

# The Employee Development Forum Ltd

Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 54832

Name of lead inspector: Jo Parkman HMI

Last day of inspection: 13 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit 11A, Lyons Farm Estate  
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## Information about the provider

The Employee Development Forum Limited (The EDF) was founded in 1998 to provide a range of training and development programmes in Sussex. The company has its headquarters in Horsham and is owned and managed by its managing director. There are nine other team members, of whom seven are associates of the company.

All learners are working towards apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing technologies. The off-the-job training is subcontracted to colleges of further education. Apprenticeship training is funded through a contract with Sussex Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The EDF now offers apprenticeships across much of England. Up until July 2008 The EDF offered Train to Gain programmes as part of the Sussex Consortium supporting engineering and manufacturing. The EDF works in partnership with the Camelia Botnar Foundation to provide training opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The company has no training facilities for apprenticeships, but does have a forklift training facility for commercial training. The EDF also offers a range of short courses and seminars on a commercial basis. The majority of its annual income is derived from government funded training.

The EDF is key partner in two engineering Centres of Vocational Excellence; Heritage and Restoration, and Instrumentation, Control and Automation, these will cease in December 2009.

The following organisations provide training on behalf of The EDF:

- Barking College
- Birmingham Electrical Training College
- Carshalton College
- Central Sussex College
- City College Brighton
- City of Bath College
- City of Bristol College
- Croydon College
- East Berkshire College
- Hastings College
- Matthew Bolton College
- MidKent College
- New College, Nottingham
- Newcastle College

- North West Kent College
- Northbrook College
- Stourbridge College
- Tyne Metropolitan College
- Wakefield College

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	90 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	3

## Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of The EDF's provision is satisfactory. Leaders and managers have clear and suitable goals for the development of the business. The EDF makes good use of its partnerships to develop programmes that meet the skills needs of the engineering industry. Overall, The EDF demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve the quality of its training programmes. The achievements of learners are satisfactory and they make reasonable progress towards achieving their qualifications. The EDF has established strong relationships with employers who can offer a good standard of training and give learners the best opportunities. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The EDF provides satisfactory care and support for its learners and has a suitable regard for their welfare and safety. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory and learners say they feel safe and protected from abuse. The EDF satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity.

## Main findings

- Overall and timely success rates are satisfactory. Success rates have improved steadily over the last three years. In 2008/9 both overall and timely success

rates are close to the national average at 67% and 37% respectively. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are better than those for adult learners.

- Learners develop good skills in the workplace. Employers are supportive and flexible in providing jobs which allow the learners to gain skills relevant to their specific national vocational qualification (NVQ). However, key skills are not always developed in an engineering context, and in these cases they are not linked well to the rest of the programme.
- Reviews of learners' progress on their NVQ are good, frequent and thorough. The review documentation is of a high standard and covers all aspects of the apprenticeship. Assessors clearly record the specific tasks to be completed by the next review, usually four weeks later. However, reviews of learners' progression on the technical certificate are less well developed, and are not sufficiently thorough or detailed.
- Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory, and include sufficient workplace observations for most learners. Aspects of internal verification are weak. Planning is poor and there is no sampling plan. Only verbal feedback is given to assessors. Most portfolios are only verified once completed, rather than during the programme to allow learners and assessors the chance to make corrections more easily.
- Planning of the programme for a minority of learners is poor. In a minority of cases The EDF does not recognise early enough that a planned programme does not match the learner's job role. Where a learner's job role does not allow a good fit to the requirements of the NVQ, assessors do not plan early enough how this will be resolved.
- The managing director sets very clear strategic priorities for the business which include a clear set of goals. Business planning is well developed and The EDF makes good use of its partnerships to develop programmes which meet the skills needs of the engineering industry.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory. Staff have a good understanding of the principles of keeping learners safe. Learners feel safe and have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The EDF collects data on gender and ethnicity at recruitment and there are no differences in the achievements of different groups of learners. However, The EDF does not make enough use of this data to ensure that all learners have an equal opportunity to gain apprenticeship places.
- Partnerships with employers are particularly strong and The EDF has good arrangements to seek, and act upon, their views and requests. However, the strategy to involve learners in improving the provision is less well developed. In a minority of cases The EDF's response to learners' feedback is inadequate.

