

Springfields Fuels Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 54552

Name of lead inspector: Mike White HMI

Last day of inspection: 13 January 2012

Type of provider: Employer

Address: Springfield Works
Salwick
Preston
Lancashire
PR4 0XJ

Telephone number: 01772 762000

Information about the provider

1. Springfields Fuels Limited (SFL) manufactures oxide fuel products for the nuclear reactor fleet and other nuclear intermediaries, for home based and international customers. The company currently employs 1,300 people on a site near Preston where it has its own purpose-built training centre. SFL contracts with the Skills Funding Agency to provide engineering training for apprentices.
2. The head of skills development works with a training manager, apprentice training manager, seven training instructors and a centre administrator to deliver the apprenticeship programme. SFL employs 18 of the 47 apprentices and provides their on-the-job training. The remainder are employed by other local businesses and are given on-the-job training by them. SFL was previously inspected in 2006.
3. The following organisation provides training on behalf of SFL:
 - Blackpool and The Fylde College (Engineering and manufacturing technologies)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	76 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 2
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		1
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		1
Equality and diversity		2
Subject Areas		Grade
Engineering and manufacturing technologies		2

Overall effectiveness

4. The overall effectiveness of SFL provision is good. Leaders and managers set high expectations for both staff and apprentices. Apprentices significantly increase their employability through their training. Success rates are outstanding and achievement of qualifications, additional to the apprenticeship framework, is very good. All apprentices benefit from the good welfare facilities at SFL and develop a good understanding of broader life issues, such as how to remain healthy.
5. Apprentices' training, assessment and reviews are good. SFL works very effectively with employers to ensure that the provision meets their needs. Arrangements to ensure apprentices' health, safety and welfare are outstanding and SFL demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring apprentices train in a culture of respect and dignity. Managers are aware of the need to improve some aspects of the provision, including the strategy for engaging with users and arrangements to use observations to develop teaching and learning.

Main findings

- Overall and timely success rates are outstanding. Apprentices develop excellent vocational skills and significantly improve their employability through achieving qualifications additional to their framework. Many learners progress into higher education. Apprentices demonstrate outstanding safe working practices.

- Apprentices benefit from good information and support which helps them to make informed choices about their health and well-being. Many apprentices participate in activities that contribute to their communities and raise funds for charities. Involvement in activities to promote environmental awareness is good.
- Practical training is very good. However, some classroom sessions do not engage or involve apprentices sufficiently. Staff have a very broad range of experience and expertise. Assessment practice is thorough, utilising a good range of methods. Oral feedback following assessment is good but written feedback does not reinforce this sufficiently. Progress reviews are carefully planned and frequent and they provide effective guidance for apprentices.
- Provision meets the needs of employers within the nuclear and other local engineering industries very well. SFL has successfully introduced new programmes and specialist units at the request of employers. It offers employers very good support to recruit apprentices.
- Apprentices receive good support from their trainers, which includes support given very effectively through progress reviews. All apprentices have very good access to the wide range of welfare and personal support facilities provided to SFL's employees.
- Leaders and managers have an exceptionally well-developed strategy to ensure that the future direction of the apprentice training centre meets local and national needs. Staff involvement in planning and managing transition arrangements, to ensure minimal impact on apprentices, is very good.
- A very effective apprentice training board provides good support and challenge and it scrutinises programme performance closely. However, the board's composition does not benefit from the wider expertise available through external employers.
- Arrangements to safeguard the welfare of apprentices are outstanding and those to develop apprentices' health and safety awareness and safe working practices are excellent.
- Promotion of equality and diversity to apprentices through induction and articles in the apprentice newsletters are good and fully supported by checking and reinforcement during progress reviews.
- SFL makes good use of learners' and employers' individual feedback to help inform decisions regarding quality improvement, however there is insufficient engagement of users in group forums to share and learn from the experiences of others.
- Involvement of staff in the self-assessment process is good and the resulting report is largely accurate. However, SFL does not involve other users in self-assessment sufficiently. Arrangements to observe teaching and learning are not developed sufficiently to contribute to self-assessment or staff development.

