

Inspection of Springfields Fuels Limited

Inspection dates:

12 to 15 July 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Apprenticeships	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Information about this 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 provider is based near Preston, where it has its own purpose-built training centre. SFL provides apprenticeship programmes in engineering. SFL subcontracts to Blackpool and The Fylde College to deliver the level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear engineer integrated degree apprenticeship. Apprentices are employed either by SFL or a small number of employers throughout the North West region.

Currently, there are 33 apprentices studying apprenticeship standards. There are 20 apprentices on the level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician standard and 13 on the level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear engineer (integrated degree) apprenticeship standard.

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

Most apprentices are making the progress expected of them. They are motivated to succeed and display positive attitudes to their learning. Their attendance at training sessions is high. Apprentices have a strong sense of community. They raise money for charity. Apprentices give careers presentations about the benefits of apprenticeships at local schools. They talk to school pupils about their own apprenticeship experiences in the engineering and nuclear industries. Apprentices help pupils to practise and improve their interview skills to help them to be prepared for interviews when they leave school.

Apprentices develop their confidence significantly. Level 3 maintenance and operations technician apprentices confidently and articulately discuss maintenance jobs with colleagues and managers. Level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear technician apprentices successfully suggest improvements to work safety processes. Employers value the contributions apprentices make to their businesses. As a result, apprentices become trusted members of the team.

Most apprentices achieve promotion or go on to further learning. However, not all apprentices are aware of the wider career opportunities available to them beyond their employers' businesses.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns they may have. They know how to work safely and stay safe at work. They are very aware of the critical dangers to themselves, work colleagues and the public.

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

Leaders and managers have a sound rationale to meet the skills requirements of their own business and the employers they serve. They provide apprentices with a career pathway in the engineering and nuclear industries. Leaders provide a curriculum that challenges most apprentices to meet their full potential.

The curriculum is ordered in a way that allows apprentices to incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician apprentices first learn how to carry out engineering activities efficiently and effectively. They then learn more complex tasks, such as identifying and rectifying faults in equipment at work. Level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear engineer apprentices learn about the basics of atomic and nuclear physics. They then learn about technologies such as robotics before completing a work-related project in their final year. As a result, most apprentices are on target to complete their apprenticeships on time.

Apprentices complete additional qualifications and training. Level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician apprentices complete BTEC National qualifications. Apprentices on the level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear engineer standard receive additional training in morality and ethical standards. This extends

apprentices' knowledge beyond the requirements of the standards and meets the exacting needs of employers' businesses.

Leaders have selected industry professionals who have the appropriate qualifications and experience to teach apprentices. Most tutors regularly update their occupational knowledge. For example, they complete training in areas such as electrical wiring regulations, security, and radiation awareness. As a result, apprentices receive up-to-date training. However, leaders and managers do not support tutors to improve their teaching skills further. This means that tutors do not know what they need to do to improve their teaching practice.

Most tutors use assessment effectively to identify gaps in learning and inform teaching. They use a range of assessments, which include discussions, questioning, sample papers and written assignments. Following these assessments, tutors provide frequent opportunities for apprentices to practise and hone their practical skills to the high standards expected in the industry. As a result, most apprentices retain information in their long-term memory and can adeptly apply these skills in different situations.

The quality of feedback that tutors provide to apprentices is mostly effective. Most apprentices receive helpful feedback that tells them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. This helps most apprentices to improve their work over time. However, in a small minority of instances, tutors' feedback is cursory and lacks clarity, which impedes these apprentices from making the progress of which they are capable.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout their apprenticeship. Level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician apprentices safely replace a power supply battery system. Level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear technician apprentices skilfully design process control systems. They safely change belts on large extractor fans. Most apprentices develop the skills they need to be successful at work.

Apprentices use their English and mathematical skills at work effectively. Level 6 nuclear scientist and nuclear engineering apprentices write well-structured and professional reports for senior managers at work. Level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician apprentices precisely measure dimensions and accurately calculate the sizes of holes and use gauges.

Employers provide regular opportunities for apprentices to apply their skills at work. Apprentices work in a wide range of departments within their employers' businesses. Apprentices gain useful insights and experiences in fuels, transport or supply chains. As a result, apprentices have a fuller appreciation of their employers' business.

Tutors prepare most apprentices well for their final assessments. Apprentices complete practice knowledge tests, interviews and projects. Consequently, most apprentices achieve distinctions. However, not all apprentices know the requirements of their final assessments or the grades they can achieve.

Leaders use a range of information to provide an appropriate oversight of apprentices' progress. A few apprentices have fallen behind in their learning. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to help apprentices to swiftly catch up. For example, tutors increase one-to-one coaching and arrange further on-the-job opportunities with employers to develop their skills.

Leaders have appropriate subcontracting arrangements in place. They have routine meetings with subcontractors to discuss the progress that apprentices make on the apprenticeship that the subcontractor provides. Leaders take swift action to resolve any concerns that arise, such as apprentices who make slow progress or do not attend their learning.

Apprenticeship board members receive a range of appropriate information from managers. This helps them to understand the strengths and areas they need to improve. Board members closely monitor the areas that need improving. They hold leaders to account to make the necessary changes to improve the quality of apprentices' training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers support a culture of safeguarding and protection in their organisation. They have a detailed understanding of the risks to apprentices' health and safety. Leaders take robust steps to ensure that apprentices are not exposed to excessive levels of radiation. This is because leaders carry out detailed risk assessments.

The designated safeguarding lead has the appropriate experience and training to carry out their role effectively. Leaders complete a range of appropriate checks when appointing new staff to make sure they are suitable to work with apprentices. All staff receive appropriate training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should provide effective training that helps tutors to develop their teaching skills further so that apprentices receive high-quality teaching that helps them all to achieve their full potential.
- Leaders should ensure that all tutors receive appropriate training and subsequent support to enable them to successfully provide consistent and effective feedback to all apprentices, so that they know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices understand the requirements of their final assessments and what grades they can achieve.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that their careers guidance helps apprentices to understand the full range of next steps and career options available to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54552
Address	Bld 611, Training Centre Springfield Works Salwick Preston PR4 OXJ
Contact number	01772764301
Website	www.westinghousenuclear.com
Head of site	Paul Lomas
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	28 to 30 June 2016
Main subcontractors	Blackpool and The Fylde College

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of enterprise excellence, 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 visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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