

London Electronics College

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Engineering
- Information and communication technology (ICT)

Description of the provider

1. London Electronics College (LEC) was formed in 1892 in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Initially it provided training for post office managers in telegraphy, followed by wireless Morse code for marine radio officers. Subsequently, the provision has changed to reflect the demands of the electronics and telecommunications industries. Currently, learners study a range of programmes covering electronics and ICT that focuses on computers, networks and the internet. LEC contracts with London central LSC for the funding of this training. LEC also provides a range of national vocational qualifications (NVQ's) in information technology (IT), electronics engineering and engineering maintenance. Some learners also study for general certificates of secondary education (GCSE's) in mathematics, English, foreign languages and design technology, together with key skills. LEC employs 17 permanent staff. These include the principal, nine staff delivering technical programmes, five staff providing literacy, numeracy and language support, and two administrative staff.
2. At the time of inspection, LEC had registered 91 learners on engineering programmes and 57 on ICT courses. All learners are aged over 19. Over 80% are from a minority ethnic group and about half have a declared learning difficulty and/or disability. A quarter of learners have refugee or asylum-seeker status and over 90% are in receipt of state benefits. The local area has an unemployment rate of nearly 6%.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Engineering	Good: Grade 2
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of LEC is good. Achievement and standards are also good. Success rates are high and learners make good progress and develop good skills and knowledge. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and assessment practices are appropriate. Courses meet the needs and interests of learners well. Learners receive very good support. Leadership and management are good. Quality processes to improve the provision are effective. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. LEC offers particularly effective support to encourage learners with significant barriers to learning to complete their qualification and progress to higher qualifications and employment.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

4. LEC's capacity to improve is good. Recent changes have had a favourable impact on the provision. Success rates are high. LEC has developed effective quality assurance systems. The self-assessment process is sound. LEC makes appropriate use of staff and learner feedback to improve the provision. The self-assessment report clearly reflected the judgements in the inspection. The company has developed an appropriate action plan through the self-assessment process. Although some aspects of the quality improvement system are insufficiently developed, LEC has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. LEC has already started to tackle the areas for improvement found by inspectors.

Key strengths

- High and improving success rates
- Good development of learners' skills
- Good take-up of additional qualifications
- Particularly strong support for learners
- Good strategic management
- Good curriculum management
- Very effective arrangements for social inclusion

Key areas for improvement

- Poor attendance and punctuality
- Insufficient stimulating teaching
- Under developed target-setting for learners
- Insufficient industrial experience for some learners
- Some ineffective quality improvement processes

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

5. Achievement and standards are good, this is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Success rates are high and improving. Success rates on all programmes have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are generally well above national averages. On many programmes in engineering, success rates are very high. For example, success rates on the BTEC national and introductory certificates and NVQ Engineering Maintenance are 100%. Success rates on most ICT courses are high and show a three year improving trend.
6. Learners develop good skills. Most learners join the college from a wide variety of non-traditional backgrounds and for many, English is an additional language. These learners make good progress and develop good social and workplace skills. Learners work is at least of an appropriate standard and in some classes, high. For most learners this demonstrates significant progress from their starting point. Learners on engineering and ICT programmes greatly improve their employability skills through their growing familiarity with industry standard technology and their ability to plan and carry out complex tasks. Most progress into further or higher education and employment. Employers speak very positively about the skills and performance of learners recruited from the college.
7. Attendance and punctuality are poor. Learners' attendance during the week of the inspection was poor. Punctuality at the start of the day and after lunch is also poor. However, LEC makes strenuous efforts to improve learners' attendance and punctuality. Class start times allow learners ample travel time. LEC's 'breakfast club' provides free breakfasts for those who arrive in good time before their first class begins. Learners with good attendance benefit from travel expenses and luncheon vouchers. Tutors follow up absentee learners with a telephone call. The provider recognises this in its self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The overall quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. The provider recognises this in its self-assessment report. Take-up of additional qualifications is good. LEC offers good access to a wide range of qualifications. Most learners complete communication and application of number in key skills at level 1 and many progress to level 2. Learners benefit from the ability to study additional accredited qualifications at no cost to them. Many choose to do so by combining technician qualifications with an NVQ or by including a language or management award in their studies.

