



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Training for Success and
ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
the North West Regional College

Report of an Inspection
in November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Contents

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of trainees and apprentices	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	3
6. Quality of provision	5
7. Leadership and management	7
8. Safeguarding	8
9. Overall effectiveness	9
Appendix	
A. Programme registrations	
B. Inspection methodology and evidence base	
C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate	

1. Context

The North West Regional College is a non-departmental public body and is one of six regional colleges of further education in Northern Ireland. It provides education and training opportunities across the two council areas of Derry City and Strabane, and Causeway Coast and Glens. The college has campuses located in Limavady, Londonderry and Strabane. It is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. At the time of the inspection¹, 289 trainees and 318 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical areas of: beauty therapy; brickwork; child care, learning and development; dry lining; electrotechnical services; engineering; hairdressing and barbering; health and social care; painting and decorating; plumbing; transportation operations and maintenance; and wood occupations.

A minority (10%) of the trainees and apprentices have a disability and/or additional learning support needs. A further 21% have social and emotional barriers to learning. A minority (11%) of the trainees and a majority (62%) of the apprentices entered their programme with four or more GSCE passes at grades A* to C or equivalent, including English and mathematics. Most (81%) of the trainees are in a suitable work-experience placement.

2. Views of trainees and apprentices

As part of the evaluation of the North West 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. One hundred and thirty-one questionnaires were returned (21% of the current registrations), including five with written comments. The returns show that almost all (94%) of the trainees and apprentices who responded reported a positive learning experience and felt safe, well cared for and supported in the college.

In addition, inspectors met thirty trainees and apprentices in three focus groups. The trainees and apprentices reported that care and welfare is a high priority in the college, with a broad range of suitable care, guidance and support services available, in order for them to optimise their learning opportunities.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on the:

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

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

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Overall quality of learning and training programmes		
Training for Success	48%	Good
ApprenticeshipsNI	52%	Good

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ² and the essential skills provision	
Barbering, beauty therapy, and hairdressing	Very good
Child care, learning and development	Very good
Electrotechnical services	Very good
Essential skills	Good
Health and social care	Good
Plumbing	Very good
Transportation operations and maintenance	Good
Wood occupations	Important areas for improvement

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The very good standards achieved by most of the trainees and apprentices in the development of their professional and technical skills and underpinning knowledge, which they can apply confidently in the workplace.
- The high achievement rate (89%) for those apprentices who complete their ApprenticeshipsNI programme, with almost all of them sustaining employment and/or progressing to higher training or education.
- The good or better overall quality of almost all of the professional and technical areas inspected and the essential skills, with very good provision in the majority of areas.
- The good or better quality of the learning, teaching and training in most (88%) of the sessions observed, with a minority (29%) being very good or outstanding.

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

- The good work-experience placement rate (81%) for the trainees on the Training for Success programme, providing most of them with good quality, relevant workplace learning opportunities.
- The highly effective care and welfare, guidance and support provided for the trainees and apprentices, particularly for those with additional support needs, which impacts positively on their self-confidence and development of personal capabilities for the world of work.
- The very good quality of the strategic leadership, particularly the senior management team who articulate clearly a vision and shared ambition for excellence which is demonstrated by the ongoing development of well-considered initiatives and strategies to bring about sustained improvement in the quality of the provision.
- The effective links and partnerships with employers and other stakeholders that continue to be developed by staff at all levels in order to provide high quality work-based training opportunities and career progression pathways for the trainees and apprentices.

Areas for improvement

- To continue to address the low retention (60%), achievement (77%) and progression (65%) rates on the Training for Success programme.
- Improve the quality of the provision for wood occupations which has important areas for improvement.
- Develop further the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes, particularly the more rigorous analysis and use of data in order to monitor, review, and evaluate more effectively the quality of the provision.

