

Stockport Engineering Training Association Reinspection

Reinspection date

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Inspection number

300748

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An outstanding provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A good provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A satisfactory provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – inadequate

Description of the provider

1. Stockport Engineering Training Association (SETA) was formed in 1966 to provide training services to small and medium-sized engineering companies in the Stockport and Manchester area. SETA has a contract with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing technologies. There are 87 advanced apprentices and nine apprentices, who work for one of about 40 employers involved in the training. Off-the-job training takes place in the workshops at SETA and in local colleges of further education. Key skills are developed and assessed at SETA and in the workplace. Training in the workplace is provided by employers and is overseen by SETA's staff.
2. SETA is managed by a chief executive who reports to a board of eight representatives of member companies. There are 29 full and part-time staff, 15 of whom are involved in apprenticeships. The LSC provides 30% of the funding. The remainder is from the provision of commercial training. SETA also offers a two-year programme of engineering training for school students.

Overall effectiveness

Reinspection Grade 3

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. SETA's arrangements for leadership and management including equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. In engineering and manufacturing technologies, the provision is satisfactory.
4. The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with the grades identified by SETA. The self-assessment report contains some strengths that are no more than normal practice. Some of the weaknesses have not been identified. Staff have been involved in the process and a lively debate has taken place. Learners and employers were not sufficiently consulted during the compilation of the self-assessment report.
5. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements. In the year since the previous inspection SETA has made substantial progress in improving the quality of the provision. The organisation is good at responding to weaknesses when they are pointed out by external inspection but is no more than satisfactory at making improvements through its own initiative.

Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Engineering and manufacturing technologies		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Engineering</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	134	3
Train to Gain	17	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Engineering and manufacturing technologies		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Engineering</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	96	3

About the reinspection

6. This reinspection started in January 2007. Two preliminary visits were made to monitor progress. Judgements were made at the final visit in June 2007. Engineering apprenticeships were inspected. SETA no longer has a contract for Train to Gain. As in the previous inspection, provision for school students was not inspected.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learners interviewed	25
Number of staff interviewed	27
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits to the provider	3

Leadership and management

Grade 3

Strengths

- Good strategic planning and direction
- Good reinforcement of learners understanding of equal opportunities
- Strong action to improve the provision

Weaknesses

- Weak recording of formal meetings
 - Insufficient effective action to increase participation by under-represented groups
 - Insufficient use of feedback from learners and employers
7. Strategic planning and direction are good, as they were at the previous inspection and as the self-assessment report identifies. SETA has a three-year development plan specifically for LSC-funded work. The plan sets a clear direction for the organisation to meet the training aims and objectives set by senior management and directors. This is complemented by a separate plan covering the whole business including commercial training. The detailed and clear development plan addresses regional and sector needs and has a clear focus on improving equality and diversity and developing greater responsiveness. The plan contains well-defined, measurable targets and aligns with the local, regional and national needs and priorities for learning and skills. It clearly sets out changes to the culture and organisation of SETA to better enable it to achieve its aims. Staff are aware of the strategic priorities of the organisation. The post-inspection action plan is now being used as a means of managing improvements in conjunction with other lists of actions. The plan is clear with identified responsibilities and contains relevant milestones. Many of the target dates are too vague.
 8. SETA has productive partnerships with employers, schools and local colleges to ensure that the training needs of employers are met. Managers and staff fully understand the needs of the industry they serve and they liaise frequently with the member companies and other local employers. It has a thorough recruitment process to ensure that learners are well matched to employers and is often involved in the recruitment of apprentices on behalf of employers. External communications with employers are frequent and effective.
 9. Communications within SETA are satisfactory and meet the needs of the organisation. There is an appropriate structure of meetings including monthly instructor meetings, team assessor meetings and standardisation meetings with other training providers locally. The annual staff appraisal system suitably identifies the development needs of staff and is used to produce a comprehensive company-wide learning plan. This is linked with a clear strategy to improve learner achievement and support, and influence curriculum development. Actions stemming from appraisals have not always led to focused training for staff.

10. SETA has satisfactory resources to meet its training needs and those of its learners. Staff are suitably qualified and have appropriate industrial knowledge and experience. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet current requirements. The training centre equipment and hand tools are satisfactory but learners do not have sufficient access within the centre to advanced tools such as computer-controlled machines or digital readouts. A suitable maintenance programme has been introduced within the workshops. Shortages of some hand tools and equipment identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Classrooms are suitably equipped and window blinds have now been fitted where necessary to stop glare and direct sunlight. Management of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Few learners are identified as needing any support.
11. The computerised management information system is now adequately used to collect and records learners' data, including their achievements. There is satisfactory use of this data to aid management decisions on the standards of training and learner progression. SETA is still in the process of upgrading the software application to meet its changing needs and to reduce duplication of manual input and paper-based systems.
12. Recording of meetings is weak. The recording and standard of the senior management team minutes is satisfactory with clear actions, responsibilities and timescales but the minutes of most other meetings lack detail or focus. They do not contain specific actions for improvement and it is often impossible to monitor progress across subsequent meetings. Minutes do not accurately record the discussion, which takes place at meetings or the decisions and conclusions that are reached.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

