

Inspection of SW Durham Training Limited

Inspection dates: 6 to 9 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

SW Durham Training Limited (SWDT) is a registered charity and training provider. It provides study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 years and standards-based apprenticeships in engineering. It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bishop Auckland College. Its main centre is in Newton Aycliffe, and it operates across the north east of England. At the time of inspection, there were 27 learners on 16 to 19 study programmes in engineering, with 12 on programmes at level 2 and 15 at level 3. There were 118 apprentices enrolled on programmes at level 3 and six at level 4. Fifty-one apprentices were aged from 16 to 18 years and 73 were aged 19 years and above.

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

Apprentices and learners value their calm and professional learning environment and are highly motivated to develop their engineering skills. Tutors have high expectations of learners and apprentices, who in turn behave in a safe and orderly manner in workshops, replicating the behaviour that is expected in industry.

Learners and apprentices benefit from a well-resourced and spacious learning and training environment. They practise and apply their understanding in a realistic workplace setting. As a result, they are well prepared for employment in a range of engineering contexts.

Learners and apprentices develop their skills and grow in confidence. Learners on study programmes develop their mathematical skills beyond GCSE so that they can apply complex mathematical formulas in electrical principles. Apprentices on level 3 standards are encouraged to enter computer-aided design (CAD) competitions where they can showcase and develop further their individual talents.

Apprentices and learners benefit from an effective careers programme which encourages them to aspire and to understand what they need to do to progress in their chosen career. Careers progression coaches arrange appropriate and high-quality work placements for learners on study programmes so that they broaden their insights into engineering working environments. Careers staff support learners and apprentices to compose good quality curriculum vitae and applications for jobs or higher education.

Learners and apprentices feel safe in training and know who to contact at SWDT if they have any concerns. Apprentices understand how to keep safe in their workplaces. They follow strict operating procedures and complete risk assessments before taking on new tasks.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear strategic intent to address the skills development needs in the pharmaceutical, electrical and mechanical engineering sectors. Leaders collaborate well with employers to plan the training that their apprentices need. Employers appreciate how well apprentices develop the professional behaviours and attitudes that they need to work safely in often high-risk industries. Apprentices develop skills that allow them to progress to roles including automation engineer, assistant engineer, team manager and senior technician, and that help to develop their employers' businesses. Most employers value communication with leaders and trainers and have a good awareness of their apprentices' progress and whether they are on target to achieve on time. A few employers are not informed well enough about the progress that their apprentices are making, meaning they are unable to respond quickly to support them in the workplace.

Leaders and managers recruit well-qualified and experienced teaching and support staff, most of whom are engineering specialists. Teaching staff have a broad base of expertise, including working as metalsmiths in the armed forces and as engineers in nuclear power stations. Leaders ensure that teaching staff benefit from frequent professional updating. For example, staff spend time in industry to update their skills and knowledge in areas including CAD modelling and machining skills. Staff develop their skills in teaching and studying toward teaching qualifications if they do not have these.

Leaders are considerate of workload and well-being. SWDT has recently moved to a four-day working week, leaving Friday free for staff to engage in industry visits, training and updating of skills. Consequently, staff manage their workload well and have time to develop their skills and expertise.

Leaders and staff promote an inclusive learning environment for learners and apprentices. Staff receive training on ways to support apprentices and learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to learn or process information. As a result, staff help learners and apprentices who need additional support to make good progress effectively. However, in the very few cases where support is not in place at the start of the programme, this slows learners' progress.

Teaching staff thoroughly assess apprentices' and learners' existing knowledge and practical skills at the start of their programmes. For example, tutors require learners on the level 2 diploma in engineering skills to wire a 13-amp three-pin plug to assess their basic practical and dexterity skills. Staff assess apprentices' starting points in mathematics, English, information and communication technology, mechanical reasoning, principles of measurement and understanding electrical principles. Staff use this information well to plan programmes to meet learners' and apprentices' individual needs.

Staff effectively plan and sequence the engineering curriculum to enable learners and apprentices to understand key concepts before applying them in practical situations. For example, apprentices on the level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician programme learn about calculations in pneumatics and hydraulics so that they can calculate safe lifting loads when lifting items out of presses in an injection moulding factory.

Most teaching staff assess learners' and apprentices' work well. Staff provide constructive feedback to apprentices, even where they meet distinction criteria to help them continually improve the quality of their work and develop their skills in solving problems. Level 2 study programme learners receive constructive written feedback that helps them to improve their answers. However, too many level 3 study programme learners do not receive sufficient guidance on how to improve the quality of their work, meaning that they do not aspire to achieve higher grades.

Teaching staff ably support learners and apprentices to develop their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices and learners hone their writing skills when completing job cards and reports and work out complex calculations in cable wiring

using tables and data from wiring regulations. Most learners and apprentices who need to achieve their qualifications in English or mathematics do so.

Governance is effective. Governors know the provider well and understand its strengths and the areas it needs to develop further. Most governors have engineering backgrounds themselves, enabling them to use their expertise to support and strengthen the provider's leadership.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

SWDT has a strong culture of safeguarding. Thorough safeguarding, safe recruitment and 'Prevent' duty policies and procedures are in place. Staff receive comprehensive training on how to keep learners and apprentices safe, including from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders ensure that learners and apprentices have trusted named adults that they can contact should they have any concerns. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have received training that equips them for their roles.

Staff teach learners and apprentices during tutorial sessions about countering sexual harassment and abuse. Learners and apprentices have an appropriate understanding of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and what consent is in sexual relationships.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that leaders and managers swiftly put support in place for learners and apprentices with SEND so that these learners or apprentices can make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Ensure that all apprentices and learners know what they need to do to improve their work so that they can aspire to and achieve the highest grades of which they are capable.
- Ensure that employers receive the timely information that they need about their apprentices' progress so that they are promptly advised of any issues and can support their apprentices' development in the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54495
Address	Durham Way South Aycliffe Business Park Newton Aycliffe DL5 6AT
Contact number	01325 313194
Website	www.swdt.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jonathan Hall
Provider type	Independent training provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the general 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

Cath Jackson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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