

Metskill Limited (trading as Semta Apprenticeship Service)

Inspection dates		9-13 February 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Independent learning provider

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- too few apprentices, particularly adults aged over 24, have completed their frameworks within planned timescales
- tutors do not embed the teaching of English sufficiently in training sessions and progress reviews
- assessors do not focus sufficiently on the development of learners' personal and employability skills when setting targets; progress against targets is not routinely reviewed to ensure that learners make progress
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough for all apprentices; written feedback and action planning do not provide sufficient guidance on how apprentices could improve
- learners have insufficient awareness of the wider implications of equality, diversity and how to stay safe online; trainers do not relate these topics sufficiently to the workplace or the learners' experience.

This provider has the following strengths:

- the large majority of current apprentices are making good progress; they develop good, relevant, practical skills and gain additional qualifications, which increase their chances of sustained employment
- managers have consulted very well with engineering employers to ensure the range of apprenticeships meets their needs; strong liaison with local enterprise partnerships ensures that local and national priorities for apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing are met well
- almost all apprentices progress into permanent employment and many learners achieve promotion in the workplace; almost all learners completing traineeships progress onto apprenticeships
- safeguarding arrangements are good; managers, trainers and assessors place a very high priority on health and safety to ensure that learners feel safe.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop further mechanisms for early identification of learners who are making slow progress, leading to rapid provision of additional support wherever necessary in order to ensure that more learners complete their qualifications in the planned time. Closely monitor the progress of all learners throughout their programme to quickly identify those at risk of not achieving in a timely manner. Ensure that target setting is always challenging, includes personal and employability targets, and that targets are systematically reviewed at subsequent review sessions to drive good progress.
- Ensure that the development of English is promoted throughout the curriculum including opportunities for learners who have already achieved level 2 qualifications. Ensure that errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are corrected in learners' work.
- Monitor the implementation of all quality procedures closely to ensure that all learners experience good teaching, learning and assessment to help them to be successful. Ensure that learners receive detailed written feedback which provides clear guidance on how they can improve. Focus particularly on sharing the best practice and ensuring that observers record accurately the actions needed to improve and any professional development required.
- Further develop strategies for promoting the wider aspects of safeguarding, particularly how to remain safe online, and for strengthening learners understanding of diversity and the advantages of living in a multi-cultural society through teaching sessions and progress reviews.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Metskill, trading as Semta Apprenticeship Service (Semta), provides apprenticeships in engineering and business administration. Slightly more than half of apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Approximately two thirds of learners follow advanced programmes and one third follow intermediate programmes. Traineeships in rail engineering are offered to a small number of learners through one subcontractor. Semta tailors programmes to suit the specific needs of employers through flexible delivery to accommodate shift patterns and by offering a wide selection of units across engineering disciplines, as well as meeting the needs of local enterprise partnerships and local and national priorities to increase the number of apprentices in engineering and manufacturing.▪ Learners are employed by companies across the engineering and manufacturing sector. They gain skills and knowledge through on-the-job training from workplace supervisors and through off-the-job training from three subcontractors. Subcontractors are selected to match the specialism and geographical location of the employer.▪ The overall success rate on apprenticeships increased slightly between 2012/13 and 2013/14 to just above the national average. The proportion of apprentices completing their frameworks within planned timescales declined significantly from an already low base to well below the national average in 2013/14. The success rate in 2013/14 was adversely affected by the non-achievement and delayed partial achievement of 145 learners with one employer. In-year data from the provider indicate that overall success rates and the proportion of apprentices completing their programmes within planned timescales have improved during 2014/15 but it is too early to validate this data. The large majority of current apprentices are making good progress towards achieving their framework. Almost all learners completing traineeships progress onto apprenticeships.	

