

# SSE Services PLC

## Employer

<b>Inspection dates</b>		18–21 September 2012
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-Grade 2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-Grade 3
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-Grade 1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-Grade 2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-Grade 2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- Success rates are high and the development of vocational skills, social skills and confidence is outstanding.
- SSE gives excellent attention to health and safety and safe working practices.
- The development of employability skills, including access to additional qualifications, is good.
- Learners' progression to higher qualifications and senior job roles is good.
- Highly skilled and knowledgeable staff and trainers provide good quality teaching and learning, using very good resources.
- The provision of personal and pastoral support is good.
- Senior managers provide effective performance management of subcontractors.
- The monitoring of learner progress is managed very well.
- The management of health and safety is particularly effective.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too much assessment practice in engineering and construction is variable.
- Learner progress reviews do not focus enough on setting targets to drive vocational qualification progress.
- A few staff do not coordinate training sufficiently well.
- The promotion of equality and diversity during engineering and construction progress reviews emphasises legislation and not cultural, gender or disability aspects of customer-facing work.
- There is no formal process to review and further improve the standard of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Formal arrangements to gain learner and staff views to improve provision are not routinely collected.

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## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the variability of assessment practice in engineering and construction.
- Improve learner progress reviews to focus on setting targets to drive vocational qualification progress.
- Ensure all staff co-ordinate all aspects of training to meet the needs of learners better.
- Better promote equality and diversity through professional discussion to explore learners' understanding of expectations when in customer-facing roles.
- Introduce a formal process to improve SSE trainers' teaching and learning practice to outstanding.
- Formally and systematically gather learner and staff views to continue to inform and improve the provision.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall success rates are high for the majority of learners on engineering apprenticeship programmes. The proportion that completed their apprenticeships within agreed timeframes has improved over the past two years.</li> <li>▪ Construction learner numbers are low; however, success rates are good overall and intermediate level construction apprentices perform better than those at advanced level.</li> <li>▪ Overall success rates for business administration learners are good and most learners complete within agreed time frames.</li> <li>▪ Clear and useful systems to identify the ethnic, gender, disability or medical needs of the apprentice group are used alongside the qualification success rate data to identify trends.</li> <li>▪ Learners with medical conditions receive good support to achieve. Medical aids and adaptations, access to occupational health and changes to work roles are a few of the measures that help them succeed. However, SSE has insufficient focus on analysing success, including the ability to complete on time for different groups of learners, by considering, for example, geographical location by subject area, site, and access to assessment or the learner's mentor.</li> <li>▪ Attention to health and safety and safe working practices by all apprentices and staff is excellent. Staff and learners demonstrate a considerable knowledge and understanding of the significance of health and safety and promote this particularly well to all visitors to sites.</li> <li>▪ The development of vocational skills is excellent. Learners demonstrate high level skills in workshops, during training activities and on site. SSE has particularly good opportunities for apprentices to enhance their skills and increase employability options, for example where one trade suffers a downturn learners retrain into another trade area as part of future planning.</li> <li>▪ Opportunities to develop learners' employability skills further, including gaining additional qualifications, are good. Learners gain certificates for use of large machinery and equipment such as the use of elevated work platforms. This enables learners to work in a wider range of settings and offers flexibility of work roles.</li> <li>▪ The development of social skills and confidence, for example through the residential induction training that includes team working, communication and social skills development, is good. Mentors are quick to identify learners who are less vocal and who may require support when away from home, particularly young learners. Safeguarding arrangements for these learners meet requirements.</li> </ul>	