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9. Assessment is generally well managed and appropriate to course requirements and to the needs of learners. Assignments are clear and criteria for grading clearly explained. Assessors provide sufficient written and individual feedback and guidance. Internal verification is satisfactory. Staff promptly respond to action points raised in external verifier reports. The assessment of learners' work is accurate and often accompanied by constructive feedback. In ICT, however, LEC is over reliant on creating internal opportunities for NVQ learners at level 2 to generate workplace evidence.
 10. An insufficient level of teaching is stimulating. The previous inspection identified this as an area for improvement. LEC's self-assessment also acknowledges this as an issue. Too many sessions are teacher led. Learners are attentive during lessons but are insufficiently engaged with their learning. Tutors do not carry out sufficient checks of learners' understanding. Theory teaching sessions seldom include demonstrations, illustrations or memorable activities for key learning points. Better sessions are characterised by a balance of well planned activities in which the teacher skilfully uses a range of techniques and resources to engage all learners. In these sessions, the teacher uses directed questions and focused discussion to monitor understanding and learning.
 11. Target-setting for learners is under developed. Targets are ineffective in providing learners with pace and challenge. Learners meet regularly with their personal tutor to discuss their progress. Tutors carefully monitor and record each learner's progress. Academic boards, held every six weeks, carefully consider and identify those at risk of not completing and agree actions for tutors to complete. However, targets set are often too vague and not properly recorded. The current process is effective in helping learners who are making slow progress, but it is ineffective at driving the learning process and encouraging learners to build on their strengths and improve their weaknesses. Reviews do not routinely comment on progress against previous targets.
 12. The courses offered by LEC clearly meet local employment opportunities in engineering and IT. The curriculum provides well structured programmes with clearly identified progression routes. The provider offers a wide range of qualifications. The college works effectively with a range of employers in the local area to meet their specific needs. However, some learners have insufficient industrial experience during their programme. Tutors have appropriate targets for industry contacts, but they do not always meet these targets. Links with industry for ICT learners are insufficient. The college has identified the need to improve links with commercial organisations, particularly those able to offer work experience placements.
 13. Support for learners is particularly strong. Tutors and support staff work closely together to support learners well in the classroom and outside. Tutors work effectively to remove learners' barriers to learning. Learners highly value this support. Learners benefit from a comprehensive programme of support sessions. Learners are encouraged to complete their studies through a significant financial incentive on the achievement of their qualification. Many learners borrow laptops and textbooks on free loan. Learners benefit from the opportunity to sample a

range of courses by attending pre-course summer schools. Pastoral support is strong. Learners receive a wide range of financial, social and practical support.

14. Additional learning support is very effective in helping learners to complete their vocational courses successfully. Around half the learners need additional learning support. Support staff provide individual support to each learner during vocational learning sessions. Class sizes are small. Learning support is well integrated with vocational learning, and tailored according to learners'. All support tutors have a very good understanding of the demands of the vocational courses. Support tutors work well with their vocational teaching colleagues, liaising closely to ensure that they allocate their support where the need is greatest. LEC recognises this in its self-assessment report.
15. The information, advice and guidance provided to learners effectively prepares them for their studies. Learners are clear about the requirements of their programme and how to progress to further qualifications. A range of external agencies is available to give appropriate careers advice and information.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

16. Strategic management is good. Senior managers set clear strategic direction, which staff understood. The organisation has recently restructured with an appropriate redistribution of roles at senior level. The culture of LEC is now very student focused. Good external networking benefits the learners and the college through improved community links and access to external expertise. Organisational target-setting is now effective. LEC has rationalised its provision and removed unsuccessful courses from its curriculum.
17. Leadership and management of the curriculum areas are good. Managers effectively monitored course performance and learner success rates. They understand the importance of targets. Managers use data well to support progress and improvements. Formal and informal communications are good. The college has implemented several significant improvements in accommodation, equipment and teaching resources since the previous inspection. The teaching accommodation provides an appropriate learning environment, and resources are fit for purpose. However, some rooms are still too cramped to allow sufficient space for learners to sit comfortably while taking notes. Staff are generally very well qualified and all have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification. Staff appreciate the wide range of opportunities provided by LEC's professional development programme. Self-assessment is broadly accurate and identifies many of the issues found by inspectors. However, some staff are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the action plan.
18. Management of literacy, numeracy and language support is good. The support staff are all well qualified and have helped raise other tutors' awareness of teaching strategies to meet learners' needs. The support tutors continually seek

to improve the support provision. In the past year, they have greatly increased their stock of teaching and learning materials, introduced structured English courses with appropriate schemes of work, and introduced entry level numeracy qualifications. All new learners study key skills in communication, application of number and IT, starting at level 1. Support staff find that studying application of number helps many learners for whom English is an additional language, to understand numerical questions. Building key skills portfolios helps learners to develop their study and report writing skills. Arrangements for the internal verification of key skills are satisfactory. Currently, nearly all support is oriented to helping learners overcome specific areas inhibiting their progress. However, support staff do not sufficiently monitor learners' progress in developing their skills.

