

# Maritime and Engineering College North West

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 54873

**Name of lead inspector:** Nic T Brown HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 13 January 2012

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Monks Ferry  
Birkenhead  
Merseyside  
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## Information about the provider

1. The Maritime and Engineering College North West (MECNW), formerly The Laird Foundation, is based on the bank of the Mersey in Birkenhead, next to the Cammell Laird shipyard. As a charity and a company limited by guarantee, it has a board of trustees. MECNW, with a staff of 40, specialises in engineering, construction and marine engineering training. It works with 150 companies through its own arrangements and those of the regional Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB). Cammell Laird employs approximately one third of the learners. A small proportion of MECNW's training is commercial work. Wirral is one of the most deprived districts in the country. The proportion of the population in minority-ethnic groups is very low.
2. MECNW has a contract with Greater Merseyside Skills Funding Agency to provide work-based learning. It has 20 intermediate apprentices and 162 advanced apprentices. Basic craft training is carried out in the training centre after which apprentices move into the workplace, returning to the training centre one day each week to undertake the technical certificate and other requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks.
3. MECNW provides training and assessment for 79 adults through the Train to Gain programme. Training is at National Vocational Qualification level 2 and leads to an industry standard qualification. MECNW contracts through a small company to provide training in railway work. The college offers training to 24 students aged 14 to 16. They attend the training centre and work towards nationally accredited qualifications at level 1 and level 2.
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of MECNW:
  - Professional Training and Assessment Services Ltd (Railway construction)

| Type of provision  | Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11 |
|--|--|
| <b>Provision for young learners:</b><br>14 to16                | 24 part-time learners                  |
| <b>Employer provision:</b><br>Train to Gain<br>Apprenticeships | 79 learners<br>182 apprentices         |

## Summary report

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

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b> | <b>Grade 2</b> |
|---|----------------|

|                            |                |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Capacity to improve</b> | <b>Grade 2</b> |
|----------------------------|----------------|

|                           | <b>Grade</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Outcomes for learners     | 2            |
| Quality of provision      | 2            |
| Leadership and management | 2            |
| Safeguarding              | 2            |
| Equality and diversity    | 2            |

| <b>Subject Areas</b> | <b>Grade</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Engineering          | <b>2</b>     |

## Overall effectiveness

- MECNW is very successful in helping learners to achieve qualifications and become highly skilled in trades such as welding, fitting and engineering construction. Learners enjoy their programmes and a high number of them complete their training successfully, a very large majority finishing before their planned end date. Current learners are making good progress across all programmes. Health and safety is given the highest priority. Learners develop particularly good workplace skills and improve their knowledge and understanding well, increasing their job prospects and helping the businesses they work in. One young woman apprentice, near the end of her programme, is welding the plates to secure helicopters on Britain's new aircraft carrier.
- Assessment is highly effective and fits in well with work patterns. Assessors adapt very well to the needs of the learners and their employers. Programmes meet the needs of employers and learners exceptionally well and the college works with new employers to fit qualifications to their business. The college's board is excellent at guiding and giving valuable advice. Learners feel safe and equality and diversity are promoted well across the college and to employers. Quality-assurance arrangements have led to successful improvements in a number of systems, leading to a steady rise in success rates. The college provides good value for money.

## Main findings

- Success rates for apprentices have improved over the last four years. The advanced apprentices' success rate is outstanding and the intermediate apprentices' rate satisfactory. Overall rates for completion within the planned time period have steadily climbed. Current learners are making good progress. For Train to Gain learners, the rate for completion before the planned end date is very high.
- Learners' portfolios are good and include a variety of assessment evidence. Learners become very skilled in their field. MECNW is good at finding employers who need highly skilled people for their business and then match these needs to learners who were previously unemployed.
- Learners are very keen to gain skills. They feel very safe, enjoy their apprenticeships and become self-assured. The college gives an exceptionally high priority to the promotion and reinforcement of health and safety practices. Learners often attend careers events in schools and assist local charities by raising significant funds through targeted project work.
- Teaching and training are good. Sessions are well planned and tutors and trainers have a very high level of subject knowledge, and use different approaches to encourage learning. The equipment used by learners is outstanding. However, early on, there is an overemphasis on theory with insufficient practical work.
- Assessment is good. Prior to starting their programmes learners complete a wide range of initial assessments. Tutors help learners who struggle. On-the-job assessment is often undertaken by some assessors who travel throughout the British Isles to meet learners. Learners can call for an assessment when needed. However, the tracking and recording of learners' progress and the communication to them is insufficiently detailed.
- Overall the standard of progress reviews is satisfactory. Good reviews are detailed and thorough. Assessors ask the learners about what they have learnt, health and safety and equality and diversity. Clear short-term targets are set and learners' recent progress summarised. In some of the weaker reviews, the discussions lack sufficient depth. Not all staff are aware of the good practice in some reviews.
- MECNW is outstanding in working with employers and learners to meet their needs. Employers speak very highly of the apprenticeship programme and how it meets the needs of their businesses in providing people with the high level technical skills required. Learners gain good employment skills and have very clear progression opportunities to extra courses and university in some cases.
- There are excellent links with a local shipyard, schools, ECITB, the relevant Sector Skills Council and a very wide range of local employers. The provision is particularly relevant to the needs of local business. Close working with the shipyard helps improve the quality and relevance of the training. This employer in particular helps learners quickly attain high skills' levels.

