

# Sigta Limited

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 54385

**Name of lead inspector:** Janet Rodgers HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 4 March 2011

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** 26 Abinger Road  
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## Information about the provider

1. Sigta Limited (SIGTA) is a group training association and registered charity that was established in 1964 by four Sussex-based engineering companies. The organisation's head office is in Portslade, near Brighton. SIGTA specialises in engineering and manufacturing training for apprentices in subjects like mechanical, maintenance, aeronautical, electrical and electronic engineering and fabrication and welding. Learners work for one of SIGTA's member companies, located mainly in the south of England. SIGTA has 87 advanced level apprentices and one intermediate level apprentice taking engineering and manufacturing technologies programmes and one information and communication technology (ICT) advanced level apprentice. The apprenticeship programme accounts for approximately half of SIGTA's work. SIGTA also offers privately-funded training courses and learndirect training in health and social care, ICT and Skills for Life under a contract from University for Industry (Ufi) Limited. Neither of these was included in this inspection.
2. Learners attend off-the-job training at one of the colleges that provide training on SIGTA's behalf. One part-time and two full-time training officers provide key skills support, assessment and progress reviews for learners in the workplace. Since the last inspection, SIGTA has appointed a new chief executive who manages the apprenticeship programme, and developed one of the training officer roles to include quality management.
3. Within the science, engineering and manufacturing technologies workforce in the United Kingdom only 9% are aged 16 to 24, 21% are women, 12% have declared a disability and 5% are from a minority ethnic group. These proportions are relatively low when compared with other industry sectors.
4. The provider provides training on behalf of the following provider:
  - Ufi Limited.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
  - Barking College
  - Brooklands College
  - Central Sussex College
  - Croydon College
  - Northbrook College
  - Sussex Coast College.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships	84 apprentices

## 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>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
<b>Subject Areas</b>	
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	3

## Overall effectiveness

6. SIGTA offers satisfactory training. Learners develop good engineering and manufacturing skills, which they use well at work to improve efficiency and customer safety. Many learners take on high levels of responsibility at an early stage in their apprenticeship. They have a good understanding of health and safety which they use to recognise potential hazards at work. Learners are set clear targets for achievement and current learners are making good progress. Their progress on all aspects of their programme is regularly and thoroughly checked. Many learners gain additional qualifications that improve their employment prospects. Over the last two years, learners' achievement has been low and too many learners left their programmes without achieving, often due to employment-related factors.
7. Teaching and assessment are good, and training officers use their extensive subject knowledge well to enhance the training given by colleges and employers. SIGTA has good links with employers, which they use well to ensure the relevance of learners' training programmes. Learners receive effective help and support, particularly with progression to higher education.
8. SIGTA has improved many aspects of the training programme since its last inspection and its prospects for improvement are satisfactory. Although clear targets are set for developing the company, SIGTA does not have enough

targets or plans for raising its apprenticeship achievement rates, which have been low. SIGTA does not collect sufficient information from its learners about what it could improve. Training officers regularly discuss and promote equality and diversity with learners and their employers, but learners cannot always relate these discussions to their own situations or work.

## Main findings

- Learners develop good engineering and manufacturing skills. Many achieve additional qualifications to those needed for the apprenticeship. A significant number of learners work in roles with high levels of responsibility for customer safety. Their practical work is of a very high standard and often improves business efficiency.
- Overall and timely success rates are low and have decreased from being well above the national rate to just below. Between 2008 and 2010 too many learners left the apprenticeship without achieving. Many of these learners left because of employer-related factors that SIGTA was unable to influence.
- Learners feel very safe in all aspects of their programme. They are trained well at induction and throughout their programme to recognise hazards and ensure the safety of themselves and others. SIGTA has satisfactory safeguarding arrangements and appropriately checks health and safety and risk assessments at work.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and well planned. Training officers give very effective key skills support and prepare learners well for external tests. Their assessment of learners' practical and written work is thorough. Training officers use their extensive experience well to check and develop learners' understanding of concepts.
- Learners have frequent reviews of their progress, where they are set clear targets. Their employers are fully involved in progress reviews and set additional activities, where needed, to help learners achieve. Training officers use self-evaluation, employers' views and college reports well to ensure a comprehensive review of learners' progress for the whole programme.
- Training officers work productively with employers and learners to design individual programmes that meet their current and future needs well. Employers, training officers and college representatives collaborate well to develop cohesive programmes that minimise duplication.
- SIGTA has strong partnerships with very supportive employers who give good-quality training at work. Training officers keep regular contact with college representatives, monitoring the off-the-job training and influencing improvement. The chief executive has good links with local training providers which are used well to respond to change and share expertise.
- SIGTA has a clear strategic plan which combines local and industry intelligence with staff knowledge about companies and future opportunities. The chief executive has set ambitious targets for SIGTA's growth, but the organisation

does not have sufficient targets or strategies for improving overall success rates.

