

Inspection of Maritime and Engineering College North West

Inspection dates:

24 to 27 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Education programmes for young people

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

The Maritime and Engineering College North West (MECNW), is based on the banks of the River Mersey in Birkenhead. MECNW specialises in engineering, construction and marine engineering training. The college provides traineeships and apprenticeships. MECNW subcontracts to one subcontractor, Derwent Training Association, who are based in Yorkshire. At the time of the inspection there were five apprentices remaining at the subcontractor.

At the time of the inspection there were 21 learners on traineeships and 364 apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships. Almost all apprentices study at level 3, with two thirds on engineering technician, engineering fitter and construction pipefitter apprenticeships. At level 2 and level 4 there were five apprentices.

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

Apprentices and learners are motivated and enthusiastic to learn. Attendance is high. Learners benefit from the industry expertise of their tutors, who support them to develop new knowledge and skills. Most apprentices and learners speak highly of their tutors. During classroom and workshop sessions, they demonstrate high levels of respect.

A few apprentices and learners benefit from participating in themed events throughout the year to promote health and well-being. For example, they listen to guest speakers, such as the police, about the dangers of taking drugs and drink driving. A local gym provides free day passes to promote health and fitness. However, not all apprentices and learners can participate due to their timetables and work commitments.

Most apprentices and learners gain new skills as a result of their training programme. Marine fabricator apprentices learn how to diagnose faults accurately. Plate welder apprentices learn different welding techniques. They develop these skills in workshops and progress to more complex tasks.

Learners on traineeships develop skills that prepare them well for employment. They learn how to carry out job searches and write formal letters of application. Learners develop their practical skills across several disciplines, such as electrical, pipefitting and welding. Most learners move into apprenticeships or employment.

Most apprentices do not receive effective ongoing careers advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about their next steps. They do not know the career paths open to them upon completion of their apprenticeship. A few apprentices benefit from informal discussions with training officers and tutors on working abroad, working offshore and moving on to study higher national certificate qualifications.

Apprentices and learners feel safe. They value the support given by tutors and training officers to help them overcome personal challenges. Most apprentices and learners remain on programmes and achieve their qualifications.

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

Leaders work with most employers to plan a curriculum that develops the skills that employers need. Leaders include additional content to apprenticeships to meet the needs of their employers. For example, tutors ensure that the metal fabricator apprenticeship includes how to produce pipework fabrications to support future skills needs. The marine fabricator apprenticeship pathway was selected to meet the skills gaps of local employers.

Leaders do not design an ambitious curriculum for most apprentices and learners. Tutors and training officers do not always use the information they gather at the

start of the programme about what apprentices and learners already know and can do to plan an ambitious curriculum. For example, learners on traineeships who have already achieved high grades in their GCSE English and mathematics do not develop these skills further in preparation for studying at level 3. Pipefitting apprentices do not benefit from sufficiently well planned on- and off-the-job training to swiftly develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace.

Leaders plan training at the college to enable apprentices and learners to incrementally build their technical knowledge and practical skills. Learners on traineeships develop their practical skills across engineering disciplines, such as electrical, pipefitting and welding. They learn how to carry out welding safely and improve the standard and accuracy of their work. Learners are prepared well for engineering apprenticeships. Engineering technician apprentices learn about engineering materials and the properties of materials. They move on to tensile testing on treated and untreated materials. Apprentices use this knowledge at work when carrying out testing to accurately interpret the data.

Training officers do not effectively coordinate on- and off-the-job training with employers. They do not ensure that all employers are involved in planning apprentices' training in the workplace. This results in apprentices being unable to refine the practical skills learned at work swiftly. Most training officers do not focus sufficiently on the development of apprentices' skills and behaviours in the reviews of apprentices' progress. Most employers do not know the progress that their apprentices are making, or how to support them effectively in the workplace. As a result, apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Most tutors use demonstrations and questioning to develop apprentices' knowledge and skills. Tutors teach pipefitting apprentices to accurately measure and cut wires using drawings. Apprentices receive individual support in workshops while they refine their skills. As a result, apprentices complete these tasks accurately. However, a few tutors do not use appropriate assessment strategies to check learners' understanding. They do not check that learners can recall knowledge or that it is embedded in their long-term memory.

Most apprentices improve their mathematical skills during their apprenticeship. They use their knowledge of angles to weld pipes correctly. However, in a few sessions this is not sufficiently contextualised to enable apprentices to understand how it applies in the workplace. For example, when learning calculus, fabricator apprentices do not apply this knowledge to cooling curves or changing currents.

Tutors provide useful feedback to apprentices. Apprentices know what to do to improve their written and practical skills. Metal fabricator apprentices learn how to improve surface finishes and the squareness of edges on the components within a fitting plate assembly and improve the quality of their work over time. However, learners on traineeships do not always receive sufficient developmental feedback to help them know how to improve.

Tutors do not prepare apprentices well enough for their final assessments. Although apprentices achieve merits and distinctions in their diploma or certificate qualifications, they do not know how to achieve merits or distinctions in their final assessments, where this is available. As a result, most apprentices do not achieve the grades of which they are capable.

Senior leaders do not have an effective oversight of how well apprentices and learners on traineeships develop their skills and behaviours during their apprenticeship and traineeship. They do not ensure that quality assurance arrangements sufficiently focus on evaluating the strengths and areas for improvement. Most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection remain. Leaders have not been swift enough to improve the quality of training that most apprentices receive.

Governance arrangements are not effective. Board members have not ensured that leaders have rectified the areas of weakness identified at the last inspection. Leaders do not provide them with sufficiently detailed reports to enable them to provide sufficient challenge on the quality of education that apprentices and learners receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead and deputy are appropriately trained to carry out their roles. They record and monitor safeguarding referrals and welfare concerns carefully. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies and put appropriate support plans in place swiftly.

Leaders provide apprentices with information during their induction about safeguarding, online safety and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, tutors and training officers do not revisit these topics throughout the apprenticeship. Too many apprentices are unable to recall this training or demonstrate an understanding of the local risks posed to them in the workplace and in their daily lives.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should implement an effective careers programme, so that apprentices and trainees can make informed choices about their next steps.
- Leaders should ensure that employers are routinely involved in the planning and coordination of on- and-off-the-job training to support apprentices to practise the skills they have developed in the workplace.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors and training officers use information on what apprentices and learners on traineeships already know and can do at the start of their programme, so that all apprentices and learners achieve their potential.

- Leaders should quickly establish robust quality assurance processes, so that they make swift progress to improve apprentices' and learners' learning experience.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices have a deep understanding of the risks associated with extremist views, so they are prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors prepare apprentices for their final assessments, so they can achieve the grades they are capable.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors on traineeships improve the use of assessments and feedback, so that learners know how to improve their work and achieve their potential.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors and training officers prepare apprentices for their final assessments, so they achieve the grades of which they are capable.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54873
Address	Monks Ferry CH41 5LH
Contact number	0151 666 1028
Website	www.theengineeringcollege.co.uk
CEO	Terry Weston
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2017
Main subcontractors	Derwent Training Association

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality and resource 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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