

Heathercroft Training Services Limited

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Reinspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Heathercroft Training Services Ltd (HTS), trading as Heathercroft Training Academy, established in 1991, is an approved National Vocational Training and Assessment Centre, which provides training across East and West Sussex, Kent and South London.

Heathercroft provides intermediate and advanced apprenticeships in health and social care, childcare, horse care, and information and communication technology (ICT), business administration and customer service and management training at level 3 and 5. The company currently has 220 learners funded through the Skills Funding Agency, of which 154 are apprentices in health and social care and child care, 35 are on ICT apprenticeships and 23 are on management programmes. Seven learners are on horse care programmes and one learner is on a business administration apprenticeship. Management programmes have been introduced since the last inspection.

At the last inspection HTS was judged to be inadequate overall, with inadequate capacity to improve. Outcomes and leadership and management were inadequate; the quality of provision was satisfactory, as were equality and diversity. Safeguarding was judged to be good. The subject areas, health and social care and childcare and ICT for practitioners, were inadequate.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to ensure that self-assessment is part of a quality improvement programme that monitors and evaluates the impact of all aspects of learners' programmes to bring about improvements?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection, HTS' capacity to make and sustain improvements was inadequate. The self-assessment process was inadequate and the self-assessment report was insufficiently critical in recognising some key issues. The management structure is now much clearer and more supportive. Senior managers have key responsibilities for programme areas as well as other clearly-defined business roles. Operational staff understand fully their roles, responsibilities and individual realistic, challenging and measurable targets and have high levels of confidence in managers.

Since the last inspection HTS has developed the self-assessment process to ensure that all staff, employers and learners contribute meaningfully to the process, the self-assessment report and quality improvement. Robust data are collected systematically and analysed fully to determine clear areas for improvement. Self-assessment is linked well to a focused action plan which is used effectively to manage improvements. Staff regularly review progress against the plan's actions and targets.

However, while the self-assessment report clearly identifies where key areas for improvement need to be addressed, actions within the quality improvement action plan need to be defined further and targeted for improvement, for example improvements in success rates of different groups to reduce achievement gaps.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving outcomes for learners?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, the provider has made reasonable progress in improving outcomes and they are generally satisfactory. Comparing final data for 2010/11 to data from the same time period in the previous year, HTS increased overall success rates to around the national average of 76.4%. Success rates within planned timescales improved but remained just below the national average of 65.3%. In health and social care, overall success rates improved to seven points above the national average. Success rates within planned timescales improved to four points above the national average. Child care learners' success rates improved to the national average of 75%. The success rates within the planned timescales also improved to the national average of 65%.

Overall success rates for ICT learners, around 10% of total HTS learners, fell below the national average. The success rates within planned timescales also dropped below the national average. Further analysis by the provider showed that the overall success rates and those completing within planned timescales in the HTS training centre and partner Computer HQ were around the national average of 90%. The very low success rates related to 12 learners not in education, employment or training (NEET). The company ceased recruiting learners from NEET groups following the last inspection. Current data show that the overall success rates for 2011/12 are 72% and those completing within planned timescales is also 72%. Learners gain good personal and workplace skills and learners following horse management apprenticeships and the recently-introduced on-line management programme are making good progress.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in developing and implementing processes to support learners' development, and improve their overall outcomes?

Reasonable progress

At the last inspection the overall success rate for apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, around half the total leavers in 2009/10, was particularly low at 51%. Since the last inspection HTS has provided additional individual support to help learners achieve. Current data show that improvements have been made and 68% of those identified with additional learning needs have achieved their learning aims within planned timescales. The initial assessment screening process remains rudimentary and does not fully identify support needs. However, staff use their own experience and skills well to identify further support needs. Staff provide good

individual and supportive sessions to enhance learners' key skills development in the training centre and employer placements.

Staff in one employer placement are trained and working as assessors for horse care apprentices. They have worked hard and identified, in conjunction with HTS staff, appropriate qualification pathways and options to individualise programmes and ensure that the learners' needs are met fully and that learners can achieve their qualifications. Experienced HTS staff provide particularly good and very effective support to learners following on-line management programmes. Feedback on assignments is detailed and constructive. Learners appreciate the support and are making good progress through their qualifications.

What progress has been made to introduce effective progress reviews for learners, particularly those who have exceeded their planned completion date?

**Reasonable
progress**

The last inspection report stated that, although learners' reviews were satisfactory, some learners had a poor awareness of their progress or what they had to do to complete their qualification. HTS did not carry out reviews of learners' progress once they had passed their planned completion date. The review process is currently satisfactory. Progress reviews are now in place for all learners, including those who have exceeded their planned period of training. Learners are now more aware of their progress and generally know which elements of qualifications they need to complete in order to finish their training. However, the comments from employer representatives are often insufficiently detailed and sometimes contradict comments by reviewing staff. The provider is working to improve both the process and the documentation used to record reviews.

What progress has been made to improve the planning and quality of teaching, learning and assessment for ICT learners?

**Significant
progress**

The planning of learning and quality of teaching on ICT programmes have improved significantly since the previous inspection. New programme structures support staff and provide a more coherent direction to the management and delivery of programmes. Clear and comprehensive schemes of work give learners a good understanding of their progress through qualifications. Learners benefit from a very strong focus on employability and professional workplace practice in well developed on- and off-the-job training. Learners on all aspects of ICT programmes gain valuable practical experience through supportive and high-quality work placements and employment with a local computing specialist employer.

Integration of the on- and off-the-job elements of training is good, and employers are well informed about course demands. Tutors and assessors communicate well with managers and employers to identify frequent observation and assessment opportunities for learners. Teaching staff have a much improved understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and share a strong culture of continuous improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning observed during the monitoring visit was good. Assessors and tutors provide good support and guidance for learners in their workplaces.

What progress has been made to ensure all ICT staff are suitably qualified and experienced to provide learners with effective training and assessment?

**Reasonable
progress**

Heathercroft has made significant changes to the ICT teaching team since the previous inspection. Measures are now in place to ensure that learners are well supported in the classroom and workplace, and that staff are suitably experienced and qualified. An employer practitioner joined HTS staff in November 2010, bringing a high level of industry expertise to the team and establishing a strong focus on development of learners' employability and practical workplace skills. An additional trainer/assessor joined in September 2011. Trainers and assessors who previously lacked appropriate teaching qualifications are now undertaking Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector qualifications and will be progressing to certificate or diploma qualifications in the future. A clear company training plan now includes staff training to prepare for the introduction of functional skills later in 2012, and generic health and safety and safeguarding training.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in developing and using management information to monitor the impact of the provision?

**Reasonable
progress**

At the last inspection, managers and tutors did not sufficiently analyse success rate data in meetings and some team leaders did not have access to coherent data sets covering all learners. Heathercroft has worked hard to develop further a bespoke computerised system. Sound systems are in place to monitor performance and budgets. Performance data are now much more coherent and detailed, and managers and staff use the information well to determine learners' progress and achievement of qualifications and the data are shared with appropriate staff at frequent and regular meetings. Those learners at risk of not achieving within planned completion dates are clearly identified and supported. However, work remains to be done to ensure that HTS' targets are met for carrying out learners' reviews.

What progress has been made to improve systems for observing tutors' training, assessment and progress reviews and their use towards quality improvement?

**Reasonable
progress**

A new observation of teaching and learning scheme has been developed and implemented in the five months since