

# Inspection of Stockport Engineering Training Association Limited (The)

Inspection dates:

13 to 16 September 2022

## Overall effectiveness

## Inadequate

The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Apprenticeships

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

## Information about this provider

The Stockport Engineering Training Association (SETA) Limited is a provider based in Stockport. They specialise in engineering apprenticeships in the Greater Manchester and surrounding areas.

At the time of inspection, there were 171 apprentices studying level 2 and 3 apprenticeships. One hundred and sixty apprentices were on a range of apprenticeship standards, which include: 65 apprentices on the level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician; 27 on the level 3 engineering technician; 24 on the level 3 engineering fitter; 12 on the level 2 engineering operative; 10 on the level 3 engineering design and draughtsperson. The remaining apprentices were on the level 2 general welder, level 3 metal fabricator, level 3 project controls technician, level 3 plate welder and level 3 metrology technician. Eleven apprentices were on engineering frameworks.

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

Apprentices display positive attitudes to their learning. Most enjoy their courses. Apprentices value the support they receive from their employer engagement managers, trainers and workplace managers. A small number of apprentices feel that there are not enough staff to teach them, and that they have struggled to make progress on their apprenticeships because of this.

Apprentices routinely display respect towards each other, their colleagues and provider staff. They raise money for a range of charities and take part in several community projects, including helping the homeless and providing toys for children at Christmas.

Most apprentices develop new skills and confidence as a result of their apprenticeships. Level 2 engineering operatives confidently and accurately use computer-aided design software to design a site storage unit for their colleagues to build. Level 3 engineering technicians confidently supervise members of their team when completing repairs on machinery. Employers value the positive contributions that apprentices make to their businesses.

Apprentices do not receive effective and consistent independent careers advice and guidance throughout their programmes. This means that they do not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of the wider range of progression routes available to them outside of their employers' organisation.

Apprentices feel safe and routinely follow safe working practices. For example, level 3 maintenance operations and engineering technicians correctly make electrical equipment safe before carrying out maintenance tasks.

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

The quality of training that apprentices receive has significantly declined since the previous inspection. This is because leaders have not successfully managed the transition from delivering frameworks to teaching apprenticeship standards. They continue to focus on qualification and unit completion rather than the development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the apprenticeship standards require. As a result, a minority of apprentices have substantial gaps in their knowledge, have fallen behind in their learning, and have not completed their apprenticeships on time. A few apprentices should have completed their apprenticeship two years ago.

Governance is not effective. Senior leaders do not give the governors accurate information about the quality of their apprenticeship provision. Governors do not hold senior leaders to account to improve the training that apprentices receive. As a result, they have not acted to halt the decline in the quality of apprentices' training.

Leaders do not ensure that they meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. This is because in a few instances, they meet employers' needs at the expense of apprentices' needs. At the request of a few employers, leaders have prioritised the achievement of qualifications over the completion of apprentices' final assessments. Consequently, these apprentices have not completed their apprenticeships on time and are unable to move on to their next stage in their learning and careers.

Leaders do not accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. They do not know where the critical weaknesses lie. This is because leaders do not have effective quality assurance arrangements in place. For example, they do not accurately evaluate the quality of teaching that apprentices receive. As a result, leaders do not know what the weaknesses in the apprenticeship provision are, or what actions they should take to improve apprentices' learning experiences.

Leaders and trainers do not teach a well-constructed curriculum. They have not carefully considered the sequencing of teaching. Instead, there is a haphazard approach to teaching the curriculum. Trainers do not teach the qualification units in any particular order. On too many occasions, leaders and trainers reorder teaching to suit the availability of teaching staff or to maximise the number of apprentices in classes. For example, the teaching of particular aspects of theory for level 2 engineering operatives and level 3 engineering technicians will only be taught if there are enough apprentices to attend. Consequently, apprentices do not build their knowledge over time in a meaningful way, which results in apprentices' learning being delayed.

Leaders and trainers do not ensure that the curriculum fully meets the requirements of the apprenticeship standards. They recently identified that all level 3 engineering fitters, engineering technicians and maintenance operations and engineering technicians who were due to take their final assessments had significant gaps in their learning. These apprentices have been on programme for almost four years. Apprentices' progress and achievement have been severely impeded as a result of this lack of oversight. Furthermore, leaders do not have clear and incisive plans in place to help apprentices to catch up and be fully prepared for their final assessments.

Leaders have enrolled a few apprentices onto the wrong apprenticeship programme. Apprentices were enrolled onto the level 3 engineering technician apprenticeship instead of the level 3 maintenance operations and engineering technician apprenticeship. They remained on the wrong programme for four years. Leaders only recently identified this error when arranging apprentices' final assessments at the end of their programme. Apprentices are now enrolled on the correct programmes. However, a few employers were not made aware of this.

Trainers and employer engagement managers do not have high enough expectations for apprentices. They do not support apprentices to achieve high grades. Most trainers do not provide consistently helpful feedback to apprentices. As

a result, most apprentices do not know what they specifically need to do to improve their work.

Training advisers and employer engagement managers do not use information about what apprentices already know and can do at the start of the programme to plan an individualised and ambitious curriculum. In their off-the-job training, all apprentices complete the same subjects at the same time. As a result, apprentices who have already developed these knowledge and skills are not challenged to develop substantially new ones.

Employer engagement managers do not plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job training for apprentices effectively. Instead, it is left to the apprentice to arrange with their manager the opportunities needed to practise and hone their skills at work. It is because of this that most apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, level 3 maintenance operations and engineering technicians competently use pneumatic systems at work. Level 3 plate welders safely and accurately cut out and weld flanges. Most apprentices become trusted members of their team at work.

Leaders do not have a sufficient oversight of the progress that apprentices make. They do not know how many apprentices are behind in their learning or what they need to do to help them to catch up. This means that apprentices who have fallen behind do not get the required support they need to help them to catch up and achieve their apprenticeship on time.

Leaders ensure that staff have the appropriate industry expertise and teaching qualifications to teach apprentices. They regularly update their occupational knowledge and skills. For example, they complete training on abrasive wheels, electrical safety and pneumatics. However, leaders and managers do not provide training for trainers to improve their teaching. Trainers told inspectors that they do not know specifically what they need to do to further develop their teaching skills.

Senior leaders care about the work-life balance and well-being of their staff. They provide flexible working arrangements for staff with young children and other family commitments. Through an employee assistance programme, staff have access to a range of help in relation to finance, counselling, dental and chiropractic services. Staff are proud to work for SETA. However, a few staff feel that when they voice their concerns about the quality of the curriculum, leaders do not listen to them.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers support a culture of safeguarding and protection within their organisation. Apprentices work safely in this high-risk sector. They wear the correct safety equipment, such as welding helmets, gloves, boots and overalls. Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any safeguarding or safeguarding-related concerns.

Leaders complete a range of appropriate checks when appointing new staff to make sure they are suitable to work with learners and apprentices. All staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and their deputy, receive appropriate training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. All members of the safeguarding team are suitably qualified.

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

- Leaders should urgently provide clear and incisive action plans to help those apprentices who have not completed their apprenticeships on time to catch up and be fully prepared for their final assessments.
- Leaders should provide governors with accurate information so that governors can swiftly challenge and hold senior leaders to account to rapidly improve the quality of apprentices' training.
- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is planned and taught in a logical order that helps apprentices to incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time.
- Leaders should identify what apprentices already know and can do at the start of the programme and use this information to provide an individualised curriculum so that all apprentices develop substantial new knowledge and skills on their apprenticeship and are challenged to meet their full potential.
- Leaders should monitor apprentices' progress with rigour to identify apprentices who are not making their expected progress. Where apprentices fall behind, leaders should set clear and effective targets for apprentices to swiftly catch up so that they can complete their apprenticeship on time.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices receive systematically planned and coordinated, high-quality on- and off-the-job training so that apprentices can gain and master substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should ensure that trainers provide effective and consistent feedback so that apprentices know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Leaders should swiftly put in place effective quality assurance processes that help leaders to identify improvements in the quality of education. This includes providing suitable training for trainers to develop their teaching skills further.
- Leaders should provide high-quality, independent careers guidance to all apprentices, so they understand the range of career opportunities available to them.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Russell Prince
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 July 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations director, 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

Kim Bleasdale, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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