

Inspection of NC Group Ltd

Inspection dates:

14 to 16 January 2025

Overall effectiveness**Outstanding**

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Apprenticeships

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

NC Group Limited provides apprenticeships in the engineering and manufacturing sector across the north east and Tees Valley. At the time of the inspection, 49 apprentices were enrolled on the level 3 team leader or supervisor apprenticeship and six were enrolled on the level 3 science industry maintenance technician apprenticeship. The provider had fewer than five apprentices working towards apprenticeships, including level 3 business administration, level 3 machining technician, level 3 maintenance and operations engineering technician, level 3 engineering technician and level 3 laboratory technician.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They clearly articulate their learning and how they use it at work to have an impact. They use technical language and problem-solving skills well as a result of the highly effective teaching they experience. For example, when engineering apprentices need a particular specification of motor in sessions, they use their knowledge to find relevant solutions. These include using gearing to slow down the revolutions per minute to ensure that the motor fits the required criteria.

Attendance to sessions is very high, and apprentices are punctual. In the very few instances where apprentices do not attend sessions, tutors follow up on the reasons for this swiftly and take prompt action, with full employer involvement.

Apprentices feel safe. They learn about the risks they could face, including radicalisation and knife crime, from the start of their programmes and know who to contact if they have a concern. Leaders and tutors do not tolerate 'banter' and sexual harassment, and apprentices understand how to challenge these behaviours if they encounter them in the workplace.

Leaders provide a curriculum that includes a broad range of opportunities for apprentices to develop their skills and knowledge beyond the content of the apprenticeship. For example, apprentices benefit from emotional intelligence training that helps them to develop their communication skills. They meet with the local police force to learn about the risks of terrorism and radicalisation. Apprentices also have opportunities to support local community projects and competitions to enhance their knowledge and build their confidence.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers provide a curriculum which very successfully meets the needs of their apprentices and employers locally in the engineering and manufacturing industry. The curriculum enables apprentices to develop specialist skills, which enable them to progress into highly desirable careers. Leaders expertly ensure that the content of the curriculum aligns with the apprenticeship and the needs of the employer without restricting the apprentice's prospects if they want to move to another organisation.

Leaders and tutors sequence the curriculum carefully and logically. Apprentices gain an understanding of the fundamental principles of their subject before building on these through exploring more complex ideas and skills. For example, maintenance and operations engineering technician apprentices gain an understanding of engineering drawings and terminology before moving on to performing routine maintenance. They then move on to analysing the root causes of breakdowns and implementing corrective actions.

Leaders use their wealth of experience in the industry to build strong relationships

with employers, who much appreciate how well leaders communicate with them. Employers highly value the training that their apprentices receive and are very complimentary about the leadership of the organisation and the high level of skills and experience of the teaching staff.

Leaders and tutors provide very good support for apprentices with special education needs and/or disabilities. These apprentices benefit from individual plans, which take into account their additional support needs and how they would like to be supported. Tutors use a range of strategies to provide appropriate support, including additional sessions, adapted programmes and one-to-one support.

Leaders recruit highly experienced staff with strong industry backgrounds and teaching expertise. They then support tutors in developing professionally through extensive training and support. This includes updates on industry-related topics, including safeguarding, and using current and appropriate teaching methodologies. As a result, apprentices participate in exceptionally high-quality training.

Tutors use a wide range of highly effective teaching strategies to explain new concepts and help apprentices remember new learning, including workbooks and write-ups following the sessions that require apprentices to recall what they have learned. Tutors expertly impart knowledge in a natural yet challenging way. They enable apprentices to work independently and carry out research but use effective questioning to ensure that apprentices have understood their research, including checking their understanding of current legislation.

Tutors assess apprentices' practical and written work accurately. They then provide helpful feedback, which apprentices use to improve their work. This includes written feedback, which is discussed in-depth during one-to-one sessions. This ensures that apprentices understand exactly what they need to do to improve.

Tutors integrate the development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills successfully into their teaching. For example, team leader apprentices learn how to collect and analyse data and how to manage projects, including calculating timescales and budgets. Apprentices who need to pass English and mathematics qualifications achieve these qualifications, most on their first attempt.

Apprentices produce very high-quality work as a result of their learning. Maintenance and operations engineering technician apprentices build portfolios of work to showcase their knowledge and skills, which are very well presented and show a high level of understanding. Team leader apprentices make precise notes in sessions, which allows them to then produce thoughtful, interesting written pieces of work that showcase their knowledge very well.

Apprentices are prepared well for their end-point assessments (EPA). They carry out activities such as completing scenarios, which reflect the structure of the EPA and mock assessments. Most apprentices who achieve gain distinction grades.

Apprentices have useful discussions about their future careers with tutors, leaders and line managers. They meet with leaders before they start their apprenticeship to discuss their aspirations and whether an apprenticeship is the route that will help them achieve these. On completion of their apprenticeship, they remain in employment, often with the same employer. Most quickly secure promoted posts such as improvement specialist, senior technologist and logistics consultant.

Leaders and managers have good oversight of the quality of their apprenticeship provision. They carry out a wide range of activities, including observations of teaching, external reviews of the quality of the provision and safeguarding audits.

Leaders and managers have in place a highly effective board of governors. Board members draw on their experience from industry, finance and education to provide effective challenge and support to senior leaders. The board provides prudent oversight of the financial position of the organisation, safeguarding of apprentices and the quality of training that apprentices receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2741641
Address	Unit 3 and 4 Parsons Court Welbury Way Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 6ZE
Contact number	01388 737121
Website	www.ncgrouppltd.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Lee Childs
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Glenise Burrell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Karen Anderson

His Majesty's Inspector

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