

# EEF Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

17–20 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- The chief operating officer's strong leadership and the board's clear strategic vision have resulted in rapid improvements in outcomes following a decline in performance in 2013.
- Leaders at EEF build strong partnerships with employers, which result in carefully designed programmes that closely meet the requirements of their businesses and the learning needs of each apprentice.
- Trainers and instructors pay close attention to ensuring that apprentices develop good English and mathematical skills that support them well in their workplace and personal lives.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Apprentices quickly develop the technical skills and knowledge they need to be successful within the workplace.
- Trainers are well qualified and have excellent occupational skills that are recent, relevant and of a high industry standard. They inspire and motivate apprentices to acquire good engineering and manufacturing skills.
- Apprentices have access to excellent training facilities that are matched well to developing and extending their engineering skills.
- Staff provide effective personal support which motivates apprentices and ensures they make good progress and enjoy learning.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications and develop high-level vocational skills, and virtually all progress into sustained employment.
- Current apprentices are making good progress towards achieving their qualifications.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Self-assessment does not evaluate the quality of teaching and learning provided by subcontractors.
- Observers' evaluation of the quality of teaching does not consistently consider the level of challenge all apprentices receive to achieve their potential.
- Employers have insufficient involvement in the review of apprentices' progress and in contributing towards the setting of challenging targets for apprentices.
- A small minority of the most able apprentices are not challenged to make the progress of which they are capable; the small number of female apprentices do not achieve as well as their male counterparts, and the gap is increasing over time.
- Apprentices do not have a full understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation, or how to fully protect themselves while online.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- EEF Limited (EEF) is a membership-based organisation that represents engineering and manufacturing employers across the United Kingdom. EEF's purpose is to support the future growth and development of manufacturing and engineering by providing a wide range of professional, legal, commercial and business support services to its member companies including education and training. Its activities are guided by its members through advisory councils across the country and a national board of leading manufacturers. Currently about 180 employers work closely with EEF to support the development of their workforce.
- The EEF training centre, located in the West Midlands, provides specialist apprenticeship training for the engineering, manufacturing and technology sectors. Forty staff and associates are involved with the training and assessment of apprentices, of whom 38 are full time. Day-to-day operation of EEF's apprenticeship programme is overseen by the technology training centre director. Currently, 495 learners are undertaking apprenticeship training, of which the majority are learners aged 16 to 18.

