

# Stockport Engineering Training Association

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 54624

**Name of lead inspector:** Shahram Safavi HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 17 February 2011

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** 18 Hammond Avenue  
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## Information about the provider

1. Stockport Engineering Training Association (SETA) is a registered charity, formed in 1966 to provide work-based learning for engineering companies in the Stockport and Greater Manchester areas.
2. A chief executive, appointed in January 2010, manages SETA. The chief executive reports to a board of six directors who are the representatives of member companies. Currently there are two vacancies on this supervisory board. SETA employs 22 full-time staff of whom five are managers, 14 are assessors and three staff have learner support and administrative responsibilities. The company also employs four part-time staff, as required.
3. SETA contracts with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to offer apprenticeships for young people and Train to Gain provision in engineering. The SFA provides around 50% of the company's funding; the remainder is from the provision of commercial training. In 2009/10, there were 109 learners on advanced apprenticeships and 30 on apprenticeships.
4. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Stockport was 4.3%, compared to 9.1% in England. The number of pupils in 2010 gaining five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at A\* to C was 61.7%, compared with the national average of 49.8%.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
  - Stockport College
  - Tameside College

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of learners in 2009/10</b>
<b>Young learner provision:</b> 16-18	107 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships Train to Gain	139 apprentices 47 learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Engineering	3

## Overall effectiveness

6. SETA offers an appropriate standard of education and training and its prospects for improving the provision are satisfactory. Learners develop a good range of engineering skills, such as machining, problem solving, fabrication and electrical installations. They enjoy their courses and improve their employability. Apprentices in SETA successfully develop problem solving and other skills required by employers and perform significantly better than apprentices with many other providers. An acceptable proportion of advanced apprentices achieve. However, too many of these apprentices do not complete in the time planned and agreed. Too many Train to Gain learners do not complete their courses. Many of them are affected by changes to their employment situation during their training and leave early. Many learners achieve a good range of additional qualifications.
7. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical coaching and training are good. Assessors monitor learners' progress effectively but they do not plan individual learning sufficiently and then share these plans well enough with learners. The advanced apprenticeship programme is not designed and delivered with sufficient flexibility. The use of information and learning technology (ILT), to make teaching sessions interesting or to allow learners to learn at their own pace, is insufficient.

8. SETA effectively meets the needs and interests of learners and the engineering employers. Assessors are supportive and approachable and they often provide good coaching to learners to overcome any difficulties. The availability of information, advice and guidance during courses is satisfactory.
9. SETA's management is satisfactory and its well established partnerships with engineering employers are very beneficial for learners, although the company needs to plan better for future changes and development. SETA has effective arrangements for protecting its learners and its focus on health and safety is good. The company has developed a range of initiatives to increase the number of women learners but has not been sufficiently successful in this area. SETA has an appropriate understanding about what it needs to do to improve further. However, SETA should ensure that it maintains any improvements made, increases the pace of its improvements and informs its learners and partners about the improvements planned or made.

## Main findings

- Overall, outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The apprenticeship success rate has improved and is now very high and well above the national average. The rate of completion within the planned timescale has also improved and is now good. The success rate for advanced apprentices is below the national average and the rate of completion within the planned timescale is low.
- The rate of completion, within the planned timescale, for Train to Gain learners is very low. In 2009/10, the Train to Gain success rate was significantly reduced by changes in learners' employment status. Learners develop good engineering skills that increase their employability. The progress of the current learners is satisfactory. Learners have a good knowledge of health and safety. They adopt safe working practices in the workshops and in the workplace, and they say they feel very safe at work.
- Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners benefit from a wide range of relevant teaching activities in the company's training centre. The monitoring and recording of learners' progress is good. Training in SETA's workshops is very effective in developing learners' competencies. Not all learners complete an initial assessment prior to commencing training and the individual learning plans are not sufficiently well developed, used and shared with learners.
- Assessors review learners' progress thoroughly and provide an appropriate range of details on the progress review documents, helping learners to progress. However, assessors are not sufficiently aware of the literacy and numeracy levels of their learners. Training plans do not include this information or any intentions to support learners should they require it.
- The planning of on-the-job and off-the-job training, including that subcontracted to the colleges, is not sufficiently flexible to ensure most advanced apprentices complete within the agreed timescale. The use of ILT is underdeveloped.