- The self-assessment report is an insufficiently thorough or accurate reflection of the quality of the provision. The EDF does not produce an overall quality improvement plan and the links between self-assessment and actions planned during management review meetings are weak. Both self-assessment and quality improvement place too little focus on success, particularly timely success.
- The EDF makes insufficient use of data to monitor performance and evaluate the success of actions for improvement. Although there is good information on the individual progress of learners, these data are not collated. Managers do not know whether those groups of learners who have started more recently are making better progress than previous groups.

### What does The EDF need to do to improve further?

- Develop a rigorous system of internal verification that ensures that assessors know when internal verification will take place and what assessments will be verified. Ensure that internal verification happens during the programme, rather than at the end, and that assessors receive written feedback to help them improve their practice.
- Develop reporting arrangements with the colleges so that information on learners' progress with the technical certificate and at college generally, can be used effectively during progress reviews. Ensure that assessors and employers know what topics are being covered by the technical certificate so that learners' work at college can be used as evidence for the NVQ and key skills.
- Ensure that key skills are taught in an engineering context by basing key skills tasks on topics from work or units of the technical certificate. Make better use of learners' NVQ and technical certificate work as evidence of their key skills competence.
- Develop arrangements for matching learners' programmes to their job roles so that a clear plan is in place to ensure that all elements of the qualification can be achieved.
- Develop the arrangements for self-assessment so that the report is a more rigorous and accurate appraisal of the quality of the provision. Make the report more judgemental and evaluative. Ensure that the views of learners and employers contribute to the report.
- Develop formal structured arrangements to ensure a coherent approach to action planning for quality improvement. Ensure that progress with the action plan is monitored regularly.

- Make better use of data, including data on equality and diversity, so that performance monitoring is more effective and allows the evaluation of actions for improvement.
- Develop the arrangements for responding to learners' feedback to ensure that action is always taken and evaluated.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the very structured and clear programme
- the helpful and approachable staff
- achieving recognised qualifications
- the range of learning, and the mix of work and college.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- the response from The EDF following feedback given through questionnaires
- the clarity of information about what needs to be done, including explanations of technical terms.

### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

#### What employers like:

- the way The EDF resolves problems quickly
- having someone to contact who is responsive
- having a selection of learners to choose from when recruiting new apprentices
- working as a team to help the apprentice to meet their targets
- giving learners a qualification.

#### What employers would like to see improved:

- their knowledge of the content of the technical certificate
- the thoroughness of the briefing on the NVQ for new work-based assessors
- the large amount of work learners have to produce for their technical certificate and NVQ.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

The EDF has satisfactory capacity to improve. Leaders and staff have clear goals and realistic strategic objectives. Success rates have risen steadily over the last three years and are now around the national average. Managers and staff work hard to identify any areas for improvement and are committed to making changes where necessary to bring about improvements. The EDF uses team meetings effectively to review aspects of the training and initiate changes. However, the self-assessment report is not an accurate appraisal of the quality of The EDF's provision. Self-assessment does not currently lead to a coherent plan for quality improvement. The EDF listens and responds to its employers carefully and effectively, although arrangements to respond to learners' feedback are less well developed. Staff are well qualified and experienced in a breadth of different aspects of the engineering industry.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

Overall and timely success rates are satisfactory. Success rates have improved steadily over the last three years. In 2008/09 both overall and timely success rates are close to the national average at 67% and 37% respectively. Success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 are better than those for adult learners.

Learners' work is of a satisfactory standard. Learners on the NVQ in performing manufacturing operations at Level 2 produce outstanding pieces of furniture for sale through the Camelia Botnar Foundation's retail outlet. Most learners' portfolios provide a good range of evidence for the NVQ and are well organised. Assessors use witness testimonies from employers and photographs extensively to prove and demonstrate learners' competence.

Learners develop good skills in the workplace. Employers are adaptable and flexible in providing jobs that allow the learners to gain skills relevant to their NVQ. They also move learners into various departments to ensure there is an adequate coverage of the requirements of the NVQ.

The EDF ensures that learners receive adequate initial and ongoing training on health and safety. Assessors check learners' knowledge and understanding of safe practice during reviews. However, there is no system to ensure that health and safety audits are updated regularly. Learners feel safe and well protected from abuse.