19. Overall quality management and the development of quality improvement procedures have developed well since the previous inspection. The provider has made significant improvements in resources, premises, use of data, course review, observation of teaching and learning and progress monitoring. However, some quality improvement processes are insufficiently effective. For example some gaps exist in the use and analysis of some statistical data, insufficient sharing of improvement plans and not enough gathering and analysis of information about leavers. LEC's grades for the observation of teaching sessions broadly matched those that inspectors gave. However, LEC has still not yet effectively tackled all of the areas for improvement identified.
20. Equality of opportunity is good. LEC has very effective arrangements for social inclusion. Recruitment of under-represented groups is good. Over 90% of learners are in receipt of state benefits, 80% belong to a minority ethnic group and 25% are refugees or asylum seekers. Around 15% of learners are female. LEC analyses equality and diversity statistics well and has a good awareness of the progress and achievement of all its learners. LEC has developed appropriate marketing material and promotes non-stereotypical images. LEC works closely with local community groups to promote its services to those who would not normally take up engineering or IT training opportunities. Support for vulnerable learners is strong. Staff work hard to successfully remove barriers to learning. Learners value the welcoming environment that the college provides. Access to the learning centre for those with restricted mobility is good, particularly since a chair lift was installed. Access to other training rooms is limited. However, the college can arrange suitable alternative facilities where appropriate.
21. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable adults are satisfactory. Staff have received appropriate training and an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. Staff are knowledgeable about the correct way to respond in the event of any issue arising.
22. Staff have a good knowledge of equality and diversity. They check the workplace appropriately for health and safety and equality policies and practice. Learners' understanding of procedures for dealing with complaints and procedures for anti-bullying and harassment are good. Staff deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and effectively. Recent arrangements to reinforce learners' understanding of

broader equality and diversity issues during the programme are effective. Learners receive appropriate information about equalities during induction, which staff ensure they understand. Learners have a good understanding of all aspects of equality of opportunity. Staff reinforce health and safety at induction and during the programme. Staff celebrate learners' success well within the college, though they recognise the need to promote learners' success through higher profile and external events.

What learners like:

- Good support in classes
- Small friendly environment
- Feeling safe and secure
- Specialist nature of the college
- Helpful and friendly staff
- Free breakfast
- Convenient location
- Loan of laptops
- Being given the chance to learn in a supportive environment where they feel respected
- 'Being able to work at your own pace'

What learners think could improve:

- Number of practical activities - they'd like more
- Access to the top floor - we'd like a lift
- The building - it needs improvements to give it a more modern look
- Speed of the computers in some of the rooms

Sector subject areas

Engineering

Good: Grade 2

Context

23. LEC offers NVQ engineering maintenance programmes for 27 learners and a range of BTEC certificate and diploma courses for a further 64. Most learners are from a minority ethnic group. Many are recent migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. English is an additional language for many learners. All learners also take the three main key skills at level 1. A few progress to level 2 or 3. A small number of learners are also studying GCSE or A/S level mathematics in addition to their main qualification. LEC delivers and assesses the NVQ at level 2 within the college and the level 3 programme at work placements with employers in London.

Strengths

- High and improving success rates
- Good take up of additional qualifications
- Highly effective support for learners
- Good curriculum management

Areas for improvement

- Poor attendance and punctuality
- Insufficient stimulating teaching
- Under developed target-setting for learners

Achievement and standards

24. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and improving. Success rates on all programmes have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are currently well above national averages. For example, success rates on the BTEC national and introductory certificates and NVQ Engineering maintenance are 100%. Learners work competently and diligently in classes and produce work of a satisfactory standard. Learners come from a diverse range of non-traditional backgrounds and for many, English is an additional language. These learners generally make very good progress and develop good social and workplace skills. They progress into further and/or higher education or employment. Employers speak very positively about the skills and performance of learners recruited from the college.

25. Attendance and punctuality are poor. LEC recognises this in its self-assessment. Attendance was poor during the week of inspection. Punctuality is poor at the start of the day and after lunch. In one session observed by inspectors, most of the learners were late returning from lunch, even though they were on the premises. They entered the class with little challenge from the teacher and without apology.

