

Springfields Fuels Ltd (SFL)

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

28–30 June 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	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers set high aspirations for apprentices and staff. High-quality training prepares apprentices very well for employment in the nuclear industry.
- A strong and effective apprenticeship board drives forward improvement through robust and determined support and challenge to managers.
- Leaders and managers align training to meet local and national priorities, meeting the business needs of employers throughout the region.
- Leaders and managers use self-assessment very effectively to identify and successfully tackle weaker areas of the provision.
- The proportion of apprentices who successfully achieve their qualification is very high and has remained so for the last three years.
- A high proportion of apprentices progress to higher-level qualifications and employment.
- Apprentices have a good work ethic and develop the personal and social skills that they need in work.
- Tutors set high expectations for their apprentices and use up-to-date expertise to develop apprentices' high-level engineering skills valued by their employers.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Managers do not monitor rigorously the effective completion of improvement actions, identified through the observation of tutors, to improve the quality of the apprenticeships.
- Tutors do not ensure that apprentices have sufficient understanding of the range of available career options on completion of their qualification.
- Tutors do not develop apprentices' understanding of life in a diverse cultural society.
- Tutors do not set realistic industry timings for apprentices to complete their practical assessments.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Springfields Fuels Limited (SFL) is an independent learning provider. It manufactures oxide fuel products for the nuclear reactor fleet and other nuclear intermediaries, for British and international customers. The company currently employs 1,118 people and is located near Preston where it has its own purpose-built training centre. SFL provides apprenticeship programmes in engineering. SFL subcontracts apprentices to Blackpool and The Fylde College, which delivers the technical certificate on the engineering and manufacturing technologies course. Apprentices are employed either by SFL or by a small number of employers throughout the North West region.
- Unemployment in the Lancashire area is lower at 3.5% than the national and North West region rate.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rigour with which managers monitor the progress that tutors make towards achieving actions identified for improvement to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Increase the quality of careers information and guidance so that apprentices have sufficient information on their future options and they can achieve their long-term goals.
- Ensure that all apprentices gain a sound knowledge of the benefits and risks associated with living in a culturally diverse society.
- Improve the quality of apprentices' assessment to ensure that practical tasks are carried out to replicate commercial timings.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders, including the managing director, recognise and value the impact of the apprenticeship training centre on developing the skills of the workforce so that SFL maintains its reputation as a high-quality and safe producer of fuels for the nuclear industry. They demonstrate a high level of pride in the work of the centre, which has trained successfully around a third of the large workforce. Leaders and managers communicate the organisation's values and culture very effectively to staff and apprentices, including the very high priority placed on safety.
- The apprenticeship programme successfully meets the needs of the nuclear industry and of the organisation. Senior managers ensure that the centre plays a key role in developing the skills and behaviours needed to work in the industry and to ensure the organisation's continuing success. They are currently introducing new programmes in response to identified business needs, including higher-level and degree apprenticeships.
- Subcontracting arrangements are rigorous. A local further education college delivers the engineering technical certificate element of the apprenticeship on behalf of SFL. Monitoring meetings with the college take place regularly and include a comprehensive review of the progress that apprentices are making towards achieving their qualifications.
- Self-assessment identifies accurately key strengths and areas for improvement based on managers' analysis of apprentices' achievement, evaluation of the quality of provision gained through frequent observations and surveys of apprentices' views. Managers take effective action to tackle weaker aspects of the provision identified through self-assessment. A quality assurance group made up of the training manager and the training team monitors closely the progress that the centre makes towards achieving all improvement actions.
- The performance of tutors and the training manager is managed closely through operational meetings and annual appraisals. The training manager meets frequently with tutors to agree priorities and tasks and to monitor the impact of training on apprentices' progress. An annual appraisal process identifies clear and specific performance targets for tutors and the training manager. However, managers do not monitor rigorously enough the progress that tutors make against actions for improvement identified following observations. As a result, tutors often do not improve weaker aspects of their practice quickly enough.
- Staff training is good. Tutors participate in a wide range of relevant professional development activity. This enables them to improve their technical skills and knowledge, their teaching skills and their understanding of key topics such as the Prevent duty and developing apprentices' English and mathematics skills.
- Managers and tutors provide good information, advice and guidance to young people about apprenticeship opportunities at SFL and in the nuclear industry. They visit local schools and organise events to encourage young people to consider apprenticeships as a progression option. Current apprentices participate in school leavers' advice and guidance events and provide helpful information to prospective applicants about their experiences as apprentices. Although apprentices are fully aware of the progression pathways available in the company, they receive insufficient information about other career options in the engineering sector.
- Managers and tutors promote a high level of mutual respect in the training centre that reflects the organisation's commitment to an inclusive and tolerant working environment. The development of appropriate attitudes and behaviours among apprentices has a high priority in the curriculum. The centre's commitment to respect and tolerance is supported by posters and information around the building. As a result, apprentices demonstrate good standards of behaviour and a high level of respect for their tutors, other staff and each other. Managers ensure that the few offensive comments on the walls of toilets are removed quickly when they appear. However, they take insufficient action to emphasise to apprentices that writing such comments is not acceptable.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - A well-established apprenticeship board meets frequently. It includes representatives from across the organisation, including senior engineers and union representatives. Board members have an appropriate range of skills and experience, which they use well to oversee the performance of the training centre.
 - The training manager provides a detailed report at each meeting of the board that includes an analysis of the progress of apprentices, safety issues, professional development activity and progress that the centre is making against improvements outlined in its development plan. Board members provide good support and challenge to the training manager, particularly in relation to self-assessment and the

