



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Skills Academy Wales@NPT Group of Colleges  
Dwr y Felin Road  
Neath  
SA10 7RF**

**Date of inspection: January 2018**

**by**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

## About Skills Academy Wales@Neath Port Talbot

Skills Academy Wales @ NPTC Group of Colleges was established as the first work-based learning consortium of its kind in Wales in October 2009. Since August 2010, the consortium has been operating as a single contract with the Welsh Government, led by the Neath Port Talbot Group of Colleges, for the delivery of work-based learning programmes.

The current contract value of Skills Academy Wales is approximately £11.9M. They deliver training programmes in a wide range of learning areas. They deliver programmes from traineeship to higher apprenticeship level 5. At the time of the inspection there were approximately 2,700 learners on Welsh Government funded programmes.

### **Consortium members**

NPTC Group of Colleges (Pathways Training)  
ACO Training Limited  
Coleg-y-Cymoedd  
Gwendraeth Valley Community Enterprise Limited (T/A Jobforce Wales)  
Learn-Kit Limited  
Llanelli Rural Council (LRC Training)  
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (Skills & Training)  
Swansea ITEC Limited.

### **Sub-contractors:**

Assessment & Training Company Limited  
Call of the Wild  
Care Credentials Wales Limited  
JP Training Consultancy Limited  
Intertrain Limited  
Menter Training Limited  
More Training  
Pembrokeshire County Council (Futureworks)  
SKILLSCERT  
Sirius Skills Consulting Limited  
Professional Training and Assessment Services Limited  
Wastesavers Training

### **The partnership delivers training in the following learning areas:**

- Agriculture, horticulture and sustainable resource management
- Business administration and accountancy
- Construction, plumbing, electrotechnical and surveying
- Health and social care, childcare, playwork and dental nursing
- Advice and guidance
- Management, team leading and professional management
- Manufacturing
- Advanced Fitness and Exercise Fitness
- Sporting excellence and sports development

- Hairdressing and barbering
- Retail, customer service and warehousing
- Supporting teaching and learning
- Hospitality and catering
- Information and communication technology and digital media
- Engineering, land based engineering, rail engineering and motor vehicle
- Logistics and transportation

## Summary

Most learners make strong progress towards successfully completing their training programmes. They develop particularly high levels of practical competence and theory knowledge. Learners develop wider work-related skills that enable them to gain and sustain employment. Learners at all levels are motivated to succeed and many are enthusiastic and keen to progress to the next level. The rates at which learners at all levels achieve their apprenticeship frameworks and other training programmes are consistently strong.

Across partners, assessors provide consistently high quality teaching, training and assessment to learners. Assessors give learners particularly effective personal support. They motivate and encourage learners to make the progress they are capable of. The provider works well with a wide range of employers delivering programmes across many learning areas.

The partnership is well established and mature with clear strategic direction and leadership. The partnership operates in a transparent, inclusive way, recognising and using the expertise of each partner well. The provider's self-assessment and quality improvement processes are comprehensive. As a result of the close partnership working arrangements, the provider has secured consistency in the quality of training across partners with strong learner standards.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Ensure that all staff have a thorough understanding of preventing radicalisation and they develop learners' understanding of the topic effectively
- R2 Improve the promotion and use of the Welsh language as a work place skill for learners
- R3 Focus professional development on improving learners' knowledge and outcomes

## **What happens next**

The provider will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Most learners develop strong work-related practical skills and theory knowledge. As a result, they become valued members of staff and quickly develop a wide range of industry related skills that enable them to sustain employment.

Most learners are motivated, enthusiastic, and keen to progress to the next level of their training programmes. Nearly all learners are confident when answering questions about their work and when communicating with their employers and peers. They are able to explain with accuracy how theory relates to their activities in the workplace. Most learners improve their speaking and listening skills relative to their starting points and are soon able to confidently adapt their approach to dealing with different people and situations.

Higher apprenticeship learners develop their existing skills well when undertaking a wide range of complex tasks in their workplaces. Many apprenticeship learners are ambitious and are determined to advance into more responsible roles in their organisations. Many engagement learners with the Prince's Trust develop an interest in the environment when working on community projects, such as creating wheelchair access routes in an animal sanctuary. Many of these learners develop good team working and leadership skills by taking turns to manage their work teams and by prioritising the deployment of tasks to make sure that team members make an effective contribution. In traineeship programmes, learners develop new skills and confidence to face barriers to learning. They develop their confidence and overcome fears when speaking to people, and for these learners this is often a positive and life-changing experience.

Most learners produce written work of at least a suitable standard and a few produce higher quality work. In the best cases, learners structure their work well and use spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriately. A majority of learners are aware of what they need to do to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. A few learners use helpful targets in their individual learning plans to support improvement or make good use of the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit to develop their skills. However, a few learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Many traineeship learners with complex additional learning and support needs make strong progress as a result of completing their training programme. These learners work particularly hard to overcome complex and wide ranging personal barriers. As a result, they gain the vital skills and experiences they need to enter the world of work, often for the first time.