### The quality of provision

Grade 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Reviews of learners' progress on their NVQ are good, frequent and thorough. The review documentation is of a high standard and covers all aspects of the apprenticeship. Assessors clearly record the specific tasks to be completed by the next review, usually four weeks later. However,



reviews of learners' progress on the technical certificate are less well developed, and are not sufficiently thorough or detailed. In some cases, colleges send reports direct to the employers and The EDF does not receive any information about the learners' performance at college. Some employers visit colleges to gain information about their learners. The EDF keeps clear records showing exactly how far through the programmes learners are and indicating whether learners are on target to complete in a timely fashion. However, these records are not used by assessors during reviews.

Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory and include sufficient workplace observations for most learners. However, aspects of internal verification are weak. The planning of internal verification is poor and assessors receive only informal, verbal, feedback. Most portfolios are only verified once they are completed, which does not give assessors the chance to correct any omissions in a timely way.

The EDF develops learners' key skills adequately but they are not always taught in an engineering context and in these cases they are not well linked to the rest of the programme. Assessors do not know enough detail about the content of the technical certificate and cannot link it effectively to other aspects of the apprenticeship. Links between key skills, the NVQ and the technical certificate are weak.

The EDF works well with employers to design programmes that meet the industry's skills needs very well. However, for a minority of learners the planning of their programme is poor. Assessors do not always recognise early enough that a planned programme does not match the learners' job roles. Where a learner's job role does not allow a good fit to the requirements of the NVQ, assessors do not plan early enough how this will be resolved. In a minority of cases this has resulted in learners having to swap components of their apprenticeship part way through their training.

The EDF uses its partnerships with employers and external organisations particularly well to promote engineering programmes and to recruit learners. The managing director is a member of many external networks and organisations and uses these links well to gather information about the engineering industry's needs. The EDF works particularly effectively with the Camelia Botnar Foundation to provide a very successful apprenticeship scheme for socially and educationally disadvantaged learners.

Initial guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. The EDF gives prospective learners a good range of information when they apply for an apprenticeship. Employers also receive sufficient details on applicants to assist in their selection procedure. Learners are given a well-presented and comprehensive induction file which covers all aspects of their programme. Assessors provide good individual support in the workplace, mainly through the regular reviews. However, The EDF has not established strong enough links with external agencies which can provide specialist learning support for learners with specific additional learning needs such as dyslexia.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 3

The managing director sets very clear strategic priorities for the business which include a clear set of goals. Business planning is well developed and The EDF makes good use of its partnerships to develop programmes that meet the skills needs of the engineering industry.

Arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory. The EDF fulfil their legal obligations and have suitable policies and procedures in place. All staff have received suitable training and more is planned for the near future. The EDF's staff have a good understanding of the principles of safeguarding and of their responsibilities. Safeguarding is discussed at all team meetings and appropriately prioritised. Learners feel safe and have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work.

The EDF's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners' and employers' handbooks include relevant information and learners' knowledge and understanding is developed during reviews. The EDF's service level agreement with employers includes specific requirements barring the display of inappropriate posters or calendars in engineering workshops. The EDF collects data on gender and ethnicity at recruitment and there are no differences in the achievements of different groups of learners. The proportion of female learners is increasing each year and The EDF has been involved in several projects to promote careers in engineering to women. Apprentices training at the Camelia Botnar Foundation have higher success rates than The EDF's overall rate. However, The EDF does not make enough use of this data to ensure that all learners have an equal opportunity to gain apprenticeship places.

Partnerships with employers are particularly strong and The EDF has good arrangements to seek, and act upon, their views and requests. The EDF has achieved part A of the Training Quality Standard and demonstrates a strong commitment to meeting employers' needs. However, the strategy to involve learners in improving the provision is less well developed. In a minority of cases the response to learners' feedback is inadequate.

The self-assessment report is an insufficiently thorough or accurate reflection of the quality of the provision. Strengths are overstated and most of the areas for improvement are not identified. The EDF does not produce an overall quality improvement plan and the links between self-assessment and actions planned during management review meetings are weak. Both self-assessment and quality improvement place too little focus on success, particularly timely success.

The EDF makes insufficient use of data to monitor performance and evaluate the success of actions for improvement. Although there is good information on the individual progress of learners, these data are not collated. Managers do not know whether those groups of learners who have started more recently are making better progress than previous groups. Less than 40% of learners achieve their qualification on time but managers have not identified if this is due to the planning of the programme and cannot identify appropriate actions to improve it.

## Information about the inspection

1. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by The EDF's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of The EDF's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local LSC and other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
2. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails. They looked at questionnaires that learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## The Employee Development Forum

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4-point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	79	79
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	NA	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*	NA	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	NA	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	NA	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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