

ETEC Development Trust

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

ETEC Development Trust (ETEC), formerly known as ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd, was established in 1998 and achieved charitable status in June 2009. The company operates from two sites in the Hendon area. A new Chief Executive was appointed in July 2010. ETEC delivers a foundation programme subcontracted from a local training provider, Springboard, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) through Train to Gain, and apprenticeship training in business administration, construction, and information and communication technology. At the time of the visit there were 75 Train to Gain learners and 13 apprentices.

The provider was inspected in August 2008. Inspectors judged the overall effectiveness and main aspects of provision to be good. The provision in construction, planning and the built environment was also good. Preparation for life and work was satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit in relation to Train to Gain programmes and apprenticeships.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made towards maintaining the good self-assessment and quality improvement planning procedures?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, self-assessment was good. Since then, ETEC has further developed the self-assessment process, increasing the involvement of staff, and trying new ways of seeking the views of learners and employers to inform judgements. Self-assessment now covers all ETEC's provision and includes all staff in the process. In preparing reports for their programme area, staff have strengthened their evaluative skills and capacity to identify areas for improvement. Data are now more readily accessible to support them in this. Senior managers' thorough scrutiny and moderation of draft subject reports are a valuable check on the accuracy of judgements.

Self-assessment continues to be linked very effectively to the quality improvement plan. Monthly meetings engage staff well in monitoring progress against this plan. Self-assessment has benefited learners directly. For example, ETEC has extended access to learning in community venues by providing electronic whiteboards and laptops.

The company commissioned an employer survey through external consultants, used electronic voting with learners, and set up employer and learner engagement groups to improve consultation. ETEC makes very effective use of learners' and employers'

views to inform self-assessment. Staff respond promptly to suggestions or concerns, for example acting quickly to resolve one learner's complaint about bullying.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has been made towards improving success rates and retention on all programmes?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, success rates had improved and were good. Between 2007/08 and 2009/10 overall success rates and those achieved within the planned time for apprenticeships declined, falling well below national rates. To address this, ETEC revised the initial assessment procedure to ensure that planned completion dates are appropriate to each individual learner's needs, particularly for those facing difficult personal and social issues. More rigorous progress reviews have increased the accountability of staff for learners' performance. Success rates for apprenticeships completed within the planned time have steadily improved and are now above the national rate. Achievement in construction has also improved but remains low.

Success on the Train to Gain programme completed within the planned time for 2009/10 was below the national rate. This has risen in the current year to above the national rate for NVQs at level 2. Factors outside the provider's control have adversely affected the retention for the small number of Train to Gain learners working towards NVQs at level 3 and for some construction apprentices.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made towards improving the use of target setting within learners' progress reviews?

Insufficient progress

At the previous inspection, the quality of provision was good. However, target setting was identified as an area for improvement. Since then ETEC has taken steps to address this, but these have not yet had sufficient impact. The company has organised annual staff training events focusing on target setting and the review process. However, ETEC has also experienced high staff turnover during this period. Many of the current staff started with little or no experience of training or assessment. They have now all completed NVQ assessor training and relevant teaching qualifications. A further staff training event was held in May 2011. ETEC has revised review documentation to include prompts on target setting and to make it easier to use in the workplace. More recently a member of staff has been given responsibility for auditing reviews and reporting monthly to managers. This process has identified weak practice in nearly all areas. The more recent audits record some improvements, although not all staff have received individual feedback from the audit process. Staff see current weaknesses identified in the quality of target setting at reviews as a recording issue rather than about how well the targets support learners' progress.

Leadership and management

How much progress has been made towards improving planning processes?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, leadership and management were good. However, some aspects of business planning were weak. These included insufficient promotion of one programme, the failure to meet some recruitment targets and underdeveloped planning for training. ETEC has taken action to strengthen planning and accountability across the organisation. Better structured and well-focused meetings have improved the use of time to plan and review business operations. Staff report regularly to managers and other colleagues on progress against their performance targets. ETEC gives a high priority to ensuring staff gain appropriate teaching qualifications in plans for training. The company has revised its marketing materials and introduced the use of social media to reach out to potential learners.

ETEC currently faces a number of challenges, including reductions in staffing and financial pressures. The economic downturn has affected the availability of work-placements, particularly for construction. Recruitment to apprenticeships has fallen below targets, but is now showing signs of improvement. To meet new government contracting requirements, the company has formed a partnership with a local college to deliver apprenticeship training as a subcontractor. In dealing with some difficult circumstances, ETEC has maintained a strong focus on the quality of the learners' experience and has continued to improve outcomes.

What progress has been made towards maintaining and further improving the good promotion of equality and diversity?

Significant progress

Since the last inspection, ETEC has maintained and further developed its good approach to the promotion of equality and diversity. It has developed strategies to widen the geographic spread and curriculum offer in order to engage with more diverse community groups. ETEC has developed contacts and new arrangements with organisations meeting the needs of deaf, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. It has made good use of a range of funding to target these groups as well as young learners not in education, employment or training. Strategies are also in place to foster contact with African, Bangladeshi and European immigrant groups in the area. ETEC makes good use of social network sites to promote the training offered to a wider range of learners and to provide support and encouragement to learners to stay on programmes.

Good internal systems promote continuous improvement through an equality and diversity improvement team and equality and diversity action plan. Regular staff training events have effectively challenged stereotyping and further extended

understanding and knowledge. Training has included an innovative session on transgender issues delivered by an external specialist. Equality and diversity training forms part of all inductions.

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