- Learners receive good support and guidance, and they learn about numerous opportunities from the beginning of their time. This includes moving from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships and beyond. Tutors readily work with any learner to help ensure they are successful and reach their potential.
- Strategic leadership and management are outstanding. An influential board provides specialist support and information about the current and future skills requirements for maritime and engineering business in the Merseyside area. Managers work well together to promote and encourage high industrial standards in learners' work.
- Learners feel able to feedback any concerns they may have about their programmes, knowing appropriate action will be taken. However, results from different feedback arrangements are not routinely analysed to establish trends over time or to recommend improvements in areas where levels of satisfaction are lower.
- Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory and although more observations are taking place, not all staff have been observed nor is their work routinely audited to ensure good practice is identified and shared so that consistently high standards are achieved.

### **What does the Maritime and Engineering College North West need to do to improve further?**

- Introduce arrangements to share good practice, especially in progress reviews, and ensure all staff provide the same level of service in testing and recording learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Continue to improve the accuracy, recording and communication to learners of the overall progress they are making in their training programmes and ensure that those making slow progress are identified and supported.
- Ensure learners' and employers' feedback is systematically recorded and analysed to establish levels of satisfaction on different courses and that areas for improvement are identified and appropriate actions are taken.
- Continue to develop the self-assessment process to identify good practice and areas for improvement across all delivery models.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- the good training
- the relaxed atmosphere and the friendliness of the college staff
- the respect given to the apprentices
- how the course is organised
- the frequency of the visits to employers by college staff
- that there is always someone encouraging to talk to about any problems

- the good help with difficult subjects
- the good facilities in the college
- the opportunity to learn a good trade.

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

- the canteen facilities
- more learner group meetings and discussions
- the information available on the overall progress being made by individual learners
- the volume and availability of reference materials.

**Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

**What employers like:**

- being kept informed of our employees' progress
- the close working relationship with the college
- the good development of specialised programmes
- the professional and supportive college staff.

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

- none identified.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

7. MECNW's capacity to improve is good. Learners' success rates and leadership and management have improved since the last inspection. Its learners mostly work in the highly safety-critical field of maritime and construction. Their products in the workplace are rigorously scrutinised for quality. For instance, all welds are x-rayed. The direct impact of this regime on training and prompt actions to deal with faults, are readily noticeable. Staff have a sophisticated understanding of the reasons for quality assurance. They give their full cooperation to achieving it.
8. MECNW has revised many elements of its day-to-day systems and processes to create greater efficiencies and improve aspects of practice. Data are used well to monitor and improve the provision. Learners' rates of progress on all programmes have risen consistently over the last four years. Self-assessment is satisfactory and while its approach to quality improvement has been generally effective MECNW needs to audit its process to ensure consistency and more effective sharing of good practice. The college benefits from an active and challenging governing board.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

9. Advanced apprentices' success rates are outstanding. Over the last four years, the overall success rate for intermediate apprentices has improved each year and in 2010/11 the rate is satisfactory at two percentage points above the national average. Overall rates for completion within planned end dates have shown a significant year-on-year improvement for both intermediate and advanced apprentices. Current apprentices and Train to Gain learners are making good progress. There are no significant differences in success rates between different groups of learners.
10. Well-presented portfolios contain a diverse range of relevant assessment evidence. Learners are acquiring and developing a very high level of occupationally relevant engineering skills and often, on completion of their framework, carry on training in the workplace. During training, one apprentice nearing the completion of his framework was promoted to a responsible position in the dockyard quality-assurance department, checking the work of skilled welders.
11. MECNW is very good at identifying employers who need highly skilled workers to meet their business requirements and matching these needs to learners who are not in education, employment or training. The college helps these learners to find employment as apprentices.
12. Learners are very motivated and enthusiastic. They feel very safe, enjoy their training and gain in confidence. The promotion and reinforcement of health and

safety practices is given an exceptionally high priority. Staff and learners have a high regard for their own safety and the safety of others. All are aware of working in a risk-assessed and safety-critical environment. Learners have a good awareness of safeguarding and know whom to contact with any issues.

13. Learners are regularly involved in careers events in schools and they work for local charities raising significant funds through targeted project work. For example, learners have raised funds through their involvement in producing calendars that depict work in the shipyard, which is of local interest, and sell well.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