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

- Ensure that observations of teaching, learning and assessment and other quality monitoring processes are evaluative and provide clear information on strengths and areas for improvement in provision by:
  - making better use of information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to guide the professional development of tutors and improve their practice, for example in planning lessons to meet the more advanced needs of more able apprentices as well as those who need more intensive support
  - using the information gained from the observation of learning activities to share best practice across the provision; ensure that these observations lead to improvement so that all teaching, learning and assessment activities are consistently of a very high standard.
- Build on the existing good links with employers to encourage their active involvement in all stages of apprentices' skills development. In particular, make more systematic use of employers' detailed appraisals of apprentices' work, and link these closely to assessors' ongoing reviews of apprentices' progress undertaken in the workplace.
- Ensure that tutors use information gained about apprentices' skills at the start of the course to plan individualised learning that challenges the most able apprentices to progress swiftly according to their potential.
- Ensure that the analysis of data leads to systematic and detailed action planning in order to prioritise areas for improvement, and to rapidly improve the performance of female apprentices.
- Ensure that self-assessment provides a full evaluation of the quality of teaching provided by subcontractors.
- Ensure that staff use learning activities such as progress reviews and tutorials to develop more effectively apprentices' knowledge and understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation, and how to protect themselves while online and using social media.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The chief operating officer's clear and decisive action reversed the dip in the number of apprentices who obtained their qualifications in 2013/14. Following an operational review, leaders swiftly refocused staff working practices on the importance of teaching and learning, and strengthened the management team. As a result, the proportion of apprentices obtaining their qualifications in 2014/15 improved significantly and is now higher than the figure for similar providers.
- Managers plan well for improvement. The strategic business plan has a clear focus on teaching and learning and is based on a well-informed strategic analysis of the engineering sector. Managers make good use of management information to monitor and improve performance. Staff are involved and kept well informed via regular meetings which focus effectively on improving provision and ensuring that current apprentices are on track to obtain their qualifications.
- The curriculum is very effectively managed and resourced. Extensive and very productive collaboration with employers, government agencies and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) shape well the design and teaching of apprentices' learning programmes in meeting regional and national priorities. Managers work closely with the LEP's and EEF's own employer skills group to identify skills shortages such as in mechatronics, digital, additive manufacturing and composite manufacturing, in order to meet future skills shortages very effectively through the apprenticeship programme.
- Apprentices have benefited from a multi-million-pound investment following the opening of the Aston training centre in 2013. They have access to excellent training facilities that are matched well to developing and extending their engineering skills. For example, they use specialist software to design equipment which is then printed in three dimensions (3D) before prototypes are produced on computerised numerical control machinery.
- All staff are well qualified. Staff development is a priority for the organisation. Most assessors and trainers have benefited from up-to-date training in health and safety, safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, so that they are more confident to discuss these aspects with apprentices. Newly appointed staff are supported to gain their teaching and assessor awards quickly.
- The promotion of equality and diversity throughout EEF is very effective. Managers and staff model this by ensuring they treat all apprentices with dignity and respect; all staff have a genuine concern for the welfare of apprentices. A supportive culture enables apprentices to raise concerns confidently and effectively.
- Senior managers demonstrate aspirational expectations for apprentices. They set targets for them to achieve high grades; they develop their English, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well to support this ambition. Through a clear functional skills policy, managers promote the need to develop all apprentices' skills in these subjects to a high level. However, a lead functional skills tutor has not yet been appointed, slowing the implementation of the policy.
- Managers have put in place very inclusive processes to contribute to the quality and accuracy of self-assessment. Feedback from apprentices, staff and employers is a key part of the process; as a result, leaders have an accurate understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. However, the self-assessment report does not include an evaluation of the quality of subcontractors' provision. As a result, managers and staff give less priority to improving the overall quality of training and learning experienced by those apprentices who do not attend the Aston training centre.
- Managers have defined clearly their requirements for quality improvement planning; individual staff are particularly aware of their own areas of responsibility. Senior managers review monthly a comprehensive quality improvement plan with a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders and managers have yet to take effective action to improve the performance of the small number of female apprentices, whose achievement rates are deteriorating over time in comparison to those of their male peers.
- Managers effectively evaluate and improve the performance of staff. They observe and monitor staff performance well against clear and measurable objectives. This process has led to beneficial changes in staffing and subsequent improvement in the quality of provision. Observations of teaching and learning are regular, but observers do not consistently include sufficient evaluation of how effectively tutors challenge all apprentices to achieve to their full potential.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Governance and oversight arrangements from the strategic management group, including the chief operating officer, are very effective. Clear lines of accountability exist from operational managers to

the strategic management team, operations board and the executive board.

- Strategic managers meet frequently and scrutinise performance well. Plans to form a more independent governance board, aimed at increasing the scrutiny currently provided by employer forums and the strategic management group, are at an early stage of implementation.

#### ■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Apprentices feel safe; staff protect them well through very effective safeguarding practices. A designated safeguarding officer has been trained to an appropriate level. Essential checks are made through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) on staff who work with young people.
- The designated safeguarding officer maintains detailed case histories of the very few instances of safeguarding concerns, and actions are effective. Safeguarding is a standing item at monthly operational management meetings and at strategic management meetings.
- Effective links are maintained with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and areas of concern are recorded and reported appropriately, including referrals to the Channel programme where appropriate.
- Sign-in procedures for visitors at the training centre are robust. Very effective arrangements are in place to support younger apprentices who attend the programme on a residential basis and stay overnight at local hotels. Regular communication between the hotel management and EEF staff helps to keep apprentices safe while training away from home. For example, if apprentices return late to the hotel or need access to an emergency doctor, effective and detailed procedures are in place to cover such situations.
- Not enough apprentices are sufficiently aware of British values or how to keep themselves safe from the threat of radicalisation and extremism. While apprentices have frequent tutorials and training in these subjects, apprentices demonstrate insufficient understanding of these topics. Managers have produced an informative 'Prevent' action plan. The very recently developed draft 'Prevent' policy will be presented to the executive board for approval in June 2016.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the good outcomes for apprentices. Teaching staff and employers provide good coaching to ensure that apprentices develop their knowledge and skills over time, achieve their qualifications and progress successfully into employment.
- Training in the workplace is particularly good. Apprentices benefit from opportunities to sample a wide range of planned activities that support their skills development; they take good advantage of this in order to make informed choices about potential engineering and manufacturing pathways in which they wish to specialise.
- Apprentices quickly produce work that is of a good, industry standard and to the exacting engineering tolerances and specification required of vehicle manufacturers, aerospace companies and steel fabrication engineers. They closely adhere to safe operating procedures and use tools and specialist engineering equipment with confidence and precision. They are aware of their responsibility and duty of care to others.
- Support for apprentices in the workplace is good. Assessors visit frequently to guide, train and assess apprentices. Assessors are highly occupationally competent in engineering and training. They use their vocational expertise well to provide good guidance on assessment opportunities; this good practice motivates and inspires apprentices. Assessors work closely with employers to select the most appropriate qualifications and options, which closely link to each apprentice's job role.
- Much of the off-the-job training in EEF's skills centre is good. Apprentices on the first year of training attend the centre full time. They benefit from excellent resources and quickly develop good engineering expertise, supported well by highly competent trainers. Apprentices enjoy learning, participate well in activities and increase their knowledge.
- The promotion of English and mathematics is good. While most apprentices join the apprenticeship course with GCSE A\* to C grades, staff promote the importance of high standards in English and mathematics consistently throughout the programme regardless of prior ability. A few apprentices study mathematics to a level higher than that required by their apprenticeship framework in preparation for progression to higher education.
- The promotion of equality and the awareness of diversity is good. Staff make precise checks on apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity during visits to the workplace, and they promote these themes effectively in learning sessions at the training centre. Apprentices have a precise understanding of their rights and responsibilities and know what to do if they feel they have been unfairly treated. In rare cases where apprentices feel they have been bullied, staff take swift and decisive action to remedy the situation.
- Assessment is thorough. Assessors provide good verbal feedback to apprentices. Helpful detail enables them to understand what they have done well, and how they can improve. Staff provide helpful feedback

to apprentices on their written work which emphasises the need to use spelling and grammar correctly; they place a strong and valid emphasis on the development of the technical language used in engineering and manufacturing. In a very small minority of cases assessors or employers do not routinely correct spelling and grammar errors in apprentices' work. As a consequence, apprentices are not given the opportunity to develop their professional standards in writing.

- Apprentices' starting points are assessed thoroughly at the start of the course, but trainers do not use this information well enough to plan lessons that challenge the most able to achieve to their full potential. Trainers' checks on learning are not sufficiently developed to ensure that more capable apprentices are consistently making good or better progress, engaging in learning and assessing their own development. In the very small minority of cases where apprentices have already achieved the technical certificate that is part of the apprenticeship qualification, they have to wait until the rest of their year group has achieved this qualification before they are tasked to start gathering evidence for their national vocational qualification (NVQ).
- Employers are not routinely involved in the review process for apprentices who return to the workplace following their initial foundation training phase, thus missing the opportunity to share their views on their employees' progress. Employers routinely provide apprentices with a detailed appraisal of their performance, but EEF staff do not use the feedback and findings of these appraisals to inform EEF's reviews of apprentices' progress, or to assist in target setting.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** are good

- Apprentices' attendance and punctuality, both at the engineering training centre and at the workplace, are exemplary. They quickly develop positive attitudes to their learning as a result of trainers' strong emphasis on good working practices, high expectations and encouragement of apprentices to take pride in wearing their employers' uniforms.
- Around half of all new apprentices attend a week-long residential development programme that supports them well to develop a broad range of employment-related skills, including improved confidence, interpersonal skills and team working.
- Apprentices work diligently in lessons, take pride in the good standard of technical work they produce, and exhibit a good understanding of why the quality of their work is important to them and their employers. They quickly gain a precise understanding of engineering technical terminology and the mathematical skills required to be successful in the workplace. For example, they learn how to interpret accurately and work out cutting speeds when machining components to customers' specifications. Employers value highly the good communication, numerical and technological skills that the apprentices gain, which are essential to their job role.
- Apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance that enable them to make appropriately informed choices about their apprenticeship programme, future learning and career aspirations. Most employers have well-considered on-the-job training plans that ensure apprentices benefit from planned periods of structured work experience in different parts of their organisations. Apprentices quickly gain an understanding of key business functions, other job roles and potential progression pathways upon graduation. Annual awards events are motivational for apprentices and provide a good celebration of their achievements.
- Apprentices work through their learning programmes with enthusiasm and quickly develop a good range of engineering, manufacturing and precision-machining skills that help them carry out their job roles in the workplace with confidence, and to industry standards. They benefit from good additional technical training in milling, machining, computer-aided design, robotics and programmable logic controllers. This training enhances their employability when they return to the workplace after their initial foundation training phase at the training centre. Employers value the contribution that the majority of apprentices make in the workplace.
- Apprentices develop a good understanding of inclusion and diversity in wider society and modern Britain, both at the training centre and in the workplace. However, apprentices' understanding of the importance of fundamental British values requires improvement. While apprentices understand the importance of democracy, for example by holding elections for a member of class to represent apprentices' views at learners' voice meetings, few apprentices are able to express confidently how these values relate to them personally or as workers.
- Apprentices quickly develop positive attitudes to safe working practices both at the EEF training centre and in their workplaces. They are diligent in wearing personal protective equipment. However, few apprentices have sufficient awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism or how to protect themselves appropriately when using the internet and social networking sites. Managers at EEF have implemented very recent actions to address these issues, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness and impact of these new initiatives.

## Outcomes for learners

are good

- Apprenticeship success rates are good, with an increasing number of learners successfully gaining their qualifications within the planned time. After a decline in 2013/14, success rates for apprentices improved considerably in 2014/15 to the high levels reported at the previous inspection. The provider's own in-year data for 2015/16 indicates that the very large majority of apprentices make good progress relative to their initial starting points, and achieve in line with planned timescales. The few apprentices studying in subcontracted provision do as well as those in provision that EEF offers directly.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning and receive very good support from their trainers to ensure they successfully meet the requirements of their apprenticeship qualifications.
- The small minority of apprentices who join the EEF training programme without GCSEs at grades A\* to C in English or mathematics successfully achieve the appropriate level of functional skills required for their apprenticeship qualifications at the first attempt. A few apprentices undertake additional mathematics qualifications at a higher level than required for the completion of their programme.
- Apprentices benefit from carefully tailored programmes which use additional learning units that match their needs and their employers' requirements. For example, around half of all new apprentices undertake four additional learning units during the performing engineering operations qualification provided during their initial foundation year at the training centre; and a quarter of apprentices study towards an extended diploma technical certificate.
- Due to their well-developed job skills, most apprentices who completed their programme in 2015 gained permanent employment, with corresponding increases in pay and levels of responsibility. A small but growing number of apprentices progress on to higher education qualifications and gain progression within their job role.
- Few differences exist in the performance of different groups of apprentices. Success rates for the minority of apprentices who are aged 16 to 18, and the majority who are older apprentices aged 19 to 23, are high, and well above the performance for their respective peer groups nationally. All groups make similar rates of progress, for example learners from all ethnic groups achieve to a similar level, as do those with disability. However, actions to improve the achievements of the few female apprentices, who perform less well than their male counterparts, have not worked, and the gap is increasing over time.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16-18/19+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	404
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Neil Withey
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.eef.org.uk/apprentices">www.eef.org.uk/apprentices</a>

## 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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	11	4	310	170	-	-		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	n/a							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Warwickshire College</li> <li>■ City of Wolverhampton College</li> <li>■ Wakefield College</li> <li>■ York College</li> <li>■ Swindon College</li> <li>■ Gateshead College</li> <li>■ Derwent Training Association</li> <li>■ West Nottinghamshire College</li> </ul>							



## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Victor Reid, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Laurie Brown	Ofsted Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Daisy Walsh	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Frear	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the health and safety compliance manager as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.



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