

Inspection of EAS Mechanical Limited

Inspection dates:

18 to 20 September 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

EAS Mechanical Limited is an independent learning provider based in Northampton. Leaders work with local, small-to-medium-size businesses in the construction industry.

At the time of the visit, there were 142 apprentices. There were 18 level 2 building service engineer installers, 52 level 3 plumbing and domestic heating technicians and 72 level 3 installation and maintenance electricians. Forty-seven apprentices are under 18 years of age. A small number of apprentices study mathematics and English qualifications alongside their apprenticeship. There are no apprentices in receipt of high-needs funding and no subcontracted provision.

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

Apprentices value the time they spend in the classroom to develop and refine their technical skills in plumbing, electrical and building services engineering. However, too many apprentices are not able to practise the new knowledge and skills effectively enough in the workplace.

Trainers create a calm, welcoming and professional learning environment. They role model professional behaviours during theoretical and practical lessons and ensure apprentices focus fully on their work. This fosters a positive atmosphere where apprentices are respectful towards each other and value their learning environment.

Apprentices do not understand how to maintain their mental and physical health fully. Trainers inform apprentices about the importance of, for example, regular breaks and provide access to mental health resources. However, these topics are not taught or revisited. Apprentices do have a good grasp of healthy relationships. They recognise signs of domestic violence and coercion and are aware of workplace health and safety practices and how to use personal protective equipment.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe at work and online. They are confident that staff will take appropriate actions to deal with any safeguarding or welfare concerns.

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

Leaders have not developed effective links between apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. Apprentice plumbers who are moving towards the end of their courses do not have frequent enough opportunities to practise soldering and crimping when at work or to complete sufficient gas-focused activities. Apprentice electricians do not get sufficient opportunities to practise newly learned skills and knowledge at work or to complete assessment activities in a timely manner.

A significant number of apprentices who are at the end of their courses have fallen behind in their studies. This is largely due to not being able to complete practical assessments on site. For example, most of the electrician apprentices who were due to complete their courses around the time of the inspection still had significant assessment work to complete. Almost all apprentices across all standards pass their formal theory assessments and do so in a timely manner.

Tutors' planning with employers does not ensure apprentices receive ample opportunity to practise their skills in the workplace. During reviews, tutors inform employers of what the apprentice has achieved in line with the unit specification but do not focus closely enough on where the apprentice needs further practice to become competent and develop fluency. This hinders apprentices' progress.

The quality of written feedback on apprentices' work is too variable. In too many cases, level 3 plumbing apprentices do not receive clear and direct written feedback

on their work and do not know how to make necessary improvements. Conversely, level 3 electrical apprentices receive high-quality written feedback and produce detailed work to a high standard.

Leaders have recently introduced suitable assessments to identify apprentices with additional needs such as dyslexia earlier in the course. They receive additional support and necessary adjustments, such as coloured overlays and scribes, which help them improve their written work.

Most trainers organise topics in a logical sequence, starting with fundamental health and safety before moving to more complex topics such as preparing risk assessments. This allows apprentices to operate safely at work and gain the necessary external accreditation to work in the construction sector. Most apprentices build their knowledge and skills progressively and are well prepared for final assessments.

Trainers have expert knowledge of their subjects and use it effectively in their teaching. They explain topics clearly using handouts, diagrams and demonstrations. This helps apprentices understand complex concepts such as different methods of electricity generation.

Most apprentices develop a sufficient understanding of both theoretical and practical aspects of their training during lessons. For instance, apprentice electricians are proficient in the necessary units of measurement and equipment testing, while apprentice plumbers have a good grasp of cold water systems and their applications. During lessons, apprentices perform their practical tasks consistently well.

Leaders and trainers maintain high expectations for apprentices' attendance and punctuality and relate these standards to professional expectations. This focus is effective, as evidenced by the high attendance and punctuality rates observed during the inspection.

Apprentices do not benefit from a clearly planned careers programme. Career routes are discussed but not in detail. For example, apprentices know of opportunities to progress into surveying and site management but are not clear on what they need to do to progress into these roles.

Leaders' quality assurance processes are not yet well developed. They have quality audits and lesson observation processes but not all observations, for example, have been completed for the previous academic year. Those that are complete do not identify how trainers can improve their teaching practice further.

Leaders understand their areas for improvement but have not taken sufficient action to resolve the weaknesses. They have not yet developed a secure strategy to ensure rapid improvement in the curriculum.

Governors are suitably qualified and experienced but are not involved enough in discussions about the curriculum to provide sufficient support and challenge to

leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that electrical and plumbing apprentices have enough well-planned on-the-job training activities so that they can practise their newly learned knowledge and skills at work.
- Ensure all apprentices complete their practical assessments in line with their formal theory assessments.
- Ensure apprentices receive written feedback on their assessments which supports them to improve.
- Implement an appropriately planned personal development curriculum to include careers advice and guidance.
- Ensure that quality improvement activities secure rapid improvement to those weaknesses identified.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2717163
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Website	www.easmech.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Eamon Wilson
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

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, and the previous inspection report. 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

Michael Worgs, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Nikki Brady	His Majesty's Inspector
Saul Pope	His Majesty's Inspector

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