

Inspection of SIGTA Ltd

Inspection dates: 4–6 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

SIGTA Ltd (SIGTA) is a not-for-profit group training association based in Portslade, East Sussex. SIGTA comprises a range of engineering companies in the south east, primarily within East and West Sussex. Apprentices study mainly engineering and manufacturing apprenticeships frameworks. At the time of inspection there were 59 apprentices studying on level 2 and level 3 frameworks, of which the vast majority were studying at level 3. A small number of apprentices study business, law and administration standards at level 2 and level 3.

SIGTA works with four subcontractors: Crawley College, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College, Havering College and East Sussex College. SIGTA also provides engineering apprenticeships as a subcontractor to Lookfantastic Training, alongside other privately funded training programmes, although these were not in scope for this inspection.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Most apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need to be effective and successful employees. Engineering apprentices develop advanced skills in technical drawing, software design and fabrication. As a result, they complete higher-level projects at work. For example, at one employer, engineering apprentices contribute to development of new fork lift truck components.

Apprentices find the frequent training sessions with training officers, where they consolidate their learning, enjoyable and useful. They value the expertise and support of training officers. Apprentices who need English or mathematics qualifications receive highly individualised and effective support to help them achieve. Most apprentices produce good-quality work and a substantial number produce very high-quality written assignments.

The vast majority of apprentices are highly motivated, ambitious and value the apprenticeship programme for their future careers. They take pride in their achievements and gain in confidence in their work place. Most apprentices behave professionally and responsibly, and many earn promotions because of their programmes.

Apprentices enjoy supportive review sessions with training officers. As such, attendance is high. They feel safe and know how to report concerns. Apprentices benefit from useful extra learning to help them understand about topics such as bullying and discrimination within the workplace.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and staff work closely with employers to ensure that apprentices become highly skilled engineers. They make sure that apprentices receive clear information about their apprenticeship programmes and recruit them carefully. Staff create programmes that are occupationally relevant to both apprentices and employers. Leaders and staff select qualifications that enable apprentices to gain the knowledge and skills they need for employment. In many instances, they support apprentices to take higher-level qualifications that go beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship. These apprentices develop more-advanced knowledge and skills, which has a very positive impact on their job role.

Leaders have established a non-executive board which performs its governance role effectively. Board members have a range of experience and skills which they use to support and challenge leaders appropriately. Leaders understand the strengths of provision well. They are aware of the weaknesses and have logical actions in place to deal with them. In a few areas improvements have been slow.

Board members, leaders, staff and employers share an ambitious culture for their apprentices. They have high aspirations that apprentices will become highly skilled workers that go on to gain promotion, which many do. Consequently, most produce practical work of a good standard or better.

Apprentices benefit from off-the-job training and produce good work as a result. However, leaders do not track this comprehensively to allow them to intervene rapidly and support those who fall behind in this area.

Experienced and expert training officers perform their roles effectively. SIGTA staff know their apprentices well and are able to skilfully link training to the apprentices' specific roles and responsibilities. Training officers check apprentices' knowledge carefully to make sure they understand important concepts before moving on to new topics. Consequently, apprentices develop strong knowledge of theoretical and practical engineering. They remember key concepts which help them to be more effective in the workplace. For example, apprentices can describe in detail improvements of their understanding of fault-finding and calibration.

Training officers do not give apprentices clear feedback on written work that helps them know and remember what they need to do to improve further. As a result, not enough apprentices understand how to develop their work, improve their written English skills or achieve higher merit or distinction grades.

Leaders do not work closely enough with subcontracted colleges to check the quality of education for apprentices. Training officers fail to communicate effectively with college staff to check formally the progress apprentices are making. As a result, a few apprentices are unaware of the progress they are making with their college work or how to improve further. College staff and training officers do not plan carefully to ensure that apprentices can apply the theory they learn at college to their employment responsibilities. Whilst leaders are putting measures in place to deal with this, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

SIGTA staff support apprentices who need help to make sure that they achieve as well as their peers. A very small minority of apprentices do not receive support quickly enough, and consequently make slower progress.

Apprentices learn about their rights and responsibilities as individuals and employees. They complete activities that encourage them to understand how to work with diverse groups of people. For example, apprentices in hospital settings develop the interpersonal skills they need to work with vulnerable people. Engineers develop negotiating skills to agree technical and practical solutions which fit their customers' requirements.

Apprentices receive detailed careers information and advice before and during their apprenticeships. However, staff do not consistently make sure that the very few who may decide to leave their employers after their training know about the opportunities available to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices are safe and know who to contact if they have any safeguarding concerns. Board members ensure that leaders fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff receive frequent and appropriate safeguarding training to know how to keep apprentices safe. Leaders follow safe recruitment processes when appointing new staff. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) meets with staff frequently to monitor apprentices who may be at risk. Where safeguarding incidents occur, the DSL works effectively with external agencies to intervene and put appropriate measures in place.

Although apprentices learn about the 'Prevent' duty, not all apprentices gain sufficient understanding of local threats.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must check carefully the quality of education with subcontractors to make sure that apprentices know and remember more. They must make sure that on- and off-the-job training is effectively linked.
- Leaders should ensure that trainers provide feedback to apprentices that helps them to improve their work and further develop their knowledge, skills and written English.
- Leaders should track in greater detail apprentices' off-the-job entitlement to enable them to intervene more rapidly to support those who fall behind.
- Leaders and training officers should make sure that apprentices have a clear knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe from local threats.
- Leaders and training officers should ensure that all apprentices understand the opportunities available to them after their apprenticeships.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54385
Address	26 Abinger Road Portslade BN41 1RZ
Contact number	01273 416989
Website	www.sigta.co.uk
Principal/CEO	John Norton
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Crawley College, as part of the Chichester Group; Greater Brighton Metropolitan College; Havering College of Further and Higher Education; and East Sussex College Hastings

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

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