

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Rolls-Royce North East Training Centre
Date of visit: 14 August 2008

Context

Rolls-Royce North East Training Centre (RRNETC) is a medium-sized training provider in the north-east offering apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in mechanical, fabrication, electrical and general engineering, and Train to Gain to a diverse employer client base. The company is a commercial business unit within Michell Bearings, a division within Rolls-Royce.

RRNETC offer a wide range of training in mechanical, electrical, maintenance, sheet-metal and welding skills leading to a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 and apprenticeship frameworks. RRNETC also provide training in the workplace for advanced apprentices at level 3.

RRNETC has a contract with the Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council to deliver Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes. At the previous inspection in July 2006 RRNETC engineering and leadership and management were satisfactory. Contributory grades for quality improvement and equality of opportunity were inadequate.

Achievement and standards

What actions have been taken to improve learner success rates, including timely success rates, and maintain the high standard of work produced?	Reasonable progress
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RRNETC has made reasonable progress to improve learner success rates, timely success rates and maintain the high standard of work identified at the previous inspection. RRNETC use highly selective recruitment procedures including a relevant aptitude test, the predicted GCSE grades and an individual interview to ensure that learners entering the programme are capable of achieving the full framework. A highly structured timetable is very effective at focusing on success in a very short timescale. All learners carry out the first diploma as a technical certificate; success rates for this are very high. A good ratio of one member of staff to 10 learners in the workshop enables speedy progress and easy access to support.

The retention rates on the programme are satisfactory at 80% but the progression rates from the apprenticeship to the advanced apprenticeship are high at 95%. Apprenticeship success rates have improved from 82% in 2006/07, to 89% in 2007/08. Rates for the advanced apprenticeship fell slightly from 80% to 70% but some learner completions still need to be recorded. This level of performance is still significantly above the national averages for engineering provision. Timely rates are at the national rate.

Quality of provision

What actions have been taken to improve the planning of training processes including the monitoring of skill development, workplace reviews and electronic portfolios?	Reasonable progress
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RRNETC has made reasonable progress to improve the planning of the training processes. Managers and staff have resolved all the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The preparation of learners for the programme is good. The most significant improvement has been the introduction of electronic portfolios. Learners use these to ensure that they log their knowledge and skills acquisition effectively, and trainers check this through additional questioning of learners. The electronic system also records the monitoring of learners progress, training plans, progress reviews and assessments. This results in much better co-ordination of the various processes.

Whilst all learners have the same end date on their individual learning plans, their actual completion date is individual and decided by the progress each learner is making. Most learners now complete before their planned end date. Staff co-ordination of the training in the workplace takes place earlier and is improved. Employers are now present throughout most reviews.

Training staff cover the employee rights and responsibilities in the workplace and at the training centre. Progress reviews have clearer targets linked to the qualification; monitoring of these targets is good. However, the individual learning plans do not contain any progress milestones against which they measure progress.

How have staff resolved the weaknesses in the assessment process?	Reasonable progress
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Staff have achieved reasonable progress in resolving the weaknesses in assessment practice on the advanced apprenticeship. RRNETC carry out all the assessments for advanced apprentices in the workplace. The introduction of the electronic portfolios has significantly helped to improve the assessment practice. It includes training plans, monitoring of progress and reliable evidence of attainment, and allows better planning of the assessment based on the learner's ability and readiness for the assessment.

A good range of diverse evidence including video clips is used. Assessors and internal verifiers check the validity of the evidence. Greater interaction with employers in the training plans has also led to improved assessment planning as learners are taking a greater responsibility for their training and have a better understanding of the progress they are making. Learners are starting to request assessments themselves, especially when activities that occur infrequently arise.

Assessments are thorough and well recorded and assessors now use questioning effectively to check knowledge and understanding during assessments. The internal verification arrangements are also thorough. Internal verifiers observe assessors and give feedback, sometimes with constructive criticism, but do not record this.

Leadership and management

What actions have been taken to ensure that the quality improvement systems cover all aspects of learning processes?	No discernable progress
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RRNETC has made no discernable progress to ensure that quality improvement systems cover all aspects of the learning processes. The quality assurance and improvement systems are still incomplete and focus mainly on assessment and verification. The provider continues to rely wholly on the ISO 9001 quality systems. These focus more heavily on audit and compliance of processes and systems. RRNETC has no formal system for the observation of key learning stages in the learner journey. RRNETC does not access observation reports from the subcontracted college. Staff understanding of how quality assurance procedures support and underpin quality improvement of the learning processes is incomplete.

How have managers improved staff training and development since the previous inspection?	Insufficient progress
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RRNETC has made insufficient progress in improving staff training and development. At the previous inspection, RRNETC did not carry out annual appraisals. An annual appraisal system was introduced 18 months ago and most staff have now been appraised twice. A summary of staff training needs is in place but this records training that leads to external accreditation. The attention given to ensuring that all staff are appropriately qualified with teaching or assessor qualifications is good but the approach to other training is less systematic. Individual training needs are identified but the process of meeting these needs is not co-ordinated or well recorded. No lesson observations occur. RRNETC does not identify development needs in teaching and learning. A comprehensive training matrix for senior posts identifies the skills needed to carry out the roles. However, the delivery and recording of required training is incomplete. No formal arrangements exist for sharing knowledge that staff may have gained when returning from training or development events.

What progress has been made in promoting equality and diversity?	Insufficient progress
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RRNETC has made insufficient progress in promoting equality and diversity. Staff have not updated the relevant policies to refer to recent legislation changes. Rolls-Royce's code of practice relating to diversity and equality of opportunity makes no reference to current legislation, including that relating to gender and disability. The training centre policy is also insufficiently detailed.

The most recent development plan does not include specific action to promote equality of opportunity, with target dates and impact measures. Little focused action has been taken to increase the participation of learners from under-represented groups, including females, people with disabilities those from minority ethnic backgrounds and deprived young people. RRNETC does not analyse data on successful and unsuccessful applicants for apprenticeships to explore whether its selection processes promote diversity.

Since the previous inspection, RRNETC has developed the learners' induction and this now includes specific content relating to equality and diversity. Staff also cover employment rights and responsibilities alongside the NVQ and key skills learning. The centre organised a one-day staff training session on equality and diversity following the previous inspection in 2006, but no further staff training has since been provided.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What actions have been taken to improve the self-assessment process?	Insufficient progress
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RRNETC has made insufficient progress in improving the self-assessment process. Two team leaders hold staff meetings to carry out the process, the findings from these are fed back to the two managers who then complete the final report. Staff are given the opportunity to check the final draft. The staff teams make use of a questionnaire style template to guide staff to review against the *Common Inspection Framework*.

No system has yet been developed to specifically gather an annual appraisal from learners, employers, or the subcontracted college to add to the appraisal process. Staff and managers over-rely on information gathered at the regular learner reviews and other communication processes with employers and the college. RRNETC identified the need to resolve these issues in their 2006 quality improvement strategy but no actions have yet taken place.