Quality of provision

26. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. However, too much teaching is insufficiently stimulating. Too many lessons fail to inspire learners. Many sessions are teacher-led. Learners are attentive in lessons but insufficiently engaged with their learning. Classrooms are often cramped. Many theory lessons fail to include demonstrations, illustrations or provide memorable activities for key learning points. Better sessions are characterised by a balance of well planned activities in which the teacher skilfully uses a range of techniques and resources to engage all learners. In these sessions, the teacher uses directed questions and focused discussion to monitor understanding and learning.
27. Target-setting for learners is under developed. Targets fail to add pace and challenge for learners. Learners meet regularly with their personal tutor and discuss their progress. However, targets are vague and imprecise. Learners do not receive copies of the paperwork that records their targets. The current process, together with the regular academic board meetings, is effective in helping learners who are falling behind, but it is ineffective at driving the learning process and encouraging learners to build on their strengths and improve their weaknesses.
28. The college's assessment strategy is well managed and meets course requirements as well as learners' needs. Assignments are clear and criteria for grading clearly explained. Assessors provide sufficient written and verbal feedback to help learners improve their work. Internal verification is satisfactory and broadly in line with awarding body requirements. Staff promptly carry out action points recorded in external verifier reports. They assess individual learning needs at the start of the programmes and acknowledge these needs in some learning plans. Key skills and support tutors work with subject lecturers to help learners with literacy and numeracy during classes and in discrete sessions. Learners speak very highly of the support provided and for many, it is a key driver for them to complete and achieve the qualification. Learners find staff very approachable and supportive and willing to spend additional time to explain key learning points.
29. The college's curriculum is clearly aimed at meeting skills shortages in engineering. The college works effectively with a range of employers in the local area to meet their specific needs. Learners apply to the college wishing to study engineering or ICT specialisms. They are attracted by a curriculum that provides well structured programmes with clearly identified progression routes from level 1 to level 4.
30. Learner take-up of additional qualifications is good. Most learners complete key skills at level 1 and many progress to level 2. Learners often study accredited qualifications such as NVQs or a management qualification as well as their main technician course. A small number also take GCSE or AS level mathematics.
31. Support for learners is highly effective. Staff go the extra mile to help learners. They hold additional individual support sessions during timetabled sessions as

well as at other times. Learners can contact staff out of hours. Tutors arrange meetings outside the college in coffee bars or locations convenient for learners. LEC provides free coffee, cereal bars and fruit for learners who arrive before the start of sessions. For those who are making good progress, luncheon vouchers are provided as an incentive.

32. The quality of the information, advice and guidance provided at the start of the courses is effective in preparing the learners for their studies. Learners are clear about the requirements of their programme and about the progression matrix of engineering programmes. A range of external agencies provides appropriate career advice and information for those who complete their programme of study.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are good. Internal communications are good, as is LEC's professional development programme for staff. The range of courses offered has been adjusted to remove those which performed poorly. Courses offered make the best use of the knowledge and experiences of staff and allow progression from level 1 to level 4. The number of staff is sufficient and all are suitably qualified. However, two tutors are still working towards completing a teaching qualification. The teaching accommodation provides an appropriate learning environment. Since the previous inspection, LEC has improved the range and quality of resources to support learning. However, some rooms are still cramped and do not allow sufficient space for learners to sit comfortably while taking notes.
34. Self-assessment and the subsequent action plan are broadly accurate and identify many of the issues highlighted by inspectors. Support arrangements for learners are well managed. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is good.

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

35. At the time of inspection, 57 learners were registered on ICT courses. Nearly 25% of learners are female, over 90% are from minority ethnic groups and about half have a declared learning difficulty or disability. About 25% of learners have refugee or asylum seeker status.
36. A team of five tutors, co-ordinated by the head of ICT, delivers the ICT provision. All courses are accredited. The provision ranges from level 1 to foundation degree level. Attendance patterns are designed to encourage unemployed learners while allowing them to continue to seek work. Technician courses for IT practitioners comprise introductory certificates, first diplomas and national certificates providing progression opportunities to level 3 and above. Attendance patterns vary from courses that require learners to attend for one day per week to those that require 15 hours' attendance each week for six months. Key skills qualifications in ICT are available to all ICT learners, as are additional support sessions at lunchtimes and evenings.

