wood occupations	89	6%

* Less than 5

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	13%	59%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*- C	21%	68%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*- C	30%	79%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*- C	29%	84%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*- G	57%	81%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	17%	3%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

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

Fourteen ETI inspectors and two associate assessors observed 713 apprentices and trainees in 83 directed training sessions; visited 42 trainees and apprentices in their workplace; and interviewed 258 in focus group meetings and training sessions. Discussions were held with 74 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; and 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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