5. Outcomes for learners

The trainees and apprentices are mostly achieving very good standards of professional and technical skills and knowledge. In directed training, they develop relevant practical competences in using industry-standard equipment and techniques to an appropriate standard. In plumbing, for example, they develop quickly key hand skills, such as bending copper pipe to the correct angles and making sound joints with a range of fittings. With increasing confidence, the trainees and apprentices can apply their occupational skills and knowledge to complete workplace tasks and/or college-based projects. In barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing, for example, most of the trainees are developing effective commercial skills and demonstrate increasing degrees of customer service when dealing with clients. In the workplace, the trainees and apprentices are adept in carrying out a variety of routine activities and develop the skills necessary to complete more complex industry-based projects. In the electrotechnical services, for example, they are able to interpret detailed technical information to plan and install accurately a diverse range of electrical systems with minimum supervision. Across the professional and technical areas inspected, most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate a sound understanding of the key principles and values which underpin effectively their occupational practice in the workplace.

Most of the trainees and apprentices demonstrate good standards in the development of their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In the essential skills sessions observed, the trainees demonstrate effective reading and writing skills. Their ability to apply successfully these skills across a variety of contexts is, however more variable and an important area for improvement, particularly the application of extended writing skills within their vocational settings. In the workplace, most of the trainees and apprentices are competent communicators; they are able to engage confidently in professional dialogue with their supervisors and clients. A minority of the trainees, however, are reticent to engage in discussions and teamwork activities during directed training, particularly in their essential skills classes. The trainees and apprentices develop sound numeracy skills which they can apply successfully in the workplace to underpin routine occupational calculations and problem solving involving wider mathematical skills.

In directed training, the trainees and apprentices are developing positive dispositions to learning; the majority grow quickly in self-confidence to work collaboratively and respectfully with their peers and lecturers. Increasingly, through project-based learning, the trainees and apprentices are using, to good effect, their personal attributes and capabilities to contribute successfully in showcase events and competitions. In particular, they develop steadily the necessary interpersonal skills to work in multi-disciplinary teams, to plan and organise effectively a range of college-wide projects. In the workplace, their supervisors report increasing levels of independent working and ability to use their initiative to solve problems. The trainees' and apprentices' attendance rates across most areas are good; it is an important area for improvement in health and social care.

Overall, most (81%) of the trainees and apprentices who complete their training achieve their targeted qualifications. Over the last three years, the achievement rate on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is good at 89%, although it is an important area for improvement on the Training for Success programme at 77%.

Across most of the areas inspected, the trainees and apprentices are progressing well in their learning; they are completing their qualifications at an appropriate pace. Those with additional learning needs benefit from well-targeted support and tailored programmes that enable them to overcome effectively barriers to learning and achieve to their potential. It is notable in barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing that the trainees progress quickly from level 1 to level 2 and includes realistic opportunities to complete a number of level 3 units.

Most of the trainees and apprentices are also progressing well in the achievement of their essential skills qualifications. Over the last three years, nearly all (98%) of them achieved their targeted qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Progression to higher levels is mostly good; on average just over one-half (52%) of the trainees and apprentices progress across more than one level in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. In contrast, only a third of them progress from level 1 to level 2 in ICT. A minority (21%) of the trainees and apprentices with grade D in either of their GCSE English, mathematics or ICT on entry to their training are not currently targeting level 2 in their essential skills: consequently this is an important area for closer monitoring and improvement.

Overall, the proportion of the trainees completing their training successfully and progressing to higher training or employment is not good enough. The retention and progression rates for the Training for Success programme over the last three years are important areas for improvement at 60% and 65% respectively. The retention rate, over the same period, on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is good at 75% and progression to employment or higher training or education is outstanding at 95%. Importantly, the majority (59%) of the apprentices who achieve their level 2 framework progress to level 3 training or further education.

6. Quality of provision

The college offers a broad curriculum of work-based learning programmes in order to provide young people with training and apprenticeship opportunities aligned to the economic needs of the North West region of Northern Ireland. Traditionally, the college has sustained relevant training and apprenticeship programmes valued by employers in the construction and engineering sectors. In addition, the college has grown its provision in other sectors, including in health and care, and retail commercial enterprises. Notably, the college is proactively addressing a widely recognised need to expand and sustain apprenticeships across a broader employer base, in order to raise the qualification levels of, and progression opportunities for, young people. The college is also reconfiguring its level 1 provision, to good effect, to align it better with the needs of the young people progressing from post-primary schools with low attainment and barriers to learning and progression.

