

Sunderland Engineering Training Association Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 54668

Name of lead inspector: Bob Busby HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 June 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit 17
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Information about the provider

1. Sunderland Engineering Training Association Ltd (SETA) is a Group Training Association established in 1968. SETA is a registered charity and a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. SETA offers intermediate and advanced apprenticeships in engineering, which it delivers in its own training centre situated in the Wear Industrial Estate in Washington. SETA also operates in partnership with the College of Sunderland to deliver workshop training up to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 for full-time engineering students. In addition, SETA provides commercial engineering training. Around 75% of SETA's training is funded by the government.
2. SETA currently has a board of six volunteer trustees drawn from local industry. It has 13 members of staff of whom 10 are full-time and three are part-time employees. Five of these staff are directly involved in training or assessment.
3. SETA operates in the north east of England with employers based in Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, and Durham. During 2010/11, SETA has provided training to 107 full-time learners all following engineering programmes. Of these, 89 are advanced and 18 are intermediate apprentices.
4. The unemployment rate in Sunderland between October 2009 and September 2010 was 9.8%, higher than the rate for the north east which is 7.6% and the national rate of 6.6%. The proportion of school pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in Sunderland in 2009 was 52.6% compared with 53.5% nationally. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of Sunderland's population from minority ethnic groups was 1.9% compared with the national average of 9.1%. Most of Sunderland's residents from minority ethnic groups are Asian or British Asian.
5. SETA provides training on behalf of the following organisations:
 - College of Sunderland (foundation and intermediate level NVQ in performing engineering operations)
 - Training Development Resource (young apprenticeships in engineering)
6. The following organisations provides training on behalf of SETA:
 - College of Sunderland (national certificate engineering)
 - South Tyneside College (national certificate engineering)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	119 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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Aspect	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	Grade
Engineering and manufacturing technology	3

Overall effectiveness

7. Current learners make good progress and achieve their qualifications satisfactorily. However, the numbers who are successful have declined and are now below the national average. Learners gain good vocational skills and increase in confidence and self-esteem. Most learners who complete their courses achieve their qualifications. However, reviews of progress and the setting of targets do not always drive achievement within expected timescales satisfactorily. SETA does not effectively monitor or report the progress made by groups of learners.
8. SETA provides a satisfactory quality of education. Most lessons are well planned and appropriately paced. The quality of accommodation and specialist resources are good. Classrooms and workshops are well equipped with good access to information and learning technology (ILT) resources. In the better classes, staff make good use of them to improve learners' research skills and mastery of advanced technologies. Learners enjoy their classes and value their developing skills. The range of provision is good and is supported by very effective partnerships with employers. However, SETA has insufficient partnerships with schools and community groups. Within teaching sessions, there is effective support for learners.
9. SETA leads and manages its provision satisfactorily. Arrangements for ensuring that learners are safe are thorough, meeting government legislative requirements. SETA has satisfactory arrangements to raise awareness of equality and diversity; its intolerance of harassment and bullying is effective.

However, the promotion of equality and diversity through the curriculum and its reinforcement through reviews is inconsistent.

10. SETA's quality improvement measures are too informal. Observations of teaching and learning are well established but do not lead to formal actions to improve. Managers do not collate the results of observations to identify trends. Other key learning processes are not observed but are monitored through audits. The self-assessment process is inclusive and its judgements are accurate but the grades awarded within the report are overly generous.

Main findings

- Learners acquire and develop good work-based skills in both the provider's centre and the workplace. The initial training period for apprentices successfully equips them with the knowledge and skills to proceed into the world of work within local companies at an appropriate and productive level.
- Progression into employment from training programmes is good. Last year a cohort of 17 unemployed learners completed a pre-apprenticeship training programme and all found apprenticeships. Of this year's cohort of 14, SETA has already gained employment and apprenticeships for four learners and is very actively seeking employment for the remainder. SETA is confident of success.
- Many learners benefit from good opportunities to progress to further study at an advanced level, above the requirements of their framework. Once in the workplace, learners make good progress through their programmes and achieve the necessary technical certificates. Most learners also study a wide range of additional qualifications or additional NVQ units which are appropriate to their needs and those of their employers.
- Overall success rates have declined since the last inspection to just below the national average. Success rates for learners completing within their planned timescales have also declined over the same period and now match national rates.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and there is clear evidence of learning taking place. Staff use ILT successfully to promote and reinforce learning. However, in some theory lessons they employ insufficient strategies to keep all learners fully engaged.
- Review and assessment in the workplace are thorough. Reviews are well structured and carried out to a high standard. Target setting is clear, time constrained and realistic. Reinforcement of underpinning knowledge is thorough and good. However, the promotion and reinforcement of equality, diversity and safeguarding are insufficiently developed in some reviews.
- The recording of learners' progress is insufficiently coordinated. Assessors record the progress made by individual learners during reviews but there is no central analysis of the overall progress made by groups of learners in completing the components of the full apprenticeship framework.
- The provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. Relationships between the provider and all employers are good. SETA works effectively with employers to develop appropriate course content, which meets the needs and requirements of the sector. Company training programmes are carefully planned

to align closely with the requirements of the apprenticeship framework and improve levels of support available to learners.