What does SFL need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that classroom sessions meet the needs of all apprentices fully through consistently planning and using a wide range of activities to engage, involve and motivate them.
- Ensure that the good oral feedback, provided to apprentices following their assessments, is supported by thorough written feedback to enable apprentices to improve their performance in the future.
- Extend the apprentice training board's ability to provide constructive support and challenge, for the apprenticeship programme, by widening its composition to include representatives from external employers and increasing the experience available to it.
- Develop and implement a strategy to engage users more directly, including apprentices as appropriate, in decision-making groups and quality improvement activities including self-assessment.
- Develop the process to observe teaching and learning to focus more clearly on learning as well as teaching, to identify professional development activities for staff and to provide robust evidence to contribute to self-assessment.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good opportunities for progression to other courses and to higher education
- the high profile given to health and safety, which makes them feel safe
- the relationship with staff who treat them like adults
- the additional training courses which increase their employment prospects
- the trust that their employers have in allowing them to do complex jobs
- the enrichment opportunities
- the support given to them if they require it.

What learners would like to see improved:

- a television in the tea bar
- less paperwork to complete for the National Vocational Qualification.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- SFL's responsiveness to requests for additional training programmes
- the high importance given to health and safety
- the assistance given in recruiting high-calibre apprentices
- the maturity of apprentices following their off-the-job training

- the good communication by the training centre staff
- the high quality of the training given to apprentices
- their involvement in discussions during reviews
- the support given to their apprentices if required.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no improvements were identified.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. SFL demonstrates a good capacity to improve. It sets ambitious targets for its apprentices and the outstanding success rates are consistently above the national average. A thorough review of the training provision has contributed to a very clear strategy for SFL's future development in readiness for an upturn in the nuclear industry. SFL's management structure is good and its staff are very experienced. The good physical resources are presently undergoing rationalisation following the training review to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The apprentice training board provides good support and challenge, scrutinising programme performance closely. However, the board comprises SFL's own employees with too few external employers represented. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and leads to an effective action plan. SFL has rectified all the weaknesses from the previous inspection and has maintained or improved on its strengths. While SFL's staff have appropriate involvement in the self-assessment process, there is insufficient direct involvement of either apprentices or employers.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

7. Success rates are outstanding and consistently well above the national average. All groups of learners are very successful. The achievement of additional qualifications is very good.
8. Employers value the apprentices' very good development of vocational skills, recognising the significant impact this has on their businesses. Progression by apprentices to higher education is exceptionally high and many apprentices secure promotion to more senior roles.
9. SFL gives health and safety an exceptionally high priority. Apprentices demonstrate outstanding safe working practices and feel very safe. SFL visually reinforces health and safety constantly throughout the training centre, in every training session, and through the frequent and very informative apprentice newsletter. Apprentices have been very successful in winning SFL's overall safety award on two recent occasions.
10. Support for apprentices to make informed choices about health and well-being is good. In addition to the very informative induction sessions, apprentices benefit from the wide range of planned monthly activities to highlight aspects of health and well-being such as testicular cancer, obesity and smoking cessation. External providers give apprentices a good understanding of safe driving techniques. However, SFL does not evaluate the impact of these activities sufficiently.
11. Apprentices contribute significantly to the local community and are particularly active in raising funds for local, national and international charities. Apprentices

