

Inspection of Thermal Insulation Contractors Association (TICA)

Inspection dates:

12 to 14 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Thermal Insulation Contractors Association (TICA) is an independent learning provider that was formed in 1957 and is based in Darlington. It began to deliver levy-funded apprenticeships in January 2018. At the time of the inspection, there were 153 apprentices on standards-based apprenticeship programmes. Of these, 43 were following the standard for industrial thermal insulation technician at level 3, and 110 were on the standard for commercial industrial thermal insulation operative at level 2. Over half of the apprentices are aged 19 and over.

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

Apprentices' training takes place in very well-resourced workshops with dedicated trainers, many of whom are time-served thermal insulator technicians. Trainers enjoy working with apprentices to help them develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours, which they apply in their workplace.

Apprentices work respectfully and considerately in a calm, caring and nurturing learning environment. Trainers have high expectations of apprentices, who quickly develop positive behaviours and relationships with their trainers and fellow apprentices. Trainers clearly explain to apprentices the code of conduct while working in the workshops. This code mirrors industry standards, which include zero tolerance for alcohol and drug consumption. Apprentices know and understand why they are subject to random breathalyser testing.

Apprentices attend very well and are punctual for their training sessions. They are enthusiastic about the development of new skills, knowledge and professional behaviours. Apprentices enjoy the training that they receive in the training centre and at work and make good progress over time.

Apprentices demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning, are highly dedicated and take responsibility for their development. They recognise and value the structure of their learning, which allows them to practise and hone their skills in a safe environment. Consequently, apprentices gain valuable technical knowledge alongside their practical skills.

Apprentices feel safe. They have a very sound understanding of health and safety, which is reinforced frequently by trainers and employers. Apprentices and their trainers are intolerant of any form of bullying or harassment. Apprentices know that TICA staff will support them effectively and resolve any issues if they raise a concern.

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

Leaders and managers have a very clear rationale for the apprenticeship programmes that they deliver. As a trade member organisation with over 60 years' experience representing the thermal insulation sector, they use their knowledge and expertise to shape the curriculum. Leaders have achieved this by working closely with employers to devise bespoke training that meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship programme. Apprentices attend training on a residential basis for two weeks every three months. This enables them to be taught substantial new knowledge and skills while working on projects with like-minded, committed apprentices. Employers benefit from and are right to value the training that their apprentices receive and recognise the positive contributions that apprentices make to their businesses.

Leaders and managers have designed a well-planned and sequenced curriculum to ensure that apprentices develop strong skills that they build upon over time. Level 2 thermal insulation apprentices initially work with mineral wool as an insulator, covering this with a rigid PVC film. They then move on to using phenolic foam pipe as an insulator and covering this with rubber insulation protection. Each activity builds on the skills developed in previous activities. In addition, apprentices benefit from training on relevant topics such as asbestos awareness and working at heights that prepare them for their roles and provide the opportunity to gain related qualifications.

Trainers collect information about apprentices' academic starting points, including their levels of literacy and numeracy, and use this information appropriately to plan most aspects of apprentices' learning programmes. However, on functional skills courses, trainers do not use the information well enough to plan learning that helps individual apprentices to focus on gaps in their knowledge.

Trainers have appropriate plans in place to prepare apprentices for the range of written and verbal tests that they encounter throughout their apprenticeship programme. For example, apprentices practise multi-choice tests and interview scenarios. However, these are not fully effective in preparing learners to achieve the highest grades possible at end-point assessment.

The standard of practical work that apprentices produce is very high. Apprentices can set out, fabricate and assemble complex sheet metal elbow bends that are applied to specialist insulation systems. The complexity and accuracy of their work improve over time. Employers value the way that apprentices' skills develop so that apprentices are quickly integrated into workplace teams to perform valuable insulation and finishing tasks.

Trainers support apprentices well so that apprentices quickly develop good practical mathematical skills when calculating and fabricating sheet metal materials, which they use to install insulation to complex pipework and ducting systems with minimal waste. However, apprentices' written work is often of lower quality, such as when constructing sentences and using punctuation. This often goes unchallenged or is not corrected.

Trainers provide effective feedback to apprentices on the quality of their work in practical sessions and throughout their apprenticeship programme. Apprentices have a clear understanding of the progress that they are making. Through the review process, employers are clear about the performance of their apprentices during training. When it is identified that an apprentice is struggling with their learning, trainers provide effective additional support. Consequently, a high proportion of apprentices make good progress and achieve their qualifications.

Leaders have created an inclusive environment in which all apprentices are able to develop and flourish. Managers are mindful of the personal circumstances of apprentices, many of whom travel from different parts of the country to study at

TICA. They have developed effective relationships with hoteliers to ensure that apprentices have appropriate places to stay and that their needs are met. As a result of the close relationships they develop at TICA, apprentices form friendship groups and stay in contact with each other outside learning sessions.

Most apprentices have a clear understanding of the career opportunities available to them with their current employer. They receive this information through induction, conversations with colleagues, the course handbook and case studies. However, leaders do not do enough to ensure that apprentices receive unbiased careers advice and guidance on the full range of career opportunities available to them.

Leaders have in place a board of trustees that understands the thermal industry sector well. They provide trustees with the necessary information to enable them to provide challenge to leaders' actions to ensure the effectiveness of the training that apprentices receive. Together, leaders, managers and trustees constantly seek new opportunities to promote the thermal industry to potential employees to address the current staff shortages.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have appointed an effectively trained designated safeguarding lead (DSL), who is known to apprentices. The DSL and provider staff respond to any incidents in a timely and appropriate manner. Managers encourage trainers to report low-level and well-being concerns about apprentices so that they can intervene quickly and offer support to each apprentice should they need it.

Trainers introduce apprentices to a range of topics during induction effectively, including the dangers of radicalisation, extremism, the operation of county lines and British values. As a result, apprentices speak confidently on these issues and increase their understanding of their responsibilities in the workplace and in wider society.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices are supported fully to aspire to achieve high grades at end-point assessment.
- Develop the skills of apprentices in writing accurately, including accurate spelling.
- Ensure that apprentices receive guidance early in their programme about the full range of career options available to them.
- Ensure that apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications receive tuition that meets their individual needs.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54958
Address	TICA House Allington Way Yarm Road Business Park Darlington DL1 4QB
Contact number	01325 734138
Website	https://tica-acad.co.uk/tica-home/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Marion Marsland
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the training manager, 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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