- Internal verification is satisfactory. It is thorough and well planned. However, although internal verifiers observe some workplace assessments, they do not include all assessors and arrangements are underdeveloped.
- SETA has an appropriate process for strategically planning and managing provision. The board agrees strategic priorities and shares them with managers. Some employers play an active role in the management of the provider's business through board membership and they have a good understanding of both the company's strategic direction and the self-assessment report. However, reports to the board do not focus sufficiently on learners' performance.
- SETA's arrangements for safeguarding meet government legislative requirements. Appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are in place for staff in regular contact with learners and a central register is maintained. Staff have received appropriate safeguarding training but none have yet completed safer recruitment training.
- SETA's arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory. SETA has successfully started to target the recruitment of groups under-represented in learning. However, staff miss opportunities to promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and through meaningful discussion at reviews.
- Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory but lack formality. SETA uses frequent audits to monitor compliance but these do not drive improvement. Staff share good practice informally. SETA collects and analyses learners' and employers' views but does not use them sufficiently to inform actions for improvement. The observation system does not lead to formal action plans for improvement. Monitoring of subcontracted provision is ineffective. A new quality system is now in place but is not yet embedded.

What does Sunderland Engineering Training Association Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates by more frequent and detailed analysis of learner progress across all elements of the apprenticeship framework, closely monitoring retention rates, and anticipating and responding rapidly to the changing needs of particularly vulnerable learners.
- Improve the quality of teaching, training and assessment so that all learners experience provision of the highest quality. Develop more effective strategies to involve all learners continually during lessons and to maintain their interest in workshop sessions.
- Ensure that learners' understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding is extended through relevant discussions during teaching sessions and by more effective promotion, questioning and discussion during reviews.
- Extend the good partnership working with employers by developing direct links with schools and community groups to identify and meet specific local needs.

- Improve the management and quality assurance of programmes by ensuring that consistent quality procedures lead to continuous improvement for all learners. Develop further the use of the observation system to evaluate the quality of learning better and to include induction and reviews.
- Improve provision by extending the collection, analysis and use of learners' and employers' views to inform action planning. Ensure that learners and employers are informed of actions taken as a result of their comments.
- Develop the collation, analysis and use of data at all levels in the organisation to monitor performance better, identify trends and plan improvements.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- very frequent contact from assessors
- extending individual employability skills
- high levels of support received from staff, particularly the individual support that is available when needed
- the use of electronic portfolios.

What learners would like to see improved:

- better reliability of computing equipment at college
- more experience on programming computerised machine tools
- more consistent help from tutors at college
- SETA to listen to and act upon their views.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- responsive and good quality service
- good communication with SETA's training centre
- the knowledgeable staff.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more short courses available earlier in the apprenticeship.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

11. SETA capacity to improve is satisfactory. The strategic plan outlines appropriately SETA's response to government and funding agency strategies. The provision in engineering is sound. Managers have addressed weaknesses in the planning of training and in development planning identified at the last inspection, but weaknesses in progress reviews remain. New quality improvement procedures have been introduced but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory overall, as are quality of provision, and leadership and management. Learners significantly improve their confidence and develop good vocational skills. Programmes have been well developed in conjunction with employers to ensure their needs are met. Strong partnerships with employers benefit learners significantly, particularly unemployed learners on pre-apprenticeship programmes. The recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups and women has improved but remains low.
12. The self-assessment process is effective and consultative. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and areas for improvements identified in the report. However, grades within the self-assessment report were too generous and did not consider the impact of declining success rates, placing too much emphasis on emerging in-year results. Although learners' and employers' feedback is collected and analysed, it needs to be used better to inform improvement planning.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

13. Learners' acquisition and development of work-based skills are good. Their skills development is good and they benefit from well-structured training programmes. Apprentices' initial training period equips them with the knowledge and skills to proceed into the world of work at an appropriate and productive level. Once in the workplace, learners make good progress and most achieve the necessary technical certificates, within two years.
14. Learners benefit from good training opportunities and many study at an advanced level, above the requirements of their framework. Most learners study a wide range of additional qualifications or achieve additional NVQ units. Many have progressed into higher education, in some cases studying up to degree level. Some learners take short, well-focused training courses in line with company needs.
15. Portfolios and written work are of a high standard and are cross-referenced effectively to awarding body standards. Many learners, following advanced apprenticeship programmes, make good use of ILT when compiling electronic portfolios which also develop their computer and literacy skills.
16. Overall success rates have declined over a three-year period to below the national average. The success rates declined from 75% in 2007/08 to just

below 73% in 2008/09. They declined further to 67% in 2009/10, below the national average, mainly due to one employer withdrawing 14 learners and transferring them to another training provider. So far, in 2010 six out of seven leavers have successfully completed their framework.