13. The equality and diversity policy has been updated to reflect current legislation and to improve the explanation of learners' rights and responsibilities on key issues like bullying or harassment. Learners gain a good understanding of equal opportunities at their induction. They are also given a useful booklet to refer to later. They know what to do if they have a complaint or if they believe they are being unfairly treated. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is reinforced effectively throughout their training programme. Learners are reminded about equality issues at the progress review meetings. Their understanding is tested at each review meeting by asking them two questions drawn at random from a set of standard questions.
14. Learners' understanding of health and safety is reinforced in the same way. The progress review record contains a record of the questions and the adequacy of the responses.

15. Actions are taken to promote apprenticeship training to under-represented groups but have not been sufficiently effective. There are only two female learners, neither are from a minority ethnic group or has a disability. At the time of the previous inspection, the training programme for school students was expected to broaden the range of entrants by the progression of a high proportion to the apprenticeship programme. The number of school students has increased from 30 to 69 but few of them choose to work towards apprenticeships with SETA. SETA managers and staff have visited more than 12 schools to promote careers in engineering and encourage applications to the apprenticeship programme. Two of the schools have been chosen because they have a high proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. Two have been chosen because they are schools exclusively for young women.
16. Raising participation from under-represented groups is not given a sufficiently high priority by SETA. There is no systematic analysis of statistics. The issue does not feature in management team meetings. The weakness has not been identified by self-assessment or included as an action in the development plan.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

17. The slow progress by learners was a weakness at the previous inspection. SETA responded with strong leadership and effective action by staff at all levels to improve the apprenticeship provision, a strength identified through self-assessment. Many learners who had not completed their framework by the planned end of their programme are now fully qualified. At the time of the previous inspection, 35 learners were in this position. Now only two remain. Many weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection have now been addressed.
18. Monitoring of subcontractors was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection but is now satisfactory. New service level agreements have been put in place with all subcontracting colleges and with all member companies employing apprentices. The service level agreements are detailed and clearly define roles and responsibilities of SETA and of the member companies. Monitoring of subcontractor performance is satisfactory. Meetings are held each term and minutes are taken to monitor the subcontract, focusing particularly on the progress of individual learners. Contracts contain specific reference to SETA's right to monitor quality of provision delivered on its behalf and ensure that subcontractors' performance is appropriate and meets learners' needs. There is good informal communication between subcontractors and SETA and adequate formal communications through the minutes of the meetings. Minutes do not contain sufficient records of agreed actions or whether they have been subsequently achieved. Contracts do not specifically mention sanctions or penalties for underperformance.

19. The process for observation of teaching and learning was judged to be inadequate at the previous inspection but is now satisfactory. Observations take place of teaching and learning, reviews and assessments. Evaluations of performance are now clear and are appropriately recorded and shared. Observations lead to detailed feedback and action plans for improvement of individual performance of trainers. However, often there is insufficient monitoring of subsequent progress against these actions. Sessions are graded and the company uses grade profiles as a means of measuring improvement. Observation records have started to be used in the appraisal process. Not all staff have yet been observed.
20. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the awarding body requirements. Both internal verification and assessment now take place during the apprenticeship as well as at the end. Appropriate arrangements for sampling assessments exist, including observation of assessments and the standard of learners' portfolios. Verifier meetings and standardisation meetings occur frequently to help share best practice and maintain consistency in assessments. The outcome of decisions and the follow up of actions are not well recorded. Staff respond quickly to actions identified within external verifier reports.
21. The self-assessment process is well established. Senior managers meet frequently to discuss judgements for the self-assessment report. Draft reports are shared with staff for comment. The final report produced immediately before the inspection was shared with staff but is not representative of the views of many staff who believe the provision should contain higher grades. The self-assessment report is graded accurately. The report claims strengths in areas that are only satisfactory and some weaknesses are not identified. Learners and employers were not sufficiently consulted during the completion of the self-assessment report.
22. SETA does not collect adequate qualitative feedback from learners and employers to improve the provision, a weakness not identified through self-assessment. Questionnaires are circulated annually but there is insufficient detail in the returned questionnaires and there is no detailed analysis of the responses to identify trends or drive improvement. Although some information is collected at learners' reviews, this too is not analysed or collated into useful summaries, which could be used for improvement. Complaints are not clearly or formally recorded.