The majority of Welsh speaking learners use their language skills appropriately in the workplace and when undertaking training activities. Very few Welsh language speakers choose to undertake written assessments through the medium of Welsh.

The rates at which learners achieve their apprenticeship and foundation apprenticeship frameworks and other qualifications are strong and have been at or above the sector average over the last three years. Learners perform particularly

well in business, administration and law, retail and customer service and engineering and manufacturing technologies programmes. Over the last two years success rates in higher apprenticeship programmes are above the sector average. Success rates across other programmes, including flexible learning, traineeships and engagement, have been around the sector average over the last three years. The majority of learners achieve their essential skills qualifications at levels appropriate to their framework, a few achieve at a higher level.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Most learners are enthusiastic and appropriately motivated to complete their training programme. Many are keen to continue their training and progress to the next higher level. They demonstrate a positive attitude to learning, take pride in their work and feel valued by their employers.

Most learners work well both individually and when working as a member of a team in small groups. Most learners sustain concentration well and avoid distractions during training sessions. Most learners relate well to peers, assessors and their employers. They respect and value the views and contributions of others in discussions even when their opinions differ from their own. As a result, most develop communication skills that gives them the confidence to work independently with supervisors, assessors, clients and customers.

Nearly all learners feel safe, secure and free from harassment in their workplaces and when attending training centres. They demonstrate a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are able to identify potential health and safety issues with confidence. Most learners apply their knowledge well and can explain clearly how their learning has impacted positively on their working practices.

Most learners demonstrate a secure understanding of safeguarding risks and reporting procedures as a result of their induction programme and discussions during review meetings. However, the majority of learners do not have a sufficient understanding of how to respond to and report potential issues relating to radicalisation and extremism.

Most learners are made aware of online safety guidelines. Learners who are not undertaking a digital literacy qualification do not demonstrate sufficient awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online.

Most learners receive useful information on how to make healthy choices relating to diet, physical activity and emotional wellbeing. Engagement learners undertake a particularly effective six week wellbeing programme to develop their life skills and emotional resilience. As a result, their attendance increased and most significantly improved their motivation and ambition to succeed on their training programme.

Many learners on engagement and traineeship programmes benefit from valuable involvement with external support agencies and engage well in beneficial personal development sessions. They show a positive interest in the environment and make productive contributions to a wide range of beneficial community projects. As a result, many develop the necessary perseverance and resilience to overcome significant personal challenges and complete their training successfully.

Many learners engage well with community based projects and undertake a wide range of charitable work. One team of learners help with a community garden initiative to grow vegetables, which they donate to a food bank. Another dressed up to take part in a Halloween activity to raise money for a local animal sanctuary.

Many learners become better informed citizens through informative discussions on topical issues during progress reviews.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Overall, the quality of teaching, training and assessment has strong features with only a few minor areas requiring improvement.

Nearly all assessors have well established and strong relationships with a wide range of employers. Employers support their learners well and provide positive learning experiences for their learners. Nearly all assessors have a wealth of industry expertise and know their learning area particularly well. Most assessors have high levels of expectation for their learners and give effective levels of support and challenge to make sure they achieve their potential.

Assessors carry out regular and effective progress reviews with their learners. Nearly all assessors set helpful and relevant short-term targets, often empowering learners to identify and set their own goals for the next review. Nearly all assessors plan assessment activities and off the job training sessions well. Assessors use a suitable range of assessment and teaching methods and match the complexity and style to suit learners' needs from level 1 to level 5 qualifications. Many assessors are highly skilled when using questioning techniques in order to probe and develop learners' knowledge and understanding of their chosen task. Most assessors provide useful comments and constructive feedback on learners' written work to help them improve.

Nearly all assessors mark learners' work regularly and correct spelling and grammatical errors.

Assessors use effective systems to track the progress of learners towards their qualification aim. The lead provider gathers this information from all partners and subcontractors on a monthly basis in order to ensure all learners are on target to achieve. When slow progress is identified, the lead provider develops a support action plan and assessors closely monitor learners' progress.

The provider delivers a breadth of learning experiences that are well matched to learners' career aspirations and their level of ability. Training in a wide range of learning areas is available due to the large number of employers the provider works with. The provider ensures assessors give very effective personal support to learners with additional learning needs to overcome their barriers to learning. The provider ensures learners have wider opportunities to participate, often through their employer, in fundraising events for local charities, tidying up local areas and for example filling shoeboxes for disadvantaged children.

The provider takes appropriate account of the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills when planning training. Nearly all assessors set appropriate targets

to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, they develop research and writing styles to generate clear evaluative reports. However, a few assessors do not always encourage learners to develop these skills in the workplace well enough. Across the partnership, learners' digital skills are not sufficiently developed or delivered by all partners and learning areas.

