

Inspection of Sunderland Engineering Training Association Limited

Inspection dates: 23 to 26 May 2023

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	Good

Information about this provider

Sunderland Engineering Training Association Limited is an independent learning provider in Washington, near Sunderland. It provides apprenticeship training in a wide range of engineering disciplines from level 2 to level 6. At the time of the inspection, there were 240 apprentices, mainly studying on level 3 apprenticeship standards. Around three quarters of apprentices were aged 16 to 18. Most apprentices work in the North East, with a few located elsewhere in England.

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

Apprentices enjoy studying in a training environment that replicates the engineering industry. They are allocated their own work areas and machinery, such as lathes, milling machines and electrical bays, in workshops that they keep clean, well maintained and free from swarf and other industrial debris for the duration of their training.

Staff set high expectations for apprentices, who behave well and are polite, tolerant and respectful of others. As well as tracking apprentices' progress on their practical work, staff evaluate apprentices' behaviour during workshop reviews. This includes analysis and discussions about apprentices' work ethic, attitude, communication, motivation and commitment.

Apprentices' attendance at off-the-job training sessions is consistently high. Staff and employers promote very well the need for apprentices to be punctual and to attend their planned training sessions. Employers are notified immediately if apprentices miss lessons, and appropriate action is taken to ensure that apprentices do not fall behind. These actions include apprentices attending additional training sessions.

Staff provide apprentices with training about how to manage their finances appropriately. They know that most apprentices are likely to earn a high salary for their young age. Staff teach apprentices about the dangers of gambling and other potential pitfalls associated with growing up in modern Britain so that they are better prepared for life both during and after study.

Apprentices feel safe. Staff provide them with comprehensive information about the trade risks associated with the engineering sector. Apprentices carry out useful risk assessments before undertaking practical tasks and are taught to operate machinery safely. Tutors teach apprentices how to recognise the signs of radicalisation and extremism. However, a few apprentices do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the potential risks in the industry. Those employed in chemical companies, for example, do not know that they could be a potential target for extremist groups.

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

Leaders work very closely with employers and stakeholders to provide high-quality, specialist engineering apprenticeships. They have long-established and positive working relationships with many large, well-known and prestigious engineering companies across the North East of England. Leaders have expertise in the training, development and design of apprenticeship standards. They were recently involved in the steering group to revise the machining apprenticeship standard at level 3.

Leaders conduct a range of useful quality assurance activities, including for subcontracted provision. These activities include visits to lessons and audits of

apprentices' files. Leaders use these activities to identify emerging areas for improvement that subsequently inform staff training. For example, they identified that employer involvement in apprentice progress reviews was an area for improvement. There is now much increased employer involvement in tripartite reviews.

Managers provide staff with helpful training to teach and assess effectively. Those new to teaching shadow more experienced teachers before taking their own class. They also carry out initial teacher training and gain assessor qualifications. In addition, staff undertake useful industry upskilling through visiting engineering companies and attending manufacturer training on new, specialist engineering equipment. Leaders recently purchased specialist, computer numerical controlled (CNC) machinery that matches what many employers use so that staff are able to develop the up-to-date skills that apprentices need to have.

Staff and employers ensure that apprentices receive appropriate careers advice and guidance about the potential opportunities available with their current employer. Apprentices have a sound understanding of the progression routes in their respective companies, such as into team leader roles, and how additional training will give them an advantage when applying for promotion or more senior positions.

Tutors plan and sequence teaching logically to develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours effectively over time. They accurately identify what skills apprentices need at work, based on the detailed discussions they have with employers about the range of activities that apprentices will undertake. For example, level 3 metal fabrication apprentices start by learning skills such as how to weld basic fillet and corner joints before moving on to more complex activities, such as balustrade work, that their employer specialises in. As a result, apprentices become more confident in working independently and can tackle more complex tasks at work.

Staff provide a wide range of additional training and qualifications that enhance apprentices' work-related skills and knowledge of the engineering sector. For example, level 3 maintenance and operations engineering apprentices attend additional welding training as their employers require these skills, even though welding is not contained in the apprenticeship standard. As a result, apprentices learn a wider variety of complex engineering skills that are valued by their employers.