- SETA is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and employers. Employers speak very highly of the service provided to them. SETA uses its well established partnerships with employers to develop courses that meet their needs for both apprenticeship training, and general and bespoke skills training and updating.
- SETA makes very effective use of its long-term and well-established partnerships with employers to improve and enhance its provision, learners' skills and employability. The company uses these relationships advantageously and is very productive in finding apprentices employment.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Induction to the training centre and the training programmes is appropriate. Learners are provided with a wide range of useful information about personal issues and about their training programmes. Advice and guidance during the courses are satisfactory overall.
- The company has recently introduced a new management structure which has much improved internal communication. However, SETA acknowledges that staff roles and responsibilities should be better defined and the appraisal process, which was suspended due to organisational difficulties, should be restarted.
- The chief executive has been very proactive in developing partnerships with other providers to improve the company's operation and provision. However, SETA's strategic planning to accommodate the changes in the demands of some of its main stakeholders is not sufficient. SETA manages its subcontractors appropriately. However, the subcontractor management processes are not sufficiently formalised and adequately recorded.
- The supervisory arrangements for overseeing the development of SETA are satisfactory. The board monitors the performance of the company; however, it does not focus sufficiently on learners' outcomes.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Assessors promote equality and diversity appropriately through the learning processes. SETA is working hard to increase the low number of women learners.
- The self-assessment process is thorough and provides an appropriate basis for improvements. Quality arrangements are satisfactory. However, the pace of some improvements has been slow and some developments to address areas for improvement, identified at the previous inspection, have not been sustained.
- SETA offers satisfactory value for money. It manages its resources appropriately and uses additional company funds wisely to improve its resources. However, the availability and use of ILT are insufficient.

## **What does Stockport Engineering Training Association need to do to improve further?**

- Improve overall success rates, and success rates within the agreed timescale for advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners, by ensuring that they remain on their programmes and make good progress. Design, manage and deliver aspects of the advanced apprentices' programme, including the subcontracted provision, so that sufficient learners achieve within the agreed timescale.
- Ensure all learners receive an initial assessment of their attainment in literacy and numeracy, so that any who require support are identified and provided with it. Ensure assessors are fully aware of the literacy and numeracy levels of learners by including the test results in the training plans.
- Improve SETA's strategic planning process by working with all the key stakeholders, including the SFA. Evaluate new challenges, thoroughly plan for the changes and effectively implement the actions in a timely manner.
- Ensure the pace of improvement is increased, monitor improvements rigorously and ensure all improvements are sustained.

**Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors****What learners like:**

- finding employment
- the good opportunities to complete additional qualifications
- the regular checks on the progress made during the training programme.

**What learners would like to see improved:**

- the availability of computers to support learning
- the social facilities in the training centre
- the link between topics studied in the subcontractors and the training in the centre or the workplace.

**Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors****What employers like:**

- the apprenticeship training that relates to company requirements
- the good communication between SETA and the employers
- the focus on health and safety at work.

**What employers would like to see improved:**

- more opportunities to share experience about apprenticeship training with other employers.