Strengths

- High success rates on most courses
- Good development of learners' skills
- Good access to and take-up of additional qualifications
- Particularly strong support for learners
- Good curriculum management

Areas for improvement

- Poor attendance and punctuality
- Insufficient stimulating teaching
- Insufficient industrial experience for learners

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on most courses are high. Success rates have improved in each of the last three years, rising to 75% in 2007/08. The overall success rate for NVQ courses is also good at 79%. Success rates for ICT key skills are good, with those for level 1 increasing to 92% in 2007/08. Level 2 success rates declined to 79% in 2007/08 but remain high. Around half of those learners whose destination is known progress to a higher level qualification and the remainder usually enter employment.
38. Development of learners' skills is good. Learners make significant gains in personal, social and work skills. Improved employability skills follow from their growing familiarity with industry standard software and their ability to plan and

carry out complex tasks. Standards in some classes are high. For example, learners demonstrate good ability by designing attractive and user-friendly websites. Overall, Learners' work is of a satisfactory standard. However, some learners' portfolios contain evidence of their competence, which is not sufficiently well presented.

39. As noted in the previous inspection report, attendance and punctuality are poor. Only about half of the expected number of learners attended sessions during the week of inspection. Low numbers attended workshop support sessions for key skills and NVOs. However, tutors cope particularly well with poor attendance and punctuality. LEC makes strenuous efforts to encourage learners to attend. For example, class start times allow learners ample travel time. The breakfast club provides free breakfasts before morning classes. Learners with good attendance receive travel expenses and luncheon vouchers. Tutors telephone absentees to encourage them to resume their attendance.

Quality of provision

40. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. However, insufficient teaching is stimulating. This area for improvement was also found during the previous inspection. Some theory sessions are too tutor centred and provide little challenge for learners. Questions are too often directed at the whole class, allowing some learners to remain passive. Teachers do not make sufficient checks on learners' understanding. The best sessions are well planned, delivered at a challenging pace and make sensible use of the new interactive boards. In practical work and support workshops, tutors respond effectively to learners' needs, but sometimes give information too freely, rather than challenging learners to think for themselves.
41. The assessment of learners' work is accurate and often accompanied by good constructive feedback. However, learners are offered insufficient industrial experience. LEC has insufficient links with industry and commercial organisations that are able to offer work-experience placements to ICT learners. LEC is over-reliant on creating internal opportunities for NVO learners at level 2 to generate workplace evidence. The college has identified the need to improve links with employers and to significantly expand links with companies that might provide projects and placements for learners.
42. Tutors carefully monitor and record each learner's progress. Academic boards are held every six weeks to carefully consider each learner's progress and identify those at risk of not completing. Actions are agreed for tutors to carry out. Learners receive a progress review with their personal tutor once each term. However, the resulting targets are not sufficiently helpful in encouraging learners to progress. Reviews do not routinely comment on progress against previous targets.
43. The ICT provision is well focused on the needs of learners and the community. It provides good progression opportunities to higher education and employment. Learners have good access to additional qualifications. Take-up is also good. Learners benefit from the ability to study an additional qualification at no extra

cost to them. Many choose to do so by combining technical qualifications with NVQ's or including a language or management award in their studies. Employers regard highly the learners that they recruit from LEC

44. Individual support for learners is particularly strong. Tutors and support staff work closely together to support learners. Tutors have good working relationships with learners and have a good knowledge of their capabilities. Learners have good access to staff and value their support. Tutors work effectively to remove barriers to learning, for example, in their patient explanation of technical terms for learners for whom English is an additional language. Small group sizes enable tutors to bring late arrivals quickly up to speed. Absent learners benefit from good emailed handouts. Textbooks are well chosen. A comprehensive programme of support sessions helps to ensure that all learners improve their chance of success. Bonuses encourage learners to complete their studies. Learners can borrow laptops and textbooks at no cost to themselves. Learners receive sound advice and guidance about LEC's courses. They benefit from the opportunity to attend summer schools to experience new courses before applying to study them.

Leadership and management

45. Leadership and management are good. Courses and learner performance are monitored effectively. Targets are well understood. Data is used well to support progress and improvements, but not always in a consistent way. Formal and informal communications are good. The college's grades for the observation of teaching sessions are generally accurate. Staff are well qualified. All staff have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. The college has implemented several significant improvements in accommodation, equipment and teaching resources since the previous inspection. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements.
46. Course reviews provide a sound basis for self-assessment, but do not always include an analysis of learners' views. The self-assessment report provides a largely accurate picture of the ICT provision and reflects the main judgements made by inspectors.
47. Staff work hard to successfully remove barriers to learning. Learners value the college's welcoming environment. Access to the learning centre for those with restricted mobility is good. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is good.