- SIGTA promotes engineering and manufacturing well to under-represented groups. Training officers and learners discuss various equality and diversity topics during progress reviews, but the questions they use are not particularly relevant to learners' work or personal circumstances. SIGTA's monitoring of employers' equal opportunities practice, including for recruitment, is too informal and unrecorded.
- Training officers regularly discuss learners' and employers' concerns and act swiftly to make individual changes, where feasible. However, the system that SIGTA uses for collecting learners' feedback about their programme does not give sufficient information about what needs to be improved, nor does it include the views of learners who leave without achieving.
- Training officers use SIGTA's management information effectively to improve learners' progress and identify those at risk of not achieving. They do not use published success rate data enough to monitor trends. Although much of the self-assessment report reflects the organisation well, SIGTA's analysis of overall and timely success rates is inaccurate.

### **What does Sigta Limited need to do to improve further?**

- Set suitable and challenging targets for improving overall and timely success rates and reduce the number of learners who leave without achieving, through devising a strategy and realistically monitoring trends.
- Devise systems for collecting, analysing and using learner feedback that will give more useful information for continuous improvement.
- Review and strengthen the arrangements for monitoring equality and diversity in the workplace and increase the relevance of the questions used by training officers during learners' progress reviews.

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

### **What learners like:**

- the opportunities the apprenticeship has given them to develop practical engineering skills
- the ability and experience of their training officers to bring the subject to life
- the progress they have made within their companies since starting the apprenticeship
- the additional qualifications they take as part of their training programme
- being treated as an adult and given significant responsibility
- the well-planned training in the colleges that links well with their work
- their targets, which are clear and set out what they need to do between training officer visits.

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

- more help arranging opportunities to work in areas of their company where they can complete the full range of practical tasks needed for their qualification.

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

### **What employers like:**

- the very mature and responsible attitude that learners develop
- the extensive experience and knowledge of the training officers, which they use when working with learners
- the external training that SIGTA provides which helps them with their internal training plans.

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

- there was nothing that employers said they would like to see improved.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 3**

9. Changes in SIGTA's leadership and management are starting to have an impact. Training officers and the chief executive regularly discuss learners who are at risk of not achieving their targets. As a result of this, current learners are making good progress. Training officers' close working with employers and colleges is ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is good. SIGTA has taken effective action since the last inspection to address its identified weaknesses, with assessment and learners' progress reviews now being strong. The chief executive has set a clear direction and targets for future development. The self-assessment process is inclusive and appropriately reflects much of the provision. However, neither the strategic plan or self-assessment report cite overall success rates as being an area for improvement. As a result, SIGTA does not have sufficient strategies or targets for improving overall success rates, which have declined over the last three years. Learners' views are not used sufficiently to drive quality improvement initiatives.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 3**

10. Learners develop good engineering and manufacturing skills and knowledge. Their employers set them challenging tasks to solve issues they have identified at work. Their practical work is of a high standard and many learners design and develop equipment that improves business efficiency and health and safety. Current learners are making good progress towards achieving their targets.
11. The engineering and manufacturing technologies overall success rate was satisfactory at 77% in 2009/10, which is one percentage point above the national rate and timely success was five percentage points above the national rate. However, on all programmes, overall and timely success rates have declined over the last three years from a previously high rate to being low and below the national rate in 2009/10. These rates are largely affected by circumstances that SIGTA was unable to influence, including redundancy or learners being dismissed by their employer, and a group of ICT learners who transferred their programme to a different training provider. Although too many learners left between 2008 and 2010 without achieving, there are early signs of improvement within the current year.
12. Many learners are given positions with high levels of responsibility at work. They take on increasing accountability for customer safety, for example in maintaining commercial aircraft or testing products before they are manufactured for public use. They rapidly develop maturity, with some learners conducting tours or open days on behalf of their employer. Many learners progress to higher education or are promoted after completing their apprenticeship.