Areas of learning

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Engineering</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	96	3

23. There are 96 learners of whom 87 are advanced apprentices, and nine are apprentices. In addition there are 69 school students working towards level 1 and level 2 NVQs. In the first year, apprentices and advanced apprentices receive practical engineering training in SETA's workshops as they work towards a level 2 NVQ. Key skills qualifications are also completed during this off-the-job training phase. Advanced apprentices then work towards a level 3 NVQ in their workplace. Vocational qualifications are studied by all apprentices and advanced apprentices throughout the programmes on a day-release basis either at SETA's training centre or at a further education college. SETA's staff carry out most NVQ assessments. Some employers have trained assessors who assess learners in the workplace. Almost all apprentices and advanced apprentices are employed when they start the programme.

Engineering

Strengths

- Good on-the-job training
- Highly effective monitoring of progress

Weaknesses

- Insufficient use of targets at progress reviews

Achievement and standards

24. The slow progress of learners was a weakness at the previous inspection. Many learners failed to complete within the planned framework timescale. SETA has made a determined effort to clear the backlog of learners. Of the 58 learners who have left the programme since June 2006, 46 have done so having completed the framework.

25. The progress of current learners is satisfactory. There is a strong focus on training for the first part of the on-the-job programme followed at a later stage by assessment against the NVQ level 3. Since the previous inspection, key skills achievement has improved with all learners now completing their key skills qualifications at an early stage.

26. Learners develop good practical and learning skills. The standard of their work is satisfactory. Work pieces are of an appropriate standard. Well-structured portfolios include a range of
27. suitable evidence such as job reports, background knowledge questionnaires and photographs. Their personal skills also improve and learners are more confident and work well in teams.
28. Many learners progress to higher education qualifications. Employers support their learners in the achievement of additional qualifications and skills which improve their effectiveness at work. The range of these qualifications is broad and includes electrical wiring regulations, safe lifting and handling, milling, and solid computer-aided design qualifications.

The quality of provision

29. On-the-job training is good, as the self-assessment identified. Employers provide well-planned programmes to develop learners' skills and knowledge. Log books are widely used to record tasks they have undertaken at work. Log book entries are cross referenced to skill and training specifications from the start of the on-the-job training and before NVQ level 3 assessments begin. The tasks and learners' skill development are regularly monitored by SETA's training staff. Supervisors and managers are well qualified and experienced. Many are former SETA apprentices reflecting the long-standing relationship SETA has with its employers. They provide effective learning support in a safe environment. A wide range of equipment is available for learners to enable them to carry out their tasks.
30. Initial training in the training centre is effective and well planned. Learners develop useful skills in basic engineering fabrication, machining and maintenance. The skills and knowledge that the learners require to complete tasks in the training centre increase gradually as they progress. Learners often complete additional specialist modules to meet employers' needs. For example, one learner completed a specialist milling course and another learner a solid computer-aided design course to enable them to work in the design office. The equipment in the workshops is well maintained and operated safely but does not include advanced equipment which is commonly used in industry, such as computer-controlled machine tools.
31. Assessment is satisfactory. The initial assessment process is thorough and provides learners and employers with a sound basis on which to make informed decisions. All applicants are interviewed and receive an initial assessment in literacy and numeracy, together with a mechanical aptitude test. Arrangements to support learners with literacy, numeracy or specific learning needs such as dyslexia are satisfactory. Employers are fully involved in the recruitment and selection of learners. Qualified assessors who are vocationally competent carry out assessment in the workplace. Assessment is used to develop learning and skills as well as for the NVQ. Written comments in learners' portfolios help them

to improve their standards of work. Assessment for the NVQ is not well-planned and does not start until the final two years of the end of the programme.

32. There is insufficient use of targets at learner progress review meetings. The reviews are carried out frequently at intervals of about eight weeks. Actions agreed at the reviews are often too broad and not sufficiently focused. For example, one learner was simply asked to complete all his assignments by the next review. There was no mention of how many assignments needed to be completed, what they included or if they needed to be completed by a specific date. Sometimes targets are agreed but are not recorded so that the learner has nothing to refer to between reviews. In other instances, progress against agreed targets is not recorded at the following review. Targets, which are recorded, are often not specific or time-bound and do not encourage learners to progress in a timely manner. Learners are sometimes unable to describe the targets and the progress they have made towards completing them.

Leadership and management

33. The systems for monitoring learners' progress are highly effective and have contributed to the rapid improvement in learners' progress and the high number of framework completions. Any learner who is falling behind is now quickly identified and supported. In SETA's workshop the progress of learners is displayed on a notice board which is updated as learners successfully complete tasks. These records are also maintained on a computer database and are analysed to identify trends and to inform management decisions.
34. A comprehensive monitoring record is maintained of all components within the framework, showing the current status and progress of the technical certificate, level 3 NVQ and key skills qualifications. It is updated regularly and used as a management tool to identify slow progress of learners and to inform actions during regular meetings to increase the rate of learner progress.
35. Staff have access to training and development activities to help maintain their occupational knowledge and develop their training expertise.

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