

Milltech Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 53388

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Last day of inspection: 14 January 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Milltech Limited (Milltech) is based in Sunderland and provides apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships for young people in motor vehicle and business, administration and law. Milltech also has a small Train to Gain contract in these areas. The company subcontracts with Springboard, a private training provider, for the training of its Entry to Employment (E2E) learners.

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in September 2006, at which all aspects of the provision were judged satisfactory. At a subsequent monitoring visit, in July 2008, inspectors judged that Milltech had made reasonable progress in three of the six identified themes but insufficient progress in the remainder. Since this visit, Milltech has restructured the provision and put a new management team in place.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the provider made to its capacity to make and sustain improvements?	Reasonable progress
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Milltech has made reasonable progress in its capacity to make and sustain improvements. Milltech's management restructure in February 2009 included the appointment of a quality improvement manager who has greatly accelerated the pace of improvement. The company has made reasonable progress in improving learners', staff and employers' understanding of equality and diversity and in implementing appropriate safeguarding procedures. The self-assessment process has improved. All staff contribute to the self-assessment process and understand how it can improve the quality of provision. Staff understand their targets in the quality improvement plan, although Milltech has not yet reviewed their progress in achieving these. Since the last inspection, managers have focused effectively on improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. They have improved resources to support learning by investing in interactive white boards and the introduction of effective e-learning portfolios. New management information systems are in place to provide accurate information to assessors and tutors about learners' progress. However, these measures have not yet supported improved outcomes and success rates are slow to improve.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has Milltech made in improving outcomes for learners? Insufficient progress

Milltech has made insufficient progress in improving outcomes for learners. In 2005/06 the overall success rate was 52%, just above the national average. By 2008/09 the overall success rate had risen to 67% but had not kept pace with national improvements and was just below the national average of 71%.

Historically, advanced apprentices at Milltech achieved well above the national average; inspectors identified this as a strength in the last inspection. However, since then their success rate has fallen significantly by 17 percentage points, from 88% in 2005/06 to 71% in 2008/09. It now compares with the national average. The apprenticeship success rate was poor in 2005/06 at 48%. By 2008/09 this had risen to 64%, six percentage points below the national average. In 2008/09, the percentage of learners who completed their framework within the planned time was good at 66%, 16 percentage points above the national average.

In Train to Gain, although numbers are low, the success rate is outstanding at 100%.

In E2E, the proportion of learners who progressed into further training or employment has decreased significantly by 12 percentage points, from 54% in 2004/05 to 42% in 2008/09.

Attendance is good. Learners increase in confidence and develop good workplace skills.

Quality of provision

What progress has Milltech made in improving the quality of off-the-job training and linking it to on-the-job training? Significant progress

Milltech has made significant progress in improving the quality of off-the-job training. Teaching now includes a variety of different activities to engage learners; tutors plan well to meet individual needs. Schemes of work are much improved. Work in learning sessions meets the needs of learners and links well to their employment. Milltech now gives improved information on timetabled activities to learners and employers. Employers are well-informed about the content and timing of learning sessions. Resources to support teaching and learning are much improved by the introduction of interactive white boards and the development of an e-portfolio. Managers have improved systems for monitoring progress and recording learning. A traffic light recording system is in place to identify those learners who are falling behind with their assessments. A training workshop is available to motor vehicle learners, increasing their opportunities for practical training activities. Employers have a better

understanding of qualification requirements, but Milltech staff still do not make full use of workplace training when assessing.

Leadership and management

What progress has Milltech made in improving the reinforcement of learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity? Reasonable progress

Milltech has made reasonable progress in reinforcing learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity. At the previous inspection, learners were introduced to equality and diversity at induction but their awareness was insufficiently consolidated. Milltech's new quality manager has introduced a revised equality and diversity policy and procedure. All staff, including administrative staff, have completed a range of equality and diversity training designed for their different learning styles. Staff are confident to explore topics with learners. They now have access to informative booklets, specifically designed for use with individual learners. Learners are enthusiastic and talk appropriately about equality and diversity. They understand the complaints procedures that cover bullying and harassment comprehensively.

Milltech analyses and monitors its data to understand the ethnicity, additional learning needs and gender balance of the learners. Staff are beginning to analyse data to identify where groups of learners achieve at different rates. However, they recognise that their use of data, target-setting and action-planning needs to improve, especially in relation to analysing where groups of learners may be under performing.

What progress has been made to enhance quality improvement arrangements since the previous inspection, especially observation processes? Reasonable progress

The provider has made reasonable progress in developing effective quality improvement processes. Milltech uses the new self-assessment process as one of its key tools to drive quality improvement. A new lead internal verifier has been appointed within the management restructure. Procedures to ensure the quality of assessments show many improvements and place emphasis on the observation of assessors. Managers have improved the process for observing teaching and learning. Observations take place systematically throughout the year when all staff are observed at least twice. Observations are well-recorded and tutors receive constructive feedback. However, Milltech does not clearly link the areas identified for development to their central staff development programme. It is difficult for tutors to understand clearly how they can improve their practice to achieve a higher grade. There are no objective criteria to show the differences in observation grades. Learners comment favourably on the effectiveness of off-the-job training. The planning of teaching has improved. Lesson plans are more focused and schemes of

work more detailed. However, lesson planning does not sufficiently integrate equality and diversity within sessions.

What progress has Milltech made in meeting current safeguarding requirements?

Reasonable progress

Milltech has made reasonable progress in meeting current safeguarding requirements. The company holds an up-to-date central record of Criminal Records Bureau checks. This is complete for all but three of its administrative staff where the company await the return of checks. All staff have been trained in how to recognise signs of abuse and other relevant safeguarding topics. They understand the safeguarding policies and procedures that have been in place for the past year. Procedures give staff good, clear information and guidance and name the lead person for safeguarding. Milltech has given all learners information about safeguarding, which alerts them to the specific steps they should take and who they can contact, if a problem should arise.

Milltech's safeguarding training for its lead staff member has used generic, commercially available, training. The company is in discussion with Sunderland's Local Safeguarding Children's Board to obtain more relevant training.

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