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, the curriculum is well-planned and matched appropriately to the aspirations of the trainees and apprentices and to the workforce development needs of the local employers. The trainees and apprentices benefit from a balanced range of learning experiences to develop both their practical skills and their technical knowledge. In the workplace, they have suitable opportunities to consolidate, develop and apply their skills and knowledge. Importantly, most (81%) of the trainees on the Training for Success programme have a relevant work-experience placement where they can increase their employability skills and awareness of the world of work. In addition, the college provides very good curriculum enrichment for the trainees: they can avail of relevant short industry-specific training courses in order to enhance their employability skills. Significantly, there are also growing opportunities for the trainees to participate in well-considered project-based learning activities: this is a key feature in the professional and technical areas of barbering, beauty therapy and hairdressing; child care learning and development; and wood occupations.

There is a suitable curriculum provision to develop the trainees' and apprentices' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills up to, and including level 2, and beyond to GCSE. Progression pathways are in place to enable them to access the most appropriate training matched to their development needs and progression opportunities, and work is under way to strengthen further the progression to GCSE. Going forward, the college needs to consider how to integrate more effectively the holistic development of the trainees' and apprentices' essential skills within their vocational learning experiences, in order to underpin and improve learning outcomes.

The college's comprehensive induction processes are well-planned and co-ordinated, including clear and practical pre-entry advice and guidance for the trainees and apprentices. The trainees and apprentices with recognised disabilities are able to access well-targeted and appropriate additional learning support. A dedicated team of support staff plan well to meet the diverse range of disabilities, medical conditions and learning needs of the trainees and apprentices with tailored individualised support.

The quality of the trainees' and apprentices' personal training plans is mostly good across the professional and technical areas. Most of the trainees' and apprentices' progress reviews are regular and supportive. While individualised support plans are in place to inform the planning to meet the needs of those trainees and apprentices who require additional support, the monitoring and reviewing of the impact of the additional support provided against key targets is underdeveloped. Overall, there is an important need to strengthen further the tracking and monitoring of the trainees' and apprentices' progress against well-defined targets and to measure more robustly their progress against all aspects of their training framework.

There is a clearly defined strategic vision for careers education, information, advice and guidance, which includes appropriate careers education opportunities that meet well the needs of almost all of the trainees and apprentices, and support effectively their career and progression planning. To underpin the careers and employability curriculum provided for the trainees and apprentices, the college has invested in an innovative careers resource centre, with an educational and employability focus on the development of enterprise, innovation and creativity skills through learning, within a highly engaging learning environment. The college's 'Careers Academy' model is operated across all of the campuses to support the learning experiences of the trainees and apprentices, including the development of their personal capabilities, employability skills and learning dispositions, to underpin progression in their learning. The college plans well to develop the trainees' employability skills, through a collaborative approach that involves the professional and technical lecturers and careers support staff in the blended delivery of employability and careers sessions and workshops. The sessions are mostly good; characterised by effective planning and use of appropriate activities to build on prior learning and develop the trainees' work-readiness skills. The college is well supported by local employers, community and statutory agencies, and collaborates effectively with these organisations to provide the trainees and apprentices with opportunities to engage in enterprise and employability learning experiences to further support their career planning and learning.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training ranges from outstanding to important areas for improvement: most (88%) of the sessions observed were good or better with a majority (60%) being good and a minority (25%) very good.

Across the professional and technical areas inspected, most of the practical training sessions are well planned and provide a good range of engaging and appropriate learning activities to develop the trainees' and apprentices' occupational skills. The sessions are characterised by high levels of collaborative learning; a well-balanced range of practical activities and underpinning knowledge; and an appropriate pace of work matched to the abilities of the trainees and apprentices. In the best practice, careful planning and skilful use of information learning technology (ILT) ensures that the learning is dynamic and stimulating with an appropriate blend of theory and practical skills development.