Teachers develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills well. They accurately assess apprentices' written work for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. They also continuously reinforce apprentices' use of professional and technical language and terminology. The small number of apprentices who need to complete functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics do so early in their programme.

Apprentices complete practical work to a high standard. Tutors teach apprentices well, providing them with plenty of opportunities to practise and hone their engineering skills to the required industry standard. For example, first-year level 3

engineering technician apprentices develop good hand skills to construct G-clamps and test pieces, which involves doweling, threading and reaming using a range of metals such as mild steel, aluminium and brass.

Apprentices learn the engineering skills that they need to be productive at work. They are trained to use lathes and milling machines, including programmable CNCs, to produce engineering components to industrial tolerances during the first year of their training. Employers rightly value the block-release programme that all apprentices attend at the start of their apprenticeship and recognise that this prepares apprentices well for the next stage of their employment.

Apprentices make good progress and achieve well, including those with additional learning needs who are supported effectively by staff. In the previous academic year, around three quarters of apprentices successfully completed their apprenticeship. A high proportion pass at their first attempt, and almost all pass at subsequent resits. As a result, apprentices achieve their intended outcomes and progress well into sustained employment or further study.

Trustees have a good, clear oversight of the actions that leaders take to improve the quality of provision and understand clearly the challenges associated with running an engineering training centre. Most trustees are former engineering apprentices, including at the training provider, and have held similar advisory positions in the local area. They have a detailed knowledge of the engineering sector. They understand their role clearly and hold leaders to account for their actions.

Staff provide frequent and helpful reviews of apprentices' progress, in most cases in partnership with employers. They identify areas for development related to apprentices' progress to set short-, medium- and long-term targets. However, in a few instances, staff set targets such as 'complete assignment' and 'revise topic' rather than providing apprentices with the specific information that they need to deepen their knowledge and consolidate their skills further so that they can achieve their full potential.

Currently, leaders do not provide sufficient opportunities for apprentices to engage in extra-curricular activities to broaden their development beyond the taught curriculum, such as team-building, volunteering or participating in skills competitions. A few apprentices benefit from such activities planned by their employers, but these are company-wide opportunities rather than specifically for apprentices.

Most tutors provide apprentices with helpful feedback on their assessed written work throughout the apprenticeship. However, a few staff, such as those teaching the maintenance and operations apprenticeship at level 3, do not routinely provide sufficient feedback on apprentices' assignments or practical projects. In a small number of cases, apprentices do not receive feedback until the end of the academic year. As a result, a few apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work, including how to achieve higher grades in their final examinations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Those responsible for safeguarding complete suitable 'leading safeguarding' training. Staff complete safeguarding training when they start working at the organisation and are provided with annual refresher training to ensure that their knowledge is up to date.

Leaders have effective links with a range of safeguarding networks. They liaise with the regional 'Prevent' duty co-ordinator, the local authority and police service, as well as organisations in other regions where they have apprentices, so they know the potential risks to their apprentices, such as knife crime.

Leaders have appropriate staff in place to support all apprentices. They act swiftly to resolve any safeguarding concerns, such as in the very few instances of bullying, when these occur. In addition, there is a designated person for female apprentices to raise any potential concerns about their well-being, including in relation to sexual health and pregnancy.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices receive timely feedback on written assignments and practical projects to help them to achieve their full potential.
- Ensure that the targets set for apprentices during reviews are specific and provide them with clear instructions on how to improve further.
- Provide apprentices with sufficient opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities, particularly at the start of the apprenticeship.
- Make apprentices aware of the industry-related risks of extremism in their own work setting.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54668
Address	17 Sedling Road Wear Industrial Estate Washington Tyne and Wear NE38 9BZ
Contact number	0191 416 2860
Website	www.seta.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Robin Lockwood
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 March 2017
Main subcontractors	Oracle Training Solutions Limited Humberside Engineering Training Association University of Sheffield

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality and compliance 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

Ian Frear, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Seaman	His Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Scanlan	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Marshall-Slater	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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