## Main inspection findings

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 3**

10. SETA's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The company has responded appropriately to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection; most issues have been improved. Apprentices' success rates are now significantly above the national average. Most learners develop good engineering skills and significantly improve their economic well-being. The good quality of practical training identified at the last inspection has been maintained.
11. The chief executive and managers recognise the need to increase the pace of improvement. This sense of urgency is reflected in the changes to the management team and the chief executive's strong partnership working within a forum of providers to explore, adapt and transfer good practice to the company. SETA has introduced a number of initiatives to promote apprenticeship programmes to women learners, although women learners are still too few. Overall, quality assurance arrangements are effective, although the audit of some training processes has not resulted in sufficient improvements. The self-assessment process has much improved and the report's structure focuses well on the impact of policy and practice on learners. The report recognises most areas for improvements identified during the inspection and inspectors agree with most of the main judgements.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

12. The apprenticeship framework overall success rate has improved and is now very high and well above the national average. Apprentices' completion within the planned timescale is now good. However, the overall success rate for advanced apprentices, who are the majority, is below the national average and their success rate for completion within the planned timescale is low. In 2009/10, employers transferring learners to other employers or dismissing them from their employment significantly affected the success rate for advanced apprentices. There is little difference between success rates and completion within planned timescale rates for learners on the engineering and engineering manufacturing technologies programmes.
13. The overall Train to Gain success rate and the rate of completion within the planned timescale are both very low and have declined significantly since 2008/09. In 2009/10, the number of Train to Gain learners was low and their success rate was significantly reduced by the action of employers, for example in withdrawing them from the programme due to changes in the learners' employment status.
14. Both apprentices and Train to Gain learners benefit from the acquisition of new skills that increase their employment prospects and/or promotion. All current learners are making satisfactory progress. Learners demonstrate a good

knowledge of health and safety and feel very safe. Learners are involved in community activities and have recently completed a charity walk in aid of a children's hospice.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 3

15. Apprenticeship teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Practical training in SETA's workshops is very effective in developing the skills of learners. Learners benefit from the carefully planned and managed sessions. They produce relevant components and demonstrate a high standard of skills. Learners in employment train on industry-standard equipment, developing their engineering skills to a satisfactory standard.
16. All learners complete a mechanical aptitude test. However, assessors make little use of the results to plan learning. Not all learners complete an initial assessment prior to commencing their training. Assessors are often unaware of the literacy and numeracy levels of their learners and lesson plans do not refer to the initial assessment results. Individual learning plans are often incomplete and assessors do not use them to plan the training and measure the progress of learners. The flexibility and planning of the training and the link between on-the-job and off-the-job training, including the training that takes place with the subcontractors, are insufficient.
17. Learners find assessment processes clear and helpful. Assessment is flexibly arranged to meet the needs of learners and employers. Employed learners have the contact details of assessors so they can inform them about any unexpected changes that can affect assessment. The monitoring and recording of learners' work-based progress are accurate and thorough. Learners have a good knowledge and understanding of their progress during their training at SETA and at their place of employment.
18. Progress reviews are detailed and thorough and take place approximately every eight weeks. A clear summary is made of the progress individual learners have made since their previous review and clear short-term targets are set for the next visit. Employers are generally involved in progress review meetings and receive a copy of the review report. To supplement the formal reviews, assessors review learners' progress informally between the formal reviews. Learners find this process very helpful.
19. Partnership arrangements between SETA and employers are strong. SETA is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and employers. The company communicates well with employers and works closely with them in developing courses that meet their needs for apprenticeship training and specific training which the employers fund directly. SETA uses these relationships successfully to find apprentices employment and the employers suitable employees.
20. SETA makes very effective use of their partnership arrangements with employers. The company makes good use of these relationships to find

apprentices employment and the employers suitable employees. Of the 45 apprentices who started in September 2010, over 75% are either employed now or awaiting the decision of a recent interview. Many of SETA's previous apprentices, who now hold management positions, are closely involved with the management of the training of current apprentices.