13. Learners feel very safe in all aspects of their programme. They are trained well at induction and by training officers, their employer and at college to recognise hazards and ensure the safety of themselves and others. Training officers conscientiously review health and safety with learners during assessment and progress reviews.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

14. Teaching, learning and assessment are good and well planned. Many employers plan learning programmes to ensure learners develop a broad understanding of all aspects of their company's production methods by rotating them around each different part of the operation. Their learning is enhanced through being instructed on, and using, a wide range of machines, diagnostic equipment and instruments. Trainers with one major aeronautical company, that employs around a third of the learners, plan group learning sessions well and use excellent and stimulating teaching and learning resources, including technology.
15. Training officers use their extensive industrial experience particularly well to continuously check and develop learners' understanding of concepts. They provide very effective key skills support and prepare learners well for external tests. Where learners do not successfully pass the test the first time, they are given clear feedback about what they need to improve. Training officers successfully relate key skills into learners' assignment work and assessment from their main qualification. They carry out thorough and well-planned assessments that link well to learners' progress reviews.
16. Learners' progress is reviewed frequently and comprehensively which helps motivate them to achieve. Training officers use a wide range of information, including self-evaluation, employers' views and college reports, during progress reviews. Employers are involved significantly in learners' progress reviews and are instrumental in arranging additional workplace tasks to aid achievement, where needed. Learners are set clear targets which are carefully monitored at their next progress review.
17. Training officers work productively with employers and learners to design individual programmes that meet their current and future needs well. Many learners take programmes that far exceed the requirements of the apprenticeship. Learners particularly value the additional qualifications they gain through taking a programme with SIGTA. Employers, training officers and college representatives collaborate well to develop cohesive programmes that minimise duplication.
18. SIGTA has strong partnerships with very supportive employers who ensure good quality training. Employers give learners a significant amount of responsibility early in their careers and learners work to challenging industry standards. Training officers communicate productively with college representatives, monitoring the off-the-job training and influencing improvement.



19. Support for learners is satisfactory and learners receive effective advice and guidance, particularly about how they can progress to higher education. Most learners have ready access to help and support from workplace mentors; many have been SIGTA apprentices themselves. Additionally, learners receive useful and regular pastoral help from their training officers.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 3**

20. SIGTA has good partnerships. The chief executive works very effectively with local training providers to plan future provision and meet the changing priorities of the funding bodies. They routinely share expertise and information to improve aspects like the monitoring of colleges. SIGTA clearly sets out its expectations from employers and subcontracted colleges within its service level agreements.
21. SIGTA has a clear business and strategic plan, which is based on regional engineering and manufacturing trends. Training officers' knowledge of the industry and employers is used well in identifying future opportunities. The business plan has ambitious development targets for the next five years, but SIGTA has not set targets or devised a strategy for improving overall success rates. The company has set a challenging target for timely achievement, but this target is unreliable as it does not include those learners who leave without achieving.
22. SIGTA's board members use their expertise effectively to provide legal and business support and challenge decisions, the strategic direction and new policies. However, they have only recently used published overall and timely success rates to challenge SIGTA's rates and make comparisons with other organisations.
23. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The chief executive, as SIGTA's designated person, has developed suitable safeguarding policies and systems. All training officers are appropriately checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. Training officers understand safeguarding and reporting procedures and effectively monitor health and safety and young person risk assessments with employers.
24. SIGTA has attractive promotional literature that incorporates images of under-represented learners in engineering and manufacturing. Staff promote careers and apprenticeships in the industry at a suitable range of events and schools. Despite this, participation in SIGTA's courses by women and Black and Asian learners is low. Success rates are similar by all groups of learners, although learners aged 16 to 18 have lower overall success rates, which is in line with the national trend. Training officers have regular equality and diversity update training which they use to discuss topics confidently with learners during progress reviews. However, training officers do not sufficiently adapt the questions they use to be relevant to learners' work or personal circumstances. SIGTA does not have sufficient formal or recorded systems for monitoring

employers' equality and diversity practice, including those for the recruitment of apprentices.

25. Training officers regularly discuss learners' and employers' issues and, where feasible, resolve these quickly. SIGTA uses an external organisation to gather learners' views which enable staff to assess learner satisfaction against all training providers. However, this does not cover all aspects of the programme or gather learners' views about what could be improved. SIGTA analyses the reasons why learners leave their programme without achieving, but this is very brief and not sufficiently useful for quality improvement. Employers' feedback has been recently collected but not yet used for improvement.
26. Training officers effectively monitor the off-the-job training provided by the colleges which has led to improvement. Internal verification is satisfactory and has increased the consistency and quality of assessment. Training officers are involved in the self-assessment process and the report is a fair reflection of the provision. However, judgements made about outcomes inaccurately cite these as being good and improving. This is because SIGTA has chosen to use its own data, which do not include all the learners who left without achieving.
27. SIGTA offers satisfactory value for money on its engineering and manufacturing technologies apprenticeship. The programme is resourced well to enable training officers to make frequent visits to learners at work. Any surplus that the organisation makes is appropriately reinvested into learning programmes.

## Information about the inspection

28. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's chief executive, 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, 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 employers had recently completed for the provider. They 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)**

**Sigta 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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	89	89
Part-time learners		
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	3	
<b>Outcomes for learners</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?	4	
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?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	-	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	-	
<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?	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>	<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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