In contrast, most of the theory-based sessions to develop the trainees' and apprentices' underpinning knowledge deploy a narrower range of teaching approaches. While the sessions are effective in promoting learning, there is limited differentiation and whole-class teaching is overly prevalent. Consequently, the sessions are characterised by too few opportunities for the trainees and apprentices to engage in group work and independent learning. There is a need to make more effective use of ILT and active learning strategies to enhance and support the learning, particularly through more effective questioning and extended learner responses.

In the essential skills the quality of learning, teaching and training is mostly good. Effective practice is characterised by: good planning; high levels of engagement from the trainees; the development of their literacy and numeracy skills in a vocational context; and high levels of additional support. In the less effective practice, there is limited evidence of differentiation or assessment for learning, a lack of opportunities for trainees to engage in active learning, particularly in numeracy, and limited innovative use of ILT to motivate and engage the trainees.

The assessment arrangements are mostly effective. In particular, workplace assessment activities are well planned and rigorous; the trainees and apprentices are provided with appropriate feedback to help them improve the quality of their occupational work. Marking for improvement across all areas is, however, too variable: a more consistent approach is needed to ensure that the results of assessment are used systematically to plan for more effective learning.

The care and welfare provision impacts positively on the learning experiences of the trainees and apprentices, particularly for those with additional needs. The provision of effective learning support is a high priority for the college and consequently there is a dedicated and highly-committed team of learning support staff who enthusiastically lead and promote an extensive range of care and welfare services. There are well-established links with a variety of external organisations and agencies in order to provide well-targeted personal, social, financial, and safeguarding support and guidance for the trainees and apprentices. A wide range of high quality resources, including a recently developed mobile phone application, are provided to improve the trainees' and apprentices' access to key services. In addition, a range of workshops, for example, on drug awareness, provide comprehensive preventative education to support and raise the level of the trainees' and apprentices' awareness of pertinent and current issues.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of the strategic leadership is very good. The senior management team articulates clearly a vision and a shared ambition to provide and extend the range of high quality work-based learning programmes to meet the needs of young people and employers. They have set clear targets for improving the quality and breadth of the curriculum offer, particularly an expansion of apprenticeships across a broader range of professional and technical areas: a new post has just been created and filled in order to further the college's development of apprenticeships. In addition, the college's governors and the senior management team have prioritised the development of strategies and initiatives to improve the quality of the learning experiences of the trainees and apprentices and the learning outcomes they achieve. Key and well-considered initiatives include the provision of dedicated teams and resources to: improve the quality of the learning, teaching and training; increase the effective use of ILT to promote more effective learning; and embed project-based learning. In addition, the senior management team is responsive to the immediate operational challenges within the work-based learning provision: more effective procedures and systems are being established in order to effect improvements in outcomes of the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

A recent re-structuring of the management teams has led to greater collegial working. In particular, cross-college working groups for work-based learning and essential skills is fostering more collaborative curriculum planning and sharing of effective practice. Although, there is a need to monitor closely the management structure for the essential skills provision to ensure that there is adequate capacity to address effectively the identified key actions for improvement. The recent establishment of case-conferencing facilitates timely interventions by curriculum managers to address emerging issues and any underperformance across the provision. There is, however, an important need for more effective analysis and use of available data to track, monitor and evaluate more robustly the impact of the quality improvement interventions.

The college is proactive in developing effective employer engagement. A dedicated business support unit is building well strategic links and partnerships with a range of key stakeholders. In particular, there is a strong collaborative partnership with Derry City and Strabane Council in order to promote apprenticeships to a wider range of employers. The lecturers and the employment liaison officers engage effectively with a wide range of employers. This has led to well-established relationships with local employers who provide readily work-experience opportunities for the trainees and progression opportunities for the apprentices. In addition, the college exploits positively opportunities, through the European Union Erasmus Programme, for staff and trainees to participate in exchange visits in other colleges across Europe.

