

Whitby and District Fishing Industry Training School Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Whitby and District Fishing Industry Training School Limited (WDFITS) is an independent learning provider. The school is located in Whitby and is overseen by a governing board. It provides training for the fishing fleet in the United Kingdom. It has a contract with North Yorkshire Skills Funding Agency to provide level 2 apprenticeship programmes in sea fishing. The school is the only training provider within the UK delivering a support deck hand apprenticeship for the fishing industry. WDFITS averages around 14 apprentices in learning throughout the year.

Learners also work towards additional certificates essential for employment within the fishing industry. WDFITS also offers a range of commercial short courses. Approximately 85% of WDFITS's income is derived through Government funding.

The most recent inspection report was published in December 2008. The school was graded good in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management. The one sector subject area inspected, engineering and manufacturing technologies, was graded good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in using quality assurance systems more effectively, so that WDFIT's can identify weaknesses at an early stage and take swift action to tackle them?

Reasonable progress

Quality improvement arrangements were judged to be satisfactory at the last inspection. Self-assessment was identified as needing to be more self-critical. Reasonable progress has been made to develop quality improvement. In particular, the school now uses data about learner progress more effectively to evaluate learner progression rates and to accurately risk-assess and support underperformance. Actions taken to improve retention rates since the last inspection have been particularly effective. However, WDFITS's self-assessment report and quality improvement plan does not use targets well to challenge, or extend, organisational development and change.

An external observer systematically checks the quality of classroom teaching and learning every year. However, WDFITS recognises the need to extend its quality improvement arrangements to include more observation and evaluation of the quality and standard of other learning processes including induction sessions, learners' progress reviews and revision classes. WDFITS has developed an extensive

support programme for learners. However, the effectiveness of the different support interventions is not systematically evaluated to contribute to improvement planning or self-assessment.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection?

Reasonable progress

Outcomes for learners were judged to be good overall at the last inspection. Since the last inspection, the school has made reasonable progress in maintaining this position. The apprenticeship success rate and the completion rate within planned timescales are satisfactory; both rates have been maintained at around 57% for the last three years.

WDFITS continues to promote and support access to a range of other awards and certificates essential within the maritime and fishing industries. Participation and success rates for these additional qualifications and awards are very good. These include sea survival training, first aid, and fire fighting. The additional awards and the skills learners develop are highly regarded within the maritime industry and significantly improve future employability and progression opportunities. In-year apprenticeship qualification progression data show that current learners are progressing well.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in supporting tutors to develop stimulating and challenging lessons that engage and challenge all learners and to ensure that teaching has a demonstrable impact on learners' progress?

Significant progress

At the last inspection, it was judged that there were insufficient strategies to successfully challenge all learners during lessons. Since the last inspection, the school has made a significant investment in improving facilities and resources that provide a good basis for interactive teaching and learning. An excellent virtual three-dimensional trawler model provides learners with an opportunity to experience life as a deck hand within a training environment. Well produced industry-based learning support materials are used well to reinforce the constant focus on safety at sea. Records of learning indicate well balanced teaching using learning strategies such as problem solving and teamwork. Specialist skill development, such as net repairs, is supported well by staff with extensive industry experience.

Enrichment activities and visits extend learners' understanding about the fishing industry, the wider food chain and related jobs and industries. Social events and activities help learners develop the essential interpersonal and teamwork skills required for effective work in the confined space of a sea-going vessel.

Staff monitor progress and achievement well during the thorough review process. The early timing of essential additional health and safety qualifications and key/functional skills motivates learners and improves their confidence.

What progress has been made in improving progression opportunities into work and onto higher levels of study and widening participation of underrepresented learners? Reasonable progress

At the time of the last inspection, few progression opportunities were explained or available to learners outlining wider career opportunities within the maritime sector. The school now raises apprentices' awareness of potential progression opportunities throughout their learning programme. Exemplar opportunities and learners' success stories about their progression into, for example, the Merchant or Royal Navy are displayed clearly. Proactive national work to develop a marine studies qualification, for the credit and qualification framework, will increase the flexibility of apprenticeship qualifications by providing a range of employment pathways and progression to higher levels. Good strategic links support understanding of new and emerging work areas for people with marine-based skills, such as in renewable energy.

Embryonic partnership work to develop a foundation-level qualification is intended to support widening participation. This development will provide access to this sector for learners with low prior achievement and for school-aged learners. It is too soon to judge the impact of these recent developments on recruitment.

Learners are recruited from diverse family backgrounds and areas with no fishing industry connections. Historically, the School has been unsuccessful in recruiting and retaining female apprentices. Recruitment is firmly based on applicants' potential to succeed. The School provides very good support to help all learners to complete their apprenticeship.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving retention rates? Significant progress

At the time of the last inspection, too many learners failed to complete their apprenticeship successfully. In response to this issue, the school has made significant progress in reducing the number of early, non-successful leavers. WDFITS's research has shown them that most learners leave their programme early due to homesickness, the lack of employed status, or through not being able to cope with the demanding nature of the job.

After the last inspection, the WDFITS introduced a retention strategy that has been influential in successfully addressing a range of complex and challenging issues related to poor retention. The most successful features of this strategy are: improved

initial assessment arrangements to identify more suitable candidates; more scrutiny of learners' qualification progression; more responsive support interventions when progress slows down and a relentless effort to provide personal and pastoral support that closely meets the needs of young people and adult learners. Current retention rate data shows that over 90% of learners who started in 2010 are still in learning.

What progress has been made in securing more complete and risk assessed safeguarding arrangements?

Significant progress

At the last inspection safeguarding arrangements were not complete. Significant work has been done since then to resolve this issue. Learners feel very well supported and safe in their accommodation, in learning and when at sea. WDFITS places a particularly high emphasis on safe working practices and reports no serious injuries to learners since it commenced training. All staff and directors have completed basic training in child protection and the designated person is trained to level 2. The safeguarding policy document is finalised, comprehensive and approved by the board. WDFITS appropriately dealt with and reported on its only safeguarding incident. Learners are confident that any concerns they have will be dealt with sensitively.

All staff and landlords/ladies are Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checked before the school places learners with them. Adequate risk-assessment and supervision arrangements are in place when non-CRB checked specialist staff teach practical sessions. The school updates all CRB records every two years. The potential risks of using the internet and social networking sites are discussed with learners and occasional checks on the school's and host families' computer histories made. However, no written e-safety policy or guidance is currently available.

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