recruitment of new apprentices.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- The provider has appropriate safeguarding procedures that are implemented fully and consistently. Arrangements to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are very rigorous. The company's security procedures comply with the stringent guidelines for the nuclear industry with all personnel on site, including apprentices, requiring security clearances.
- All staff carry out relevant training on safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, and have a good understanding of how to keep learners safe.
- Apprentices know how to keep themselves and others safe; they have access to trained mentors and 'listeners' who identify and support their welfare. Apprentices gain a sound understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism through the information they receive at induction and activities that form part of their training.
- The focus on health and safety is very strong with a high commitment from senior managers to ensure that apprentices and all staff have a high level of understanding of health and safety at work and in everyday life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The provider offers a wide range of apprenticeships across several engineering disciplines, including mechanical, fabrication, machining, electrical and instrumentation. Apprenticeships are offered at advanced and higher levels. At the time of the inspection, 48 apprentices were enrolled on apprenticeship programmes, four at intermediate level, 40 at advanced level and four on higher apprenticeships. The highest number, 16, were following a mechanical apprenticeship.
- Tutors inspire and challenge their apprentices. Apprentices are highly motivated; they enjoy their work and learning new knowledge and skills. Most tutors use a good range of activities that interest apprentices and improve their understanding of key practical tasks. Consequently, apprentices develop a good knowledge of engineering, make good progress and achieve their qualification.
- Tutors use a good range of learning resources very effectively to make learning stimulating and to raise and maintain apprentices' interest. Practical activities and theory are integrated well, and this helps tutors to promote and consolidate apprentices' learning.
- Tutors are well qualified and experienced in their specialist areas and use their specialist commercial knowledge and experience well to plan learning that meets the needs of the apprentices. Tutors use well-resourced training workshops with industry-standard equipment to create a realistic work environment. As a result, almost all apprentices develop a high level of skills in their work, increasing their confidence and self-esteem.
- Apprentices make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. Tutors engage apprentices in meaningful discussions, which help apprentices to build confidence in talking about their work. Tutors ensure that mathematics is integrated well into vocational work and they encourage apprentices to develop their mathematics further in preparation for progression to higher-level qualifications.
- The monitoring and recording of apprentices' progress is good. Tutors are clear about the progress made by apprentices. Tutors use clear explanations and skilful questioning to gauge learners' understanding and skills development.
- Tutors provide good feedback on spelling and grammatical errors as well as on technical accuracy when marking and discussing with apprentices their written work. Tutors' feedback on the quality of apprentices' work helps apprentices understand what they need to do to improve, resulting in apprentices making good progress.
- Links between on- and off-the-job training are good. Apprentices are integrated well into the workplace and receive good support from skilled craftsmen and personal mentors. Work supervisors are clear about which skills apprentices need to develop and match tasks to assessment needs. As a result, apprentices make good progress in completing their assessments. However, assessment of most practical work is not set against the time constraints that replicate industrial practice.
- Tutors do not place sufficient priority during lessons and progress reviews on raising apprentices' awareness of equality and diversity to help improve their understanding of the potential issues and benefits of living in a multicultural society.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Senior managers reinforce with apprentices the need for good attendance, punctuality and attitudes towards work and monitor this rigorously. As a result, apprentices quickly develop a strong work ethic.
- Apprentices make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills and apply them in their work and everyday lives.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the options available to them to progress into higher-level qualifications. However, apprentices have insufficient understanding of the wider options available to them and the range of possible career routes on completion of their apprenticeship.
- Tutors help apprentices make good progress in developing the personal and social skills that they need in work. Apprentices develop their work skills in realistic commercial settings that replicate industry standards. Apprentices develop management and team-working skills in additional activities such as the 'association of Springfield apprentices'. A variety of activities on such topics as healthy eating, drug and alcohol awareness help apprentices to gain a clear understanding of how to keep themselves healthy.
- Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns that they have about their safety or the safety of others. Apprentices have an excellent understanding of safe working practices and develop skills in observing 'behaviour safety' that encourages the analysis of risk and development of safe working practices.
- Apprentices have a good attitude towards their learning and demonstrate high standards of behaviour. They take pride in their work and strive to succeed.
- During lessons and progress reviews, tutors do not ensure that apprentices improve their wider understanding of life in a diverse cultural society.