21. Learners receive satisfactory care, support and guidance. Induction to the training centre and the training programmes is satisfactory. In their training or career planning, learners make good use of the wide range of information that assessors offer. Throughout their training, learners receive clear advice and guidance to support them in completing their programmes and to help them progress to higher level programmes.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 3**

22. Following a period of significant economic difficulties that resulted in staffing reductions and short-time working, the company introduced a new management structure that has much improved internal communication and decision making. SETA acknowledges that staff roles and responsibilities need to be better defined and the appraisal arrangements, which had been suspended, need to be restarted. Overall, SETA's management of subcontractors is satisfactory. However, some aspects of subcontractor management, such as the documenting of contracts, are too informal and do not provide a sound enough basis for contract review or possible renegotiation. Meetings are not adequately recorded.
23. SETA has a very strong record of collaboration and partnership working with employers to promote learning, which has benefited many of its learners and employers. SETA has a satisfactory business plan. However, it does not always explore, strategically plan, prioritise activities and implement change in its operation sufficiently to reflect policy and demand changes in work-based training.
24. The supervisory arrangements for overseeing the strategic development of the company are satisfactory. The directors, who are the representatives of member employers, monitor the performance of SETA mainly through a set of financial indicators. The board's focus on learners' performance data, such as their success rates, is insufficient. SETA is developing new arrangements to ensure the board is fully informed about learners' outcomes and the broader changes within the education and training sector.
25. SETA's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The company's safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriate to safeguard all its learners. Assessors give good attention to health and safety procedures and their risk assessment of training activities is very effective. There is an appropriate number of first-aiders in the training centre and a well equipped first-aid room. A wide range of health and safety notices are displayed throughout the workshops. All staff have undertaken Criminal Records Bureau

checks and records are held centrally. A designated safeguarding officer has satisfactory links to external safeguarding support and advice, although the officer has only received an introductory level of training on safeguarding issues. Staff have received appropriate training. Apprentices receive appropriate briefings and advice on safeguarding issues. The advice is satisfactorily reinforced during their progress reviews. However, learners are not offered sufficient information about their rights and responsibilities when using digital communication devices or the internet.

26. SETA's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The company makes satisfactory use of data to monitor the provision and identify trends and areas of concern. Different groups of learners achieve equally well. However, the company is aware that, as in the wider industry, the percentage of women learners is low. SETA has introduced a number of good initiatives to attract more women learners but with little success. During learner review meetings assessors use a bank of open questions to monitor or reinforce successfully the understanding of equality and diversity. Learners report that they are confident to raise any equality concerns they may have.
27. SETA collects the views of learners, employers and other partners regularly and makes satisfactory use of them to identify areas for improvement. The company make good use of its membership of a recently established forum of providers to improve its practices. SETA regularly collects and makes satisfactory use of learner and employer feedback to evaluate and improve the provision. The feedback is effectively analysed and actions are identified. However, the company does not inform its learners and partners sufficiently about planned or completed improvements.
28. Appropriate quality systems are in place. Internal verification ensures the reliability of the assessment process. Observations of teaching, training, learning and progress reviews are in place. Observations of progress reviews are particularly detailed and good. The written evidence from the observations of training sessions focuses too much on teaching and too little on the apprentices' learning. No arrangements are in place to ensure the accuracy of grades and consistency of judgements. A range of quality audits is carried out but the processes are not sufficiently formalised or effective. Audit reports are not always produced, the findings are not routinely discussed and actions for improvements are not clear enough. The self-assessment process has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The process is inclusive and focuses specifically on the impact the provision has on learners. The resulting quality improvement plan is detailed and addresses the areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report.
29. SETA makes appropriate use of its resources. The workshops are appropriately equipped and the company uses funds derived from its commercial activities to improve the availability of workshop tools and machinery, which includes two milling machines that have been purchased recently.



## Information about the inspection

30. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's chief executive, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body and data on learners and their achievements over the period of the contract.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed about the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Stockport Engineering Training Association**  
**Learning types: 14-16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships.

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection</b>			
Full-time	0	0	0
Part-time	293	107	186
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	3		
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3		
How well do learners progress?	3		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3		
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3		

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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