have a good understanding of environmental and sustainability issues, and were awarded a 'highly commended' in SFL's environmental awards.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Teaching, training and assessment are good. Trainers use their very good experience and expertise to provide high-quality practical training, fully preparing apprentices for the workplace. Some welding apprentices have already successfully completed coding qualifications. As a result, they are trusted to carry out complex jobs in the workplace. Theory sessions in SFL's training centre are satisfactory. However, activities do not always fully engage or involve all apprentices sufficiently. Trainers make good use of questions to check apprentices' theoretical knowledge. Apprentices' responses confirm a good level of understanding.
13. Assessments and reviews in the workplace are very thorough. Assessments are well planned and regular, they guide apprentices effectively through their programmes. The wide range of assessment methods employed includes good use of workplace witness testimonies. Oral feedback, following assessment, is thorough and constructive. However, written feedback fails to reinforce this sufficiently. Progress reviews are carefully planned and frequent and they offer apprentice effective support and guidance.
14. SFL works hard to ensure that it meets the needs of employers and apprentices particularly effectively. Many apprentices progress to higher education during their apprenticeship. The wide range of additional training and qualifications integral to the apprenticeship, including behavioural safety, refrigeration and pneumatics, and welding coding qualifications, are valuable for their current and future employability. SFL is responsive to apprentices' views. Following feedback from previous apprentices, it modified the training programme to include courses such as electrical isolation and scaffolding.
15. Following requests from employers, SFL has introduced a wide range of additional training, including a new apprenticeship framework, and made changes to the programme content. Employers comment that they are highly impressed with the level of commitment given to the apprenticeship programme by senior members of the company. Employers receive particularly good support when recruiting apprentices; they confirm that the applicants referred by SFL are of a very high calibre. Employers show commitment to the provision by their high levels of involvement in their apprentices' training, assessment and reviews, and through very good attendance at the annual awards ceremony.
16. Support for apprentices is good. SFL uses partnerships with local colleges to provide extra support for key skills development. Apprentices value progress reviews as both supportive and motivational. Tutors increase the frequency of progress reviews where necessary in order to support apprentices who are making slow progress. Tutors are readily available to help apprentices who need extra support, including outside of normal working hours. All apprentices

benefit from the very wide range of welfare and personal support facilities provided by SFL irrespective of their employer.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

17. In response to the changing industrial environment of the nuclear industry, SFL has carried out a very thorough strategic evaluation of its training provision. It has carefully reviewed alternative approaches to ensure that it is well placed to continue delivering training for the nuclear industry and other local engineering and manufacturing industries. The management of transitional arrangements is very good and involves staff fully. SFL has been careful to ensure that changes have minimal impact on the existing first-year apprentices, while providing final-year apprentices with excellent opportunities for skills development and assessment opportunities through involvement in physical changes to the training centre.
18. Performance management of staff is strong. Staff appraisal is effective and there is good support for continuous professional development and industrial updating. SFL places high expectations on its apprentices, which contributes significantly to their outstanding achievements and progression. Subcontractor monitoring arrangements with Blackpool and The Fylde College are very strong. High numbers of apprentices achieve higher-level grades in their technical certificates.
19. The apprentice training board provides good support and challenge to the provision. It monitors the performance of the programme frequently and scrutinises progress made by different groups of learners closely. Any apprentice making slow progress prompts detailed discussion of support strategies. The board has good representation from within SFL, with members including the chief engineer and the trades union convenor. However, it does not presently benefit from the wider expertise and contribution of external employers.
20. The promotion of health and safety is outstanding and arrangements for safeguarding are also outstanding. Health and safety are the lifeblood of the organisation and they underpin all aspects of its activities. Apprentices have a very good involvement in reviewing and developing approaches to health and safety through the apprentice health and safety committee. The safeguarding forum drives forward the safeguarding agenda very effectively. Staff training and updating is very good. Staff cover safe internet usage appropriately during the induction of apprentices.
21. A culture of respect and dignity is strongly evident in SFL's mission and values. The good promotional materials and activities displayed throughout the training centre reinforce this message. Training and updating arrangements for staff and apprentices are good as are the equality and diversity discussions during progress reviews. Celebration of apprenticeship success is very good. Although

the wide variety of activities to widen participation have had limited impact on recruitment, the achievement of under-represented groups is very good.

22. While SFL makes good use of learners' and employers' feedback to inform quality improvement activities, it does not have a published user engagement strategy. Apprentices are very effectively engaged in some aspects, such as health and safety, but arrangements to involve users more broadly in quality improvement or other operational management are underdeveloped.
23. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. A well-designed framework dovetails the requirements of the apprenticeship programme with wider SFL improvement activities. However, the process for observing teaching and learning is insufficiently developed; it does not contribute to self-assessment or professional development planning effectively.
24. Value for money is outstanding. Success rates are outstanding and apprentices' other achievements are very good. Staff have very good experience and expertise. They use physical resources, which are to current industry standards, extremely effectively. Well-considered strategic planning puts SFL in a very favourable position for future developments. Broader welfare functions within SFL provide good support for all apprentices. Satisfactory use is made of users' feedback to improve provision but the strategy for user engagement is insufficiently developed.

Information about the inspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's apprenticeship training manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Springfields Fuels Limited**

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Part-time learners	47	47
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
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?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231 or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk