

Maritime and Engineering College North West

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		23–27 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Current apprentices and learners have high success rates.
- Vocational skills development is of a particularly high standard.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Outstanding resources are used very effectively to support learning.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management is good with high quality characteristics.
- Operational management is dynamic and particularly effective.
- Partnership working is outstanding.
- Strategic direction is clearly articulated.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Although the success rate for current apprentices is very high it has not been consistently high over the last three years.
- Too few teaching and learning sessions are outstanding.
- The quality of feedback to support learners, including the improvement of spelling and grammar, is inconsistent.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are inconsistent.
- The system for observing teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous or implemented consistently.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the recent particularly high success rates are improved further and maintained by supporting apprentices, trainees and learners to complete their training programmes.
- Further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that tutors more effectively check that learning has taken place and provide learners with more effective feedback on their performance and what they need to do to further improve.
- Ensure that the improvement of spelling and grammar in learners' portfolios is well supported and that the correct use of English is further promoted in taught sessions.
- Devise more effective strategies to promote a wider understanding of equality and diversity through, for example, relevant scenarios and naturally occurring events that promote discussion and appreciation of wider issues.
- Improve the rigour and accuracy of the process for observing the standards of teaching and learning by:
 - focusing on learning and the progress learners make in lessons
 - developing accurate action plans for tutors which help them to improve teaching and learning
 - implementing thorough joint observation and moderating procedures.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for apprentices and learners	Good
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- Outcomes for apprentices and learners are good. For the last three years, the overall success rate for engineering apprenticeship has remained just above the national rate. For the same period, the rate for completion within the planned end date has been around the national rate. The current cohorts of apprentices are achieving a particularly high retention, success rate and rate for completion within the planned timescale. These rates are significantly above the national rates.
- For learners on the adult skills programme, both success and completion rates within the planned end date are particularly high. In 2011/12, for the adult learners based at the Maritime and Engineering College North West (MECNW) the success rate was very high and significantly above the national rate. This rose even higher in 2012/13 but declined in 2013/14, but still remained above the national rate. For the same period, the rates for completion within the planned timescale were significantly higher than the national rate. In 2012/13, the success rate for the subcontracted adult skills programme was very high. Current learners are making good progress in completing their programme aims. There are no significant variations in the achievement of different groups of learners.
- Through attendance at outward-bound programmes, enrichment opportunities and competitions, apprentices very effectively develop teamwork skills and enhance their personal and social skills. Vocational skills development is to a very high standard with apprentices developing their abilities well in excess of the framework requirements. They are able to complete complex tasks and activities. Apprentices demonstrate maturity and employers trust them to complete commercial work accurately, responsibly and safely to exacting industrial standards. Their portfolio work is of a high standard and well presented.
- School pupils who attend MECNW workshops develop basic marine engineering skills and receive positive and practical insights to work and training. However, progression from school programmes to traineeships, although targeted at successful learners, is low. A significant minority of ex-apprentices gain promotion to senior management roles, and progression to higher-level programmes is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the good and improving outcomes for apprentices and trainees. Tutors are very well qualified. The majority have a teaching qualification and much relevant industrial experience. They make good use of their industrial experience to enhance students' knowledge and understanding and to help them develop very good practical skills.
- Tutors and training officers know their students very well and working relationships are excellent. Apprentices and trainees are encouraged to learn independently. For example, in one practical lesson apprentices were set challenging targets to manufacture replacement spools on a process plant rig. They worked extremely hard and independently, demonstrated very high levels of skill and completed the product ahead of time. In another session trainees used galvanised flat sheets very skilfully to fabricate air-intake ventilation systems to industry standards. However, in a minority of sessions tutors do not check sufficiently that learning is taking place.
- In the workplace apprentices are respected and quickly become effective members of the workforce. All apprentices work conscientiously and to high standards. For example, apprentices working on the construction of boats, rebuilding compressors and repairing pilot tugboats, demonstrate a high level of maturity and skills development.
- Outstanding resources are used very effectively to support learning in the college and in workplaces. Learners benefit significantly from using technological equipment in the training centre and on employers' premises. Tutors make very good use of the information and learning technology (ILT) that is available in classrooms. All classrooms have very good, relevant displays of information to reinforce learners' understanding during theory sessions. Learners benefit considerably from working on modern industrial equipment donated to the college by employers, which has recently included two large expensive diesel engines.
- Tutors' assessment of practices is good overall. Initial assessment is thorough, and ensures that the needs of individual learners are clearly identified. During training, learners are clear about assessment requirements and timescales. Workplace assessments are appropriately timed. The quality of apprentices' written work is good. However, the quality of written feedback on assignment work is inconsistent. In the best examples learners receive constructive comments which help them to improve. For a few learners, there is insufficient assessment and guidance to help and support them to improve their written work.
- Progress reviews are frequent and very helpful. Tutors provide a clear summary of the progress learners are making towards fulfilling short-term targets set at the previous review. Relevant and challenging targets to be completed by the next review are set. Training officers provide very good advice and guidance on how learners can improve their performance and their progress. Developing learners' knowledge of workplace health and safety practices is given high priority and the well-being of learners is discussed in depth. Clear advice is given to learners on how to link their theoretical knowledge with their practical activities in the workshop so that they fully understand the relevance of their practical and theoretical training. Learners produce high-quality work-related assignments and portfolios, which are appropriately enhanced with digital photographs.
- The promotion of mathematics skills is good. Apprentices and trainees develop a good understanding of the practical applications of mathematics which are effectively integrated into their programmes. In one session trainees interpreted engineering drawings correctly. They measured, set out work and carried out basic calculations accurately to support their practical task. In another session they worked very effectively in groups to calculate the swept volume of a variety of engine cylinders. In progress reviews, the reinforcement of mathematics is good. For example, probing and challenging questioning on the comparison of metric and imperial measurements was used effectively to check learning. However, in a minority of portfolios learners' mathematical skill application is not supported well enough.

- Not enough is done to support the development of apprentices' and trainees' spelling and grammar skills because they are not integrated sufficiently into vocational training. The promotion and development of English during progress reviews is inconsistent. In the better reviews, the focus is on the correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar which is corrected when errors are identified. However, in a minority of reviews insufficient attention is given to the correct use of English.
- Very good information, advice and guidance are provided to learners to help them progress and achieve. Learners receive excellent advice on their career and employment prospects and a significant minority successfully progress to higher-level study and/or to supervisory positions at work.
- Apprentices generally understand the issues surrounding equality and diversity and some are able to put this into context in their workplaces. However, in taught sessions and workplace reviews equality and diversity are insufficiently reinforced. During progress reviews the inclusion of equality and diversity is not always formally recorded.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- The effectiveness of leadership and management is good. MECNW's strategic direction is clearly articulated through its three-year strategic plan. Central to the plan is the aspirational vision for the college to be a centre of excellence for the maritime, engineering, logistics and energy sectors in the North West. Senior managers are fully committed to ensuring that training programmes successfully meet the needs of employers and learners in these occupational sectors. They have high expectations of themselves, their colleagues and their learners.
- Operational management is dynamic, enthusiastic and particularly effective. Managers demonstrate a high level of support for the apprenticeship programmes which are successfully delivered through an interrelated, well-planned and very effectively managed series of 12-week units. Programme planning and coordination are excellent. Management and selection of the subcontractor is detailed and thorough. Good working relationships have been developed, communication is regular and learning outcomes are high.
- Very good use is now made of performance data for managing and monitoring all training programmes. Highly focused weekly reports track learners' progress very effectively. In the current year, overall and timely success rates on the apprenticeship programmes are improving and are now particularly high and significantly above previous years' success rates and national rates. This is a result of rigorous monitoring of learners' progress. Tutors' caseloads are efficiently managed and tutors are increasingly accountable for learners' progress.
- Strong emphasis is placed on the identification and elimination of staff underperformance and continuing professional development to further improve staff competence in their job roles. A high priority is placed on recruiting staff with relevant and recent industrial experience and progressively developing them as assessors, tutors and training officers. Advisory board members challenge managers and hold them to account for the running of the college.
- Learning resources are outstanding. The purpose-built premises alongside the River Mersey are next to Cammell Laird shipbuilding specialist facilities which make extensive use of MECNW's apprenticeship programmes for training its staff. In addition to suitably equipped workshops and classrooms, there are information technology (IT) suites, offices and conference facilities. Good use is made of these training resources to enable apprentices and other learners to develop a wide range of maritime-related knowledge, skills and understanding by using industry-standard equipment. Although learners do not have access to a virtual learning environment (VLE), one is currently being developed.
- Partnership working is outstanding. Excellent links have been developed with Cammell Laird, the Sector Skills Councils and a wide range of small, medium and large employers, including the National Health Service (NHS) to widen training opportunities for learners. Through the good relationships with local schools very good opportunities are made available for school pupils to

visit the college and see resources and facilities prior to joining the day-release engineering programme for school pupils.

- Since the previous inspection, arrangements for self-assessment have improved. Relevant staff are involved in developing the self-assessment report which is subjected to critical scrutiny by senior managers at each stage of development. Self-assessment has accurately identified many of the strengths and areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors. Managers are aware of the need to apply more rigour to the monitoring of actions identified in the quality improvement plan.
- While management systems are continually improving, managers have given insufficient attention to the effectiveness of the strategies for integrating functional English into apprenticeship programmes. While the responsibility for specific aspects, such as screening are defined, insufficient managerial oversight is occurring to ensure that apprentices and other learners have maximum opportunities for improving their oral and written English. The quality of assessment practices is inconsistent and too many apprentices are not supported well enough to improve their spelling, punctuation and use of grammar.
- Due to staff turnover, few observations have been carried out in recent months. The process for raising the quality of provision and for ensuring that all learners experience outstanding teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous. Written reports on observations of teaching and learning include a grade. However, the grades awarded do not always correspond with the identified strengths and areas for improvement. Moderation of observations is informal and unsystematic and targets set in action plans are not sufficiently helpful.
- Equality and diversity have a high profile within MECNW. Strenuous efforts made to recruit females, minority ethnic learners and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have had limited success. There is zero tolerance of bullying, discrimination, harassment and unfair treatment. However, the standard of promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity issues to learners is inconsistent.
- MECNW's meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Initial and further update training for staff on safeguarding is satisfactory. An exceedingly high priority is placed on learners' safety and all learners are made aware of healthy and safe working practices in the engineering industry.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Maritime and Engineering College North West

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	343							
Principal/CEO	Jim Teasdale							
Date of previous inspection	January 2012							
Website address	www.mecnw.co.uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	1	81	N/A	26	N/A	30	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	159	58	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	7		2		9			
Number of learners aged 14-16	NA							
Full-time	NA							
Part-time	NA							
Number of community learners	NA							
Number of employability learners	NA							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rochdale GTA 							

Contextual information

The Maritime and Engineering College North West (MECNW), formerly The Laird Foundation, is based on the bank of the Mersey in Birkenhead and situated next to the Cammell Laird shipyard. As a charity and a company limited by guarantee, it has a board of trustees. MECNW has a contract with Greater Merseyside Skills Funding Agency to provide work-based learning. With a staff of 34, the provider specialises in engineering, construction and marine engineering training. It works with 60 companies through its own arrangements and those of the regional Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB). Cammell Laird employs approximately 54 of the 217 apprentices. MECNW provides training and assessment for nine learners on traineeships and a further 138 learners through the Adult Skills Budget programme. A small proportion of MECNW's training is commercial work. Wirral is one of the most deprived districts in the country. The proportion of the population in minority-ethnic groups is very low.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Alan Hatcher

Seven additional inspectors, assisted by the skills director 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 and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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