There is a supportive and well-targeted continuing professional development programme for staff, including for newly appointed and part-time lecturers, with a strong emphasis on building their capacity for delivering more effective learning, teaching and training, including the purposeful and innovative use of ILT and project-based learning. The recently constituted teams of learning and teaching mentors, ILT mentors and a project-based learning development officer work with enthusiasm and to good effect to promote best practice. There is, however, a need for sharply focused staff development to enable the essential skills lecturers to develop the appropriate learning and teaching strategies in order to equip the trainees and apprentices with the necessary competence and confidence to undertake more successfully the recently introduced external examinations.

A key strength of the provision is the specialist expertise and professionalism of the lecturers and support staff, which are used to good effect to enrich the trainees' and apprentices' learning experience and build positive relationships with them. Across the college the quality of the learning resources mostly range from good to very good; the workshops and classrooms are generally well maintained and the trainees and apprentices have good access to an appropriate range of specialist training equipment and consumables. The college is proactive in providing the trainees and apprentices with access to up-to-date technology, such as the recent purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles.

Self-evaluation and quality improvement planning is valued and central to the senior management's strategic planning to establish a culture of insightful reflection and quality improvement planning. There is a dedicated and well-resourced team of quality improvement staff with well-defined functions. The team members are diligent and systematic in implementing a robust quality improvement cycle which underpins effectively the collation and identification of key strengths and areas for improvement across the provision. Senior management and the governors are well informed of the planned actions to bring about improvement, which are tracked and reviewed regularly. Importantly, the key findings of the inspection are broadly in line with the most recent self-evaluation report for work-based learning. At course team level, however, there is undue variation in the quality of self-evaluation and quality improvement planning. At this level, there is a lack of in-depth analysis and robust use of key performance data and information to inform critically self-evaluation reports and to evaluate the progress and impact of quality improvement planning against key performance targets. In addition, there is a need for greater cohesion across the college's various initiatives to bring about sustained improvement, particularly those to improve further the quality of the learning, teaching and training.

8. Safeguarding

On the basis of the evidence provided during the inspection, the arrangements in the college for safeguarding young people and adults at risk are effectively developed and reflect the guidance issued by the Department. The supporting policies are well-informed and comprehensive. There is a clear strategic and operational vision across the college to support high levels of commitment to safeguarding trainees and apprentices both in directed training and in the work-experience placements. The roles and responsibilities of the staff across the student services team are clearly defined and well developed to manage effectively safeguarding arrangements across the college. Safeguarding training is a high priority in the college. The college has invested in continuing professional development in safeguarding to support staff across the college.

9. Overall effectiveness

The North West Regional College demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the trainees and apprentices. There are areas for improvement that the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The ETI will monitor how the college sustains improvement.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI L2	129	21%
ApprenticeshipsNI L3	189	31%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Your Life	0	0%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 1)	38	6%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 2)	48	8%
Training for Success (2013) Skills for Work (strand 3)	0	0%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Your Life	0	0%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 1)	68	11%
Training for Success (2017) Skills for Work (strand 2)	135	23%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of trainees	% of total registrations
Beauty therapy	24	4%
Brickwork	19	3%
Catering and hospitality	4	1%
Child care, learning and development	20	3%
Engineering	26	4%
Hairdressing and barbering	28	5%
Health and social care	15	3%
Transportation operations and maintenance	40	7%
Painting and decorating	14	2%
Plumbing	7	1%
Multi-crafts (Skills for Work L1)	64	10%
Wood occupations	28	5%

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices	% of total registrations
Brickwork	5	1%
Dry lining	13	2 %
Electrotechnical services	130	21%
Engineering	71	11%
Health & social Care	1	0.5%
Transportation operations and maintenance	36	6%
Painting and decorating	1	0.5%
Plumbing	37	6%
Wood occupations	24	4%

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

Programme	Training for Success (%)	Apprenticeship NI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C including English and mathematics	11%	62%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-C (excluding English and Mathematics)	4%	27%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at Grades A*-C	17%	59%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at Grades A*-C	13%	62%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*-G	52%	79%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	1%	0%

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 five associate assessors observed 568 trainees and apprentices in 72 directed training sessions; visited 20 trainees and apprentices in their workplace; and interviewed 247 in focus group meetings. Discussions were held with 33 employers. 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.

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 participants. 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 participants. 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 participants. 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 participants. 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.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2017

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk