

Engineering Construction Training Ltd

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 58454

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Last day of inspection: 12 May 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Engineering Construction Training Ltd (ECT) is a specialised training provider within the engineering construction industry. It is a division of the Severfield-Rowen Group Plc and is located in a purpose-built training facility in Bolton. The training is managed by four full-time staff responsible to the Group's training director. The learners are either employed by the Severfield-Rowen Group Plc or by one of its suppliers. They work on high profile and prestigious projects throughout the United Kingdom, such as the Olympic Stadium. ECT offers National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in constructional steel work, site operations, and specialised plant and machinery operations. ECT currently has 60 learners, all at level 3, funded by the Skills Funding Agency under the Train to Gain programme.

ECT was inspected in July 2009. The overall effectiveness was satisfactory, as was the capacity to improve. Achievement and standards were outstanding. The quality of provision and leadership and management were satisfactory. Equality of opportunity was inadequate. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Outcomes for learners

Have the outstanding outcomes for learners been maintained?

Reasonable progress

Achievement and standards were outstanding at the previous inspection. Overall success rates at that time averaged 98% and timely success rates were 71%. The outcomes for learners are even higher for the most recent full year, 2009/10. The overall success rate is 100% and the timely success rate is 88%. ECT has an effective system for monitoring success rates but measures timely success rates differently, yielding lower outcomes. The self-assessed Grade 3 for outcomes for learners understates the timely performance. The overall success rate in 2010/11 so far continues to be high. However, some learners have completed after their expected end date owing to changes in the qualifications and delays in the provision of documentation by the awarding body.

Employers still value the skills gained by learners. The qualifications allow the employers to compete successfully for high-value work contracts and the learners to work on prestigious projects. No variations exist in success rates across different groups of learners.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in providing structured training and learning support materials?

Significant progress

At the time of the previous inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory. However, insufficient learning support materials were available for learners and assessors to use, and ECT had no clear arrangements to provide structured training to work-based learners, should it be required. A library of learning materials has now been created and is held in the training centre. It contains a wide range of materials which provide background knowledge and enable learners to gain a more detailed and thorough understanding. For example, the library contains codes of practice and manuals for the safe operation of every type of crane. Learners who attend the training centre are able to refer to the materials as part of their taught course. They are also shown practical examples of safe working equipment which is held in the training centre. The training centre is a pleasant, spacious and well-equipped learning environment. Those learners who are trained and assessed in the workplace are sent good structured self-learning materials which they work through at their own pace. Many of the learning resources are computer-based.

What progress has been made in ensuring learners are aware of the progress they are making?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, learners had insufficient understanding of the progress they were making. Since then, ECT has incorporated the different progress review documents into a single progress review form. The new form provides a sharper focus on the learning that has taken place since the previous review and the progress learners have made towards the completion of their programme. An estimated measure of their progress is recorded, which gives learners a clearer view. Progress review meetings are still carried out every 12 weeks, or more frequently when required. The setting of targets has improved and now provides learners with more specific and measurable short-term targets and clearer timescales. In many instances, employers are unavailable to attend the review meetings. Although ECT staff contact these employers by telephone to gain their contribution, the records of these conversations are not written in sufficient detail on the progress review form. The records do not include actions that the employers agree to take to help the learners to make steady progress.

Are learners given information, advice and guidance about further training opportunities and support with literacy and numeracy?

Insufficient progress

At the previous inspection, learners were not made aware of further training or progression opportunities. The majority of the learners' primary goal is to achieve an NVQ qualification at level 3. It enables them to gain the required construction or engineering skills card which is essential for their employment in the sector. Learners

have either progressed to training for additional trade qualifications, progressed from NVQ at level 2 to NVQ at level 3, or gained promotion to a site supervisor role. However, the provision of information, advice and guidance is still too informal and any discussions are not recorded in sufficient detail on learners' individual plans.

An initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is offered to learners at induction but is not a requirement for all learners entering the programme. Only about half of the learners choose to take the initial assessment, none of whom need additional support. ECT has no means of knowing whether the other half of the learners need additional support and whether this group is more likely to need the support than the learners who elect to take the initial assessment. Arrangements are, however, in place to point learners to local training providers if they need additional support.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in the use of self-assessment and quality improvement? Reasonable progress

Self-assessment was judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection. The self-assessment report at that time was insufficiently focused on learners. ECT did not use management information and data sufficiently to support its judgements. The most recent self-assessment report is based on contributions from all staff. Learners' views are now systematically gathered and analysed quantitatively, and they show a high level of satisfaction with the provision. Their views are included in the self-assessment report. Employers' views are not collected systematically but ECT works in close cooperation with them. Their requirements and their views on the quality of the training are constantly at the forefront of developments in the provision. ECT does not have a quality-improvement plan but many improvements have been made in the provision since the previous inspection. Substantial investment has been made in staff development, although it is still focused on technical skills rather than wider topics, such as equality and diversity and support for learners with literacy and numeracy difficulties. The self-assessment report makes more use of data, such as success rates, alongside other evidence in making judgements.

What progress has been made in equality and diversity? Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, the promotion of equality and diversity to learners was satisfactory but the monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements was ineffective. This applied mainly to the employers which were suppliers to the Severfield-Rowen Group Plc. The procedures for checking the commitment of the employers to promoting equality and diversity have been strengthened. Employers' policies and procedures are now checked prior to ECT enrolling a learner on the programme. A draft policy is provided for employers without one of their own. ECT is developing a central bank of equality and diversity support materials although this is

still at an early stage. The use of images on promotional materials has been reviewed to promote the provision to under-represented groups more effectively. ECT is engaged in a number of activities aimed at promoting engineering and construction to under-represented groups. The performance of learners from these groups is informally monitored and, although the numbers recruited are low, their success rates are good. Equality and diversity are discussed with learners at each progress review meeting and their understanding is reinforced. The outcomes of the discussions are not recorded in sufficient detail.

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