17. The proportion of learners achieving within their planned timescale has declined over a three-year period and now matches the national average. So far, in 2010, of six achievers, only three have achieved within their planned timescale. Analysis of the low proportion of learners achieving within expected end dates shows that some learners have extenuating circumstances that have contributed to their slow progress.
18. Progression into employment from training programmes is good. SETA recruits unemployed learners onto a pre-apprenticeship programme, paying them while they complete their training. Last year SETA found all 17 learners, who completed this programme, apprenticeships. Of this year's cohort of 14, four have successfully gained apprenticeships already. SETA intends to channel these young learners into companies that have not formerly taken apprentices and so expand the number of employers with whom they engage.
19. Learners feel safe at work. SETA attaches a high priority to safe working practices and safe systems of work. In the workplace, employers place high importance on safe working practices. In some companies, there are stringent and random drug and alcohol tests to ensure safe working and operation of machinery. Assessors reinforce health and safety compliance during assessment. However, in some reviews, questioning to check and extend learners' understanding of health and safety and safe working practices is insufficiently developed.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

20. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and there is clear evidence of learning taking place. Staff use ILT successfully to promote and reinforce learning. For example, they enhance learners' internet research skills and their understanding of safeguarding through well-designed projects in key skills classes. However, in some theory lessons there are insufficient strategies in place to keep all learners fully engaged.
21. Reviews and assessments in the workplace are satisfactory. Reviews are well structured and carried out to a high standard. Target setting is clear, time constrained and realistic. Reinforcement of underpinning knowledge is thorough and good use is made of open questioning to encourage progress. However, promotion and reinforcement of equality, diversity and safeguarding in some reviews are insufficient. Assessors record learners' progress but there is no central co-ordination, or analysis of the progress made by groups of learners towards their full frameworks. Internal verification is satisfactory but observations carried out by internal verifiers in the workplace lack consistency.
22. All provision meets employers' and learners' needs very well. SETA offers a recruitment and selection process to local companies. Relationships between

the provider and all employers are good. SETA works well with employers to develop appropriate course content that meets the needs and requirements of the sector. Learners complete short courses within their apprenticeship programme, enhancing their employability. Well-planned company training programmes align closely with the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.

23. Learners benefit from highly supportive learning environments and employers. Employers allow time in the workplace for study, completion of learner portfolios and NVQ documentation. Some companies use work-based mentors very effectively to support learners. Employers' training officers attend reviews and assessments regularly and actively contribute to target setting. All learners are encouraged to reach their potential. Employers fund extra qualifications and higher levels of study.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. SETA has an appropriate process for strategic planning and the management of its provision. Strategic priorities are agreed at board level and shared with managers. Some employers play an active role in the management of SETA's business through board membership and have a good understanding of the organisation's strategic direction and the self-assessment report. However, reports on company performance and progress against targets do not focus sufficiently on learners' performance.
25. Communication is satisfactory. Managers and staff meet frequently. Staff have a good understanding of developments in the organisation. The appraisal system is effective in ensuring the company meets recruitment targets. However, there are no individual targets to increase success rates or to improve the proportion of learners achieving within planned timescales.
26. SETA's arrangements for safeguarding meet government legislative requirements. Appropriate CRB checks are in place for staff in regular contact with learners and a central register is maintained. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure new staff not yet in receipt of CRB checks are supervised when with learners. All staff received appropriate safeguarding training but no-one has received safer recruitment training.
27. SETA's arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory. SETA has appropriate policies for equality and diversity, complaints and bullying, and harassment which are reviewed annually. The company has started to analyse the performance of different groups of learners, particularly the reasons for low recruitment from specific groups. All staff have completed training recently in equality and diversity, providing them with a good update on current legislation. Learners receive suitable information on equality and diversity at induction. However, staff miss opportunities to promote equality and diversity through the curriculum and through meaningful discussion at reviews. Currently there are only four women and one learner from a minority-ethnic community enrolled onto training programmes. SETA has started to target the recruitment of under-represented groups successfully and has plans

to improve engagement with parents and community leaders. Learners display a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity.

28. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory but lack formality. SETA uses frequent audits to monitor compliance but these do not drive improvement. Good practice is shared informally between staff to improve provision. SETA collects and analyses learners' and employers' views but does not use them sufficiently to inform actions for improvement. Feedback to learners and employers following the collection of their views is insufficient. The observation system focuses on teaching and learning and does not lead to formal action plans. SETA does not systematically analyse the results of observations to identify trends or to set targets for improvement. Monitoring of subcontracted provision is ineffective. SETA does not receive information on the quality of teaching and learning provided by subcontractors. It does not adequately resolve issues concerning the support given by some college staff to the learners and variance in standards that learners experience. A new quality system is now in place but is not yet embedded.
29. The self-assessment process is consultative, involving all staff. Learners' and employers' feedback is collected and analysed but is not effectively used to drive improvement. Inspectors found the main judgements in the report to be mostly accurate but found the grades in the report to be overly generous.

Information about the inspection

30. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, 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, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and 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)

Sunderland Engineering Training Association Ltd

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	107	107
Part-time learners	0	0
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
<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>	n/a	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
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?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	3	3
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?	4	
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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