Outcomes for learners

are outstanding

- The proportion of apprentices successfully achieving their programmes has remained very high over the last three years. In 2014–15, all apprentices who completed their programmes achieved their qualifications within the planned time. The number of apprentices retained on programmes is consistently high with very few apprentices leaving their programme early. Current apprentices are making excellent progress, and nearly all are well ahead of their planned achievement date.
- In the subcontracted provision, apprentices make very good progress. Consequently, the proportion of apprentices who achieve high grades on their technical certificates is high. The majority of apprentices achieve additional qualifications in health and safety.
- The few apprentices who need to improve their English and mathematics receive good support and, consequently, most are successful at achieving their qualification on the first attempt.
- Apprentices who need to improve their information technology skills are supported well and quickly develop these skills, becoming confident to use them in their work. The majority are successful at passing their functional skills tests on the first attempt.
- Apprentices develop a very wide range of skills and knowledge that are highly valued by their employers. As a result, the majority gain sustained employment at the end of their programme.
- Apprentices gain the qualifications that enable them to progress in their chosen careers with over half progressing to higher education.
- Standards of apprentices' work are very high and meet the needs of employers with many apprentices exceeding the requirements of the qualification. Apprentices are able to articulate their knowledge and skills well.
- Apprentices in the workplace demonstrate high levels of confidence and engineering skill in producing pipework using various materials and utilising different bending and jointing techniques to a high commercial standard.
- The provider's data analysis identifies no significant variations between different groups of apprentices.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	55
Principal/CEO	Michael Gornall
Website address	www.westinghousenuclear.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 and above	
	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
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	4	N/A	2	38	N/A	4		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
	N/A							
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age								
Number of traineeships								
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Funding received from								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Stephen Miller, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Hailstone	Her Majesty's Inspector

The above team was assisted by the apprentice training 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 students and employers; these views are reflected in the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk



Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