- Managers have introduced close monitoring systems across all components of the framework, and these have helped ensure that apprentices complete their programmes within planned timescales. This closer monitoring of apprentices' individual progress against each element ensures that high levels of support are available to any apprentice identified as being at risk of not achieving within planned timescales. Rapid action is taken to support apprentices to ensure that they succeed in a timely manner. Consequently, the proportion of learners who pass their expected end date for completion has reduced significantly in the last year.
- The vast majority of apprentices develop good, relevant, practical skills and expertise during off-the-job training, for example, in the use of hand tools and when operating machinery. They attain a good range of additional qualifications. Skills developed and qualifications gained by apprentices have resulted in them being entrusted with significant responsibility for tasks in the workplace. Employers recognise the valuable contribution apprentices make to their business. The large majority of apprentices gain in confidence and self-esteem. Many learners achieve promotion in the workplace. Almost all learners progress into permanent employment upon completing their apprenticeship and many move into supervisory positions.
- Most apprentices have prior qualifications which exempt them from the framework requirement to achieve functional skills. Although development of their mathematics skills through engineering is appropriate, these learners do not receive sufficient further stretch and challenge to extend their skills in the use of English to improve their career prospects and job performance. Too few apprentices follow higher levels of qualifications in mathematics and English or have their levels of understanding increased during the programme. Where functional skills in English and mathematics are required, the effectiveness of tuition is inconsistent. Most tutors have themselves now completed functional skills at intermediate level to improve their own confidence but do not use this skill well in helping learners obtain a firm understanding of mathematics and English and how to apply them in context in the workplace.
- More than one third of apprentices completing their frameworks in 2013/14 were aged over 24 but the number of these who achieved the advanced apprenticeship within planned timescales, although improving, has been consistently very low, and far lower than the rate of achievement of other age groups. In 2013/14, Semta closed the gap successfully in success rates between the low number of women participating on programmes and those of men. Numbers of learners from minority ethnic groups make statistical analysis invalid, but their levels of success are inconsistent.
- The proportion of learners who declared a learning difficulty or disability over the last three years is very low. In 2013/14 those learners who declared a learning difficulty and/or disability achieved at better rates than other learners and more achieved in a timely manner.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflecting the particularly low success rates within the expected timescale, which are well below the national rate. Assessors have high expectations of learners and now provide good support, enabling them to develop skills of industry standard. In one good workplace assessment, the apprentices demonstrated good industry skills using a thermal gun to monitor metal temperatures during the stages of a forging operation. They accurately recorded time, temperature and other measurements taken using industry standard measuring equipment, as required by their employers.
- Tutors and assessors have good industry skills and experience, which they use well during reviews and assessments to provide apprentices with relevant and interesting information and to inspire learners to reflect and develop their own ideas. In a minority of sessions, assessors and teachers do not do enough to check and develop individual learners' understanding. Rail track apprentices at a subcontractor's premises benefit from excellent resources, which support them to develop skills in all aspects of track laying in internal and external environments.

- Assessment practices are not always effective in ensuring that learners make progress. While the majority of progress reviews are effective and help apprentices set targets for their main programmes, assessors give insufficient focus to the development of apprentices' personal and employability skills during the review. In a minority of instances, targets are not specific enough or measurable, and targets which have not been met are not reviewed but are just carried forward to the next review.
- The majority of apprentices enjoy their courses, and most are now making good progress. In a few classes, tutors do not direct teaching strategies sufficiently to all learners to ensure that they remain engaged, have enough opportunities to participate and make appropriate progress.
- The practical skills achieved by learners during their off-the-job training are valued highly by employers and by learners. The better training sessions prepare apprentices very well for their industry and they are quickly able to make a contribution to the employers' business needs. One learner recently carried out complex testing of a hydraulics rig used to open a ladle to permit pouring for a very large and expensive casting.
- Tutors do not always promote and develop English skills during reviews. For example, they do not correct spelling, punctuation and grammar routinely in written work. Good practice in developing English in a minority of employers' premises is not shared consistently across the provision.
- Information, advice and guidance have improved and now prepare apprentices well for their programmes, ensuring that they and their employers have a clear understanding of expectations and responsibilities. Apprentices receive useful information about progression opportunities, which has contributed to their good progress within employment and onto higher-level programmes. The induction process is comprehensive and includes all course content and employment rights. It ensures that employers and apprentices have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.
- Traineeships in rail track laying delivered by a subcontractor have provided a progression route to apprenticeship programmes successfully. Learners studying on these programmes develop their mathematics, English and employability skills, preparing them well for their progression to apprenticeship programmes.
- Apprentices feel safe. Learners state that their training provides them with a very clear understanding of health and safety and safe working practices, which ensures that they feel confident in moving into the workplace. They understand the measures in place to protect them and know to whom they should report any concerns, but their awareness of wider aspects such as e-safety are more limited. Although e-safety is discussed at induction, the reinforcement of how to stay safe online is too variable to ensure that all learners have a good understanding.
- Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality, but their awareness of the wider implications of diversity and the advantages of living in a diverse society is inconsistent. Although key legislation is discussed during induction and further during reviews, trainers do not relate topics sufficiently to the workplace or the learners' experience. Learners' knowledge is not extended sufficiently and the recording of the discussion lacks detail.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The strategic objectives set by the Semta Board are mostly achieved except for managing improvements in success rates within the planned time. Senior leaders identified and planned an ambitious programme to improve the weaker areas of provision following a critical review of provision in September 2013. The appointment of new leaders and additional managers has improved their capacity to achieve this. More rigorous controls and management during the last 18 months are starting to contribute to improvements in quality and ensuring that learners are now supported well to make good progress.