Nearly all learners have appropriate opportunities to develop an understanding of their culture and local community. Assessors promote the use of resources such as the Ein Hiaith online programme, which raises awareness of Welsh heritage and language well. The provider has developed several Welsh language resources suitable for a range of learning areas. For example, dental nurse apprentices use phrases such as 'mae'r deintydd yn barod nawr' 'the dentist is ready now' and plumbing, heating and agriculture apprentices use technical terms found in the providers' Welsh in the workplace booklets. However, a few assessors are not proactive enough in promoting the benefit of the Welsh language as an employment skill. They do not encourage Welsh speaking learners to use and develop their language skills in the workplace.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Learners' initial assessment informs the planning of training well. Assessors use the assessment of engagement learners' needs particularly well to provide tailored individual support. Assessors make good use of the providers' monthly wellbeing topics to open discussions with learners during reviews. In a few cases, assessors use naturally occurring opportunities well to raise learners' awareness of equality and diversity.

All assessors visit apprentice learners regularly. Assessors monitor and track learners' progress well. Where they have concerns that a learner requires additional support, they develop clear action plans that they monitor regularly.

Nearly all assessors use their learner visits effectively to motivate and monitor their progress towards their earning goals closely and systematically. This ensures that they know their learners' individual needs well. Assessors identify promptly if any learners are struggling to make progress. They provide effective support, such as mentoring to help learners overcome potential barriers to learning. The provider has supported learners with specialist support such as, social services, the Royal National Institute of Blind People and bereavement counselling.

Most assessors collaborate well with other professionals, such as youth workers and youth offending teams to ensure learners are supported well, and develop their interpersonal skills, which helps them to succeed on programmes and develop resilience. The provider has effective links with ethnic youth support teams and community partnership networks to support learners from minority backgrounds to access learning opportunities. The provider works well in partnership with Careers Wales and local schools to ensure that prospective learners receive appropriate advice and guidance regarding the training opportunities available to them. All assessors ensure that learners make effective use of safety equipment in the workplace and they routinely check, during visits, that learners have not been subject to harassment, safeguarding issues or extremism. The provider manages safeguarding appropriately. There are no significant concerns about safeguarding arising from the provider's provision.

The provider delivers useful training on safeguarding and radicalisation to provider and subcontractors' staff. Nearly all assessors are clear about safeguarding procedures. However, in the majority of cases assessors' understanding of radicalisation lacks depth and their addressing of this topic is often superficial.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

Since its formation in 2009, Skills Academy Wales has established a stable and mature partnership, characterised by open and transparent communication between its leadership, partners and subcontractors.

The provider has an appropriate range of management and working groups which ultimately report to the provider's executive board, chaired by the chief executive officer of the lead provider. These groups draw membership from across all partners and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders provide effective direction and oversight to the work of the provider and, as a result, all partners understand the provider's strategic direction and their contribution to its success. The governing body of the lead provider gives effective scrutiny of their work.

Arrangements for appointing and managing the performance of subcontractors are comprehensive. Partners have the primary responsibility for a subcontractor and are fully accountable for their performance. The recently developed subcontractor consultative group provides a useful additional forum for subcontractors to communicate and contribute to the work of the provider.

The provider has sound procedures for self-evaluation, which are used consistently across partners. They provide a wide range of stakeholders with effective opportunities to contribute to the self-evaluation process. As a result, the self-evaluation report is an honest and accurate reflection of the provider's performance and identifies key areas and targets for development. However, in a few places, the report lacks clear analysis.

The provider has a comprehensive strategy for the professional development of its staff. The strategy is well matched to the areas for development identified through the self-evaluation process, and to the needs of individual staff. Recent training events include a focus on Prevent, digital literacy and the Welsh language, although these have yet to have a measurable impact. There is a worthwhile annual staff conference, which allows opportunities for networking and establishing relationships across partners.

Managers maintain a useful staffing matrix which identifies the specific skills and expertise of staff across the provider and allows managers to plan training, to collaborate and to draw on the resources of other partners where needed.

The provider manages its resources well. Partners share data transparently and this informs decisions about allocating funding between partners, as required. Partners deploy their staff flexibly and with care, for example, to support learners in need of additional visits.

Partners and subcontractors make very effective contributions to management and working groups. This has the dual effect of sharing management workload fairly

between partners while also providing valuable leadership and development opportunities for leaders and aspiring leaders across the provider. The provider draws on the expertise and resources of partners well, to take advantage of the economies of scale offered by a large partnership. For example, the partnership uses joint standardisation and training events to reduce costs and improve consistency.

The provider has responded well to increased demand from employers for apprenticeships, and works well in partnership with employers and other agencies to increase opportunities for learners. A useful shared apprenticeship programme in collaboration with a local authority allows learners employed with small and medium sized enterprises in the engineering sector to carry out the full range of work experience required by the qualification by moving between employers.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the provider and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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