- Progression to higher qualifications and senior job roles is good. SSE employs all learners and they complete their apprenticeships as their first step towards further progression and development within the company. The majority of posts filled at SSE are internal appointments.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- SSE staff and trainers are highly skilled and knowledgeable about their subjects and have high expectations of learners which are reflected in the high success rates. The induction process demonstrates company expectations through the very thorough and strong emphasis on health and safety. Learners are purposefully engaged in their work and training tasks and learn new tasks quickly.
- Learners behave very well; they are polite, considerate and show a great enthusiasm for their work. The establishment of effective standards includes clear expectations of behaviour and conduct. Reinforcement of expectations through posters displaying the company's 'golden rules', including the right to challenge when anyone does not adhere to them, ensures everyone accepts responsibility.
- The introduction of measures to identify learners' starting points and barriers to job roles is effective. Improved initial assessment processes now include practical skills assessments such as working at heights and completing practical and fine dexterity tasks for engineers. This has helped identify some practical barriers to completing the apprenticeship and better match learners to job roles.
- Selection procedures are satisfactory and stipulate the requirement of five GCSEs graded A\* to C including English and mathematics for most learners in the engineering and construction areas and, as such, few have identified additional literacy or numeracy needs. For the very few with dyslexia, good signposting to external providers or to subcontractors' learning support provision is made.
- Teaching and learning are good and enhanced by excellent resources. In the training centre workshops, trainers skilfully intervene with learners helping them to explore difficult tasks and to think carefully about how they will carry them out to meet required high standards. Learners are very attentive, keen and thorough in following through instructions, or problem solving.
- Verbal feedback is comprehensive and clear, although records are brief. Learners keep their own record of specific points highlighted by trainers on how they can improve the quality of their practical work, while continuous observation followed by questioning challenges learners, stretching them to achieve high standards. Business administration learners receive good written feedback as part of the electronic portfolio system.
- Some assessment practice in engineering and construction does not make the best use of the wide range of evidence learners are able to present, preventing opportunities to accredit skills further. Where learners make errors in their written work, assessors and tutors do not routinely correct spelling and do not improve learners' writing skills; this, however, is not limiting learners' job prospects.
- In engineering and construction, progress reviews do not drive progress and targets set do not focus on the vocational qualification learners are completing. Knowledge of what the learners may be completing as part of their wider training is insufficient and does not inform the review process.
- Good role models in both staff and experienced apprentices encourage learners and motivate them to do well. The residential induction programme for apprentices includes access to mentors who are able to support learners throughout their programme, giving helpful advice and guidance about job roles, responsibilities and expectations for most learners.
- Good pastoral and personal support is provided for learners. SSE provides access to a staff counselling service, giving opportunities for learners with specific concerns or issues to receive confidential support.

- Learners receive good benefit packages including a price reduction in goods and services supported by SSE, such as mobile phone rates and electrical products. Learners receive a comprehensive handbook highlighting how to access the SSE website with all benefits listed and explained.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, while learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity, this is not checked sufficiently during reviews and equality and diversity questions set do not enable professional discussion, particularly with learners involved with customer-facing work. Business administration learners are unable to recall complaints procedures.

## Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Good

- Most engineering teaching and workplace training are good and reflect the high proportion of learners who successfully complete their apprenticeship. Planning for wider training is satisfactory but linking this effectively with training in the workplace receives limited attention. Learners gain a range of additional qualifications that significantly enhance their employability, but tutors occasionally fail to accredit opportunities for additional practical engineering training.
- Learners develop high standards of engineering skills. In the workplace, learners quickly make a valuable contribution to their allocated teams and undertake a wide range of work that provides them with valuable experience. Learners are confident, knowledgeable, and polite, good ambassadors for SSE and represent the company well when meeting customers and clients.
- Learners progressively develop their specialist skills and competence in well-organised practical teaching sessions, both at the training centre and in local colleges. They are able to articulate the underpinning knowledge and respond well to detailed questioning. They work diligently with high levels of competence, and quickly acquire the demanding skills of their trade, meeting the high expectations of SSE.
- The promotion of health and safety, and particularly safe working practices, is excellent, good attention is paid to the hazards of working on power lines and learners are able to discuss confidently the correct use of protective equipment, hand tools and machines. They systematically report potentially hazardous incidents and act promptly to minimise risk to themselves and others. Team meetings known as tool-box talks regularly and effectively promote safe working through topics such as winter driving.
- SSE supports learners well. A residential induction course provides learners with a memorable introduction to the company, its ethos and its expectations of them as employees, while SSE recognises and rewards learner achievement throughout their apprenticeship. Confidential help lines and occupational health screening effectively support learners' well-being and most learners benefit from a nominated mentor, although this system has not been introduced in all centres.
- Learners undergo a thorough initial assessment of their skills, which includes a careful evaluation of their practical dexterity and aptitude for an engineering apprenticeship. However, teachers, trainers, mentors and assessors do not regularly receive the results of these tests. Consequently, staff are not able to plan their learning sessions to meet the diverse range of learners, either to support those with specific needs or to extend the more able.
- Some assessment practice is weak. Although learners organise their portfolios of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) evidence well, with effective use of photographs, there is an over reliance on written description. Assessor feedback on spelling and grammar is partial, as errors are seldom corrected, and there is little written advice that helps learners to improve their work and extend their skills.
- Trainers have high levels of vocational skill and practical knowledge and use these well to

enrich the experiences of learners. An extensive range of resources and materials, both in the workplace and the training centre, significantly enhances learning. Highly effective partnerships with well-selected colleges are leading to joint professional updating enabling learners to add vocational relevance to the off-the-job training.

- Learners are highly motivated, enjoy their work and value their employment with SSE. They complete their apprenticeships trained to the highest of industry standards, progress into full employment and attain high levels of responsibility. Most learners progress well through their apprenticeship; however, progression opportunities for a few have recently been limited by changes in their training programme.

## Business, administration and law

Good

- Apprentices make good progress in developing workplace and personal skills, while some make exceptional progress. They develop excellent business and personal skills and their portfolios demonstrate a high standard of work. They enjoy their learning and are highly-motivated independent learners, resulting in good qualification success rates.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of their progress and the targets they need to meet. This ensures they succeed and complete their apprenticeship in good time. All apprentices have undertaken additional learning opportunities provided by the company, often identified during discussions with their managers as a way to progress in their job and develop their careers. Much learning is available on the company intranet and learners confirm they find these opportunities relevant and enjoyable.
- Apprentices have a very strong focus of safe working practices. They demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of health and safety especially how it relates to their working environment. They are unanimous in confirming that it is a core value of the company and underpins all they do.
- Training, learning and assessment are good overall, with a strong emphasis on customer service. Detailed induction ensures that apprentices understand their programme and the company's expectations. Employers and staff enable good opportunities for apprentices to develop business knowledge and occupational skills.
- Apprentices are confident, enthusiastic and take pride in their work. All staff are very knowledgeable and skilled and resources for teaching and learning are used well. Apprentices benefit from good accommodation and access to workshops where they can develop their functional skills.
- Assessors are very supportive providing well-planned training and assessments. Learners are very engaged and confident and involved in assessment planning, with assessors questioning learners thoroughly to check and also extend learning. Apprentices confirm they recognise the needs of service users well which enables them to respond productively especially to difficult situations.
- Apprentices provide evidence from a wide range of sources to support the skills they have developed. Professional constructive feedback from assessors, both verbal and written, is prompt which motivates learners and helps them to improve.
- Regular reviews take place where challenging targets are negotiated and monitored. The very comprehensive electronic portfolio system records attainment, calculates progress and contains detailed action plans which are suitably timed and recorded.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity and treat others with respect and their reviews always contain such discussions. Apprentices demonstrate that they have a secure understanding of the wider implications of equality and diversity in the workplace. However, too many learners did not know of, or remember, the complaints or appeals procedure.
- Initial assessment is used effectively to plan additional learning support where required.

Learners' job roles contain well-embedded functional skills and, where necessary, some aspects are developed and assessed off-the-job in well-organised workshops which are valued by apprentices as they are an excellent opportunity to share experiences with those from other sites. However, assessors do not routinely correct spelling and grammar in written work.

- Care, guidance and support arrangements provided by coaches, assessors and managers are good. Regular reviews are supportive and cover all areas in terms of progress and apprentices at risk of slow progress receive frequent monitoring to ensure they do not fall too far behind. Appropriate support is given where particular needs are diagnosed, while very effective advice and guidance ensures apprentices enrol on the correct programme and understand progression routes.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Since the previous inspection SSE has made significant changes to the effectiveness of its funded training. Good improvements have been made towards reducing the number of poorly performing training subcontractors and in further raising the profile of the apprenticeship programme within the company. SSE senior management is actively supportive of further developing the apprenticeship programmes to meet the challenges of an ageing workforce.
- Changes have been managed well and based upon a clear rationale of continuous improvement and high learner achievement. Communication with subcontractors is now good. SSE has been particularly effective in improving off-the-job teaching and learning through a systematic and rigorous review of the quality of subcontractors' provision.
- SSE has been innovative in ensuring that some subcontractors work collaboratively to provide standardised and high quality programmes that require subcontractor staff completing a minimum of four days professional development with SSE. However, as part of the legacy of changing subcontractors, some less effective providers continue to provide training to some learners completing their programmes. SSE trainers benefit from much professional updating and they use their knowledge and skills well to deliver good training and coaching.
- Quality assurance arrangements have much improved since the previous inspection. The collection and use of data are good and have significantly reduced the number of learners previously making slow progress. SSE is effectively tackling under-performance; for example, the revised format of quality improvement workshops systematically monitors performance, while actions to improve are robustly checked for successful and timely completion.
- Whilst the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and standards set by SSE trainers are high, SSE does not currently observe and review the quality of learning taking place or action plan to further improve standards or share existing good practice.
- The quality improvement plan is comprehensive and actions to improve match closely the findings of the inspection, although too many targets are classified as 'on-going' without clear reference as to what has been achieved.
- Learner views are regularly collected and, of the few concerns raised by learners, actions to resolve are speedily and effectively dealt with. However, a formal approach towards a detailed learner and staff review of the provision that clearly informs the quality improvement process is not sufficiently well developed with the latest self-assessment report being too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative.
- The range of provision meets the needs of learners and SSE's business needs. The high training standards ensure that the company is able to improve the quality of its service in a challenging and demanding market place. Since the previous inspection the range of business administration and law provision has been effectively broadened and SSE staff now work with national training bodies to support improvements to national priorities.
- There is too much variation in the effective planning of the programmes in some SSE



business units. For example, some staff do not always fully understand how they can actively develop links between all aspects of training. SSE recognises this, better communication channels are being developed and access to timely assessment is now available for all learners.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Company equality and diversity policies and procedures are comprehensive and all staff complete a thorough induction. Collection and analyses of data to monitor the performance of different groups are adequate and further improvements are planned.
- Apprentices benefit from opportunities to update their knowledge at progress reviews, but this approach is not sufficiently well planned as it tends to focus on the legal aspects of equality and diversity and does not give sufficient focus on developing learners' understanding of the diversity they may encounter with customers during their daily work routines.
- The management of health and safety is excellent. The company's health and safety 'golden rules' are applied rigorously to all employees and visitors to SSE premises, while the use of the weekly 'tool box' to inform all staff of the latest health and safety guidelines is particularly effective. SSE ensures that all subcontractor staff that come into contact with learners are appropriately risk assessed with a Criminal Records Bureau check.
- SSE meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners. SSE has introduced a young person's standard across the organisation and procedures for young learners staying in hotel accommodation are detailed and risk assessed. However, specific reference to what may constitute potential harm in protecting young people or vulnerable learners is not sufficiently clear to learners or staff.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF 2012)

**SSE Services PLC****Learning types: Apprenticeships.**

<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b> 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	<b>Apprenticeships</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for learners	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Subject areas graded for quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Engineering and manufacturing technologies</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Business, administration and law</b>	<b>2</b>



## Provider details

SSE Services PLC	
Inspection dates	18-21 September 2012
Lead inspector	Rosy Belton HMI
Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year 2010/2011	566
CEO	Mr Ian Marchant
Date of previous inspection	19 November 2010
Website address	www.sse.com

Provider information at the time of the inspection				
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Total number of full-time learners excluding apprenticeships	N/A	6	N/A	N/A
Apprenticeship level	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher	
Number of apprentices	89	282	N/A	
Age of full-time learners	14-16	16-18	19+	
Total by age	N/A	146	225	
Number of part-time learners	5			
Number of main training sites	One			
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)			
At the time of inspection SSE Services PLC contracted with 33 subcontractors. The following comprises the largest 20 subcontractors: <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Bracknell &amp; Wokingham College</li><li>■ Carnegie College</li><li>■ City College Norwich</li><li>■ City of Bristol College</li><li>■ Develop Training Services</li><li>■ DCET</li></ul>			

<sup>1</sup> The main subcontractors only

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- Eastleigh College
  - Electrical Assessment Services UK Ltd
  - Highbury College
  - Humberside Engineering Training Association
  - Isle of Wight College
  - JTL (Joint Training Ltd)
  - Key Training
  - SETA Ltd
  - Southampton City College
  - Steve Willis Training
  - Swindon College
  - South Nottingham College
  - West London Training
  - West Suffolk College

## Additional socio-economic information

SSE Services PLC (SSE) is one of the largest energy suppliers in the UK since its creation in 1998 with the merging of Scottish Hydro-Electric and Southern Energy. SSE employs around 20,000 people across the UK and is involved in the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity, and in the production, storage, distribution and supply of gas. It is also involved in a range of other energy services. SSE has held a National Apprenticeship Service contract since August 2008. Programmes are provided across seven business areas: generation; power systems; home services; contracting; Southern Gas Networks (SGN); lighting services; and customer services. SGN is an independent entity and SSE provides a number of support services under managed service agreements.

## Information about this inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of Pipelines and Training and Development, as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls to gather the views of learners and employers. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. These views are reflected throughout the report. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Subject inspectors looked in detail at a sample of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in engineering and manufacturing technologies and business administration and law.

## What inspection judgements mean

Provider		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding provider is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its learners' needs. This ensures that learners are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good provider is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its learners' needs. Learners are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A provider that requires improvement is performing less well than it might be reasonably expected in one or more of the key areas. This provider will receive a full inspection 12-18 months after the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A provider that is inadequate is one where the provider is failing to give its learners an acceptable standard of education and/or training and the provider's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the provider. This provider will receive a re-inspection within 12-15 months after the date of this inspection.

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