14. Teaching, training and learning are good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are clear, detailed and provide a range of activities to support all learners. Sessions are well planned and managed. Tutors and trainers demonstrate a very high level of subject knowledge, establish good working relationships, provide good quality handouts and effectively use a wide range of teaching activities to promote learning. Learners remain engaged and respond positively, purposefully and participate well during teaching sessions. However, for some learners, during the first part of their programme, there is insufficient opportunity to gain practical skills.
15. Resources to support learning are outstanding. Learners benefit from using high technology equipment in the modern training centre and on employers' premises. Practical resources in the college workshops are very good. Teaching rooms are well equipped with modern electronic presentation equipment and all rooms have relevant display information to reinforce learners' understanding during theory sessions.
16. Assessment is good. Effective initial assessment includes learning preferences, handwriting and dexterity tests. During theory sessions and progress reviews learners receive regular and directed verbal questioning to test their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Tutors support learners who are having difficulties. On-the-job assessment is frequent, regular and flexibly on demand, with some assessors travelling throughout the country to carry out observations on site at any time of the day or night. However, the accuracy, recording and communication with learners of the progress they make are insufficiently detailed to provide an accurate indication of their achievement.
17. The standard of progress reviews is satisfactory overall. Learners' progress is clearly summarised, providing an accurate reflection of what needs to be completed in order to achieve their framework qualification. In the better reviews, assessors thoroughly check learners' knowledge and understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity. Assessors set clear short-term targets and give learners an understanding of the progress they have made. Staff share good practice activities in the review process insufficiently well.



18. The college is outstanding in meeting the needs of employers and learners. Business development staff visit prospective employers and match the apprenticeship programme to their needs, providing a workforce equipped with the high level of relevant technical skills required in the industry. Training and assessment are very flexible to meet the commercial demands of employers. Learners develop a highly diverse range of employment skills and have very good access to progression opportunities, additional qualifications and higher education.
19. Partnership arrangements are outstanding. The excellent links with a local shipyard, schools, ECITB, the relevant Sector Skills Council and a very wide range of local employers provides many benefits for the users of the services provided. The provision is particularly relevant to the needs of local business. The very positive arrangements between the college and Cammell Laird have a clear influence on the quality and relevance of the training.
20. Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive a wide range of information, advice and guidance during induction and throughout their programme. The college gives learners clear guidance on progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships and the next steps in their training programmes. Tutors provide good individual support to learners at all levels to ensure that they make steady progress and achieve their potential.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

21. Strategic leadership and management are particularly strong. MECNW has a very good awareness of the current and future skills requirements of maritime and engineering business in the Merseyside area. The college's vision and mission remains closely linked to meeting local sector needs. The management team have very good knowledge and experience of working in the sector and aspire to providing excellent programmes. Teamwork is very effective and each manager has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Management information is used well.
22. The board of directors provides the college with outstanding challenge and direction from a wide range of expert specialists who work for local organisations. Three board members act as champions for health and safety, safeguarding and equality and diversity respectively, raising the profile of these areas for staff and learners.
23. Safeguarding arrangements are good and meet current legal requirements. All but a handful of young learners on the access to apprenticeship course are employed. The college has particularly strong links with the local safeguarding board through a local councillor on the board. Employers undergo thorough checks when a learner joins them.
24. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners develop a good awareness of equality and diversity starting at induction. Lesson plans are

beginning to incorporate equality and diversity related topics well. Equality matters are discussed during progress reviews although the depth of exploration of learners' understanding is inconsistent. The number of learners from minority-ethnic groups, and the number of women, remains very low. MECNW works hard to try and attract more women into engineering through visits to local schools and careers events.

25. Engagement with employers and schools is outstanding with wide-ranging programmes designed specifically to meet their needs. MECNW uses a satisfactory range of mechanisms to gather feedback from learners. However, actions taken to address issues raised are not routinely fed back to all learners.
26. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It ensures that all staff contribute, although not all key stakeholders do so. The report has insufficient judgements on strengths and areas for improvement. The quality-improvement plan is detailed and regularly reviewed and actions are taken to maintain the strengths and improve the programmes. Observations of teaching, assessments and reviews are satisfactory. Some quality assurance documentation does not reflect current arrangements. Work has started to update and simplify the guidance. The college does not compare observation results for different years. The college insufficiently audits learner documentation.
27. MECNW demonstrates that it provides good value for money. It continues to invest in high quality resources to support learning. MECNW is developing a training suite to deliver international trade qualifications required by maritime businesses and plans are in place to develop a programme for riggers. Computer suites are well equipped.

## **Information about the inspection**

28. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the college's skills director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, the inspectorate's quality-monitoring inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires that learners and employers had recently completed for the college. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Maritime and Engineering College North West**  
**Learning types: Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships**

| Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b><br>1: Outstanding; 2: Good;<br>3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate                              | Overall  | Employer responsive |
|--|----------|---------------------|
| <b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>   |          |                     |
| Full-time learners   | 260      | 260                 |
| Part-time learners   | 80       | 80                  |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>            |
| <b>Capacity to improve</b>   | 2        |                     |
| <b>Outcomes for learners</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>            |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?   | 2        |                     |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals?  | 2        |                     |
| How well do learners progress?   | 2        |                     |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?                              | 2        |                     |
| How safe do learners feel?   | 1        |                     |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>  | N/A      |                     |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>  | 2        |                     |
| <b>Quality of provision</b>  | <b>2</b> | <b>2</b>            |
| 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        |                     |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>   | <b>2</b> |                     |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?                     | 2        |                     |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>                         | 1        |                     |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?  | 2        |                     |
| 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?  | 1        |                     |
| 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?                         | 2        |                     |

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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