- Managers have recently improved links with employers and now most staff communicate with them well to plan training and assessments and monitor apprentices' progress. Many employers speak positively of the good support and training offered to apprentices and provide particularly good training resources, facilities and equipment in the workplace. The range of apprenticeship programmes such as aerospace, rail track, electronics and business administration meets very well the needs of the engineering sector industries and the local, regional and national needs of employers with whom Semta works. Senior managers maintain strong links with the lead bodies and work to address any skills shortage areas. It supports local SMEs that maintain traditional crafts in the Sheffield steel industry, such as the making of scissors. Metskill works closely with a small number of subcontractors and employer partners to extend the range of qualifications available. The monitoring of these partnerships is now good and is leading to more learners making good progress.
- Management initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning are partly successful but too much inconsistent practice remains. Arrangements for quality assurance and moderation have not yet ensured consistency in the quality of learners' progress reviews, particularly in the extending of learners' skills in English and their knowledge of equality, diversity and aspects of safeguarding such as how to remain safe online. Targets set during reviews are not monitored rigorously enough. Assessors do not always accurately assess the progress learners make towards their qualifications and this is not always moderated for accuracy.
- Arrangements for performance management are now more rigorous. All staff now work towards performance targets and have clearly defined responsibilities. The company grew substantially following the last inspection without sufficient management controls in place to assure its quality. New managers have worked vigorously to ensure that current work is supported and is quality assured. For example, arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are improved. Assessors whose sessions require improvement are re-observed within three months and if they fail to improve they are unable to teach until improvements are in place. Grades awarded are moderated but the quality of written feedback and action planning following observations varies and not enough attention is paid to reporting on learning in a few cases.
- Staff development is now contributing to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and provision for learners. Staff benefit from a good range of professional development opportunities, including gaining teaching and assessor qualifications. Several are currently working towards improving their own skills so that they can improve the English skills of apprentices further.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Managers have a clear understanding of areas that need to improve. The self-assessment report is analytical and shows a good understanding of key strengths and areas requiring improvement. Staff use data increasingly well to measure progress and performance although more detailed analysis is required of some aspects, for example the achievement of different age groups. The quality improvement plan contains sufficient specific targets for improvement and managers have a good understanding of priorities. Recent management initiatives have started to improve learners' success rates and the progress of current learners. Processes for self-assessment now include direct delivery and provision run by subcontractors and partners.
- A comprehensive plan to improve the poor timely success rates has started to contribute to an improving profile, for example in reducing the number of learners who are past their expected completion date, but it is too early to assess its full impact. Several measures are starting to have some impact but the data sets have not been analysed in sufficient detail to identify improvements needed by particular groups such as learners aged over 24. Predicted rates for the current year suggest a significant improvement but these are not validated. Weekly checks on success rates and better use of data encourage all staff to focus on improving these rates.
- Managers promote a culture of tolerance and respect, which is shared with learners and supported by policy statements. Staff receive appropriate training and show a good understanding of their responsibilities. Training sessions are not always used effectively to

extend learners' knowledge of equality, and the exploration of diversity matters often lacks depth. Learners behave particularly well in the workplace. Guidance booklets for learners provide useful information on different aspects and scenarios of equality and safeguarding, and these are explored at induction and, increasingly, during learners' reviews. Staff investigate complaints and grievances thoroughly and outcomes are reported fully. Data show few significant gaps in the performance of different groups.

- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Because of the potential risks associated with using complex machinery and materials for training in the workplace, managers, trainers and assessors place a high priority on health and safety. High levels of safety are evident and regulations are enforced rigorously. Managers and staff ensure that all learners are safe and are aware of arrangements to protect them from bullying and harassment. Managers monitor and check staff appropriately and ensure that they receive regular training updates in safeguarding. The single central register contains all appropriate information. Learners feel safe. Metskill has a clearly written policy on extremism and radicalisation and these issues are starting to be discussed with learners in progress reviews but more needs to be done to ensure that all learners' understanding of e-safety is extended beyond what is covered at induction and included in the safeguarding literature given to all learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Metskill Limited

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	3

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,382							
Principal/CEO	Ms Ann Watson							
Date of previous inspection	February 2012							
Website address	www.semta.org.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+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	307	80	364	403	N/A		N/A	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	21		31		52			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
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">■ Electronics Yorkshire■ KJ Training Solutions■ Resource Group							

Contextual information

MetSkill, formerly called Metal Industry Skills and Performance, merged with the Semta Apprenticeship Service (Semta), a not-for-profit organisation wholly owned by Semta, the sector skills council for science, engineering and manufacturing. Semta focuses predominantly on apprenticeships in engineering but has also started to offer apprenticeships in business administration and traineeships in rail engineering are offered through one subcontractor.

Semta has one operational centre based in Sheffield but works with learners and employers across Yorkshire, the North West, the Midlands and into Middlesex and the South East. It employs a total of 13 staff as training coordinators or assessors who carry out progress reviews and assessment in the workplace.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Bob Busby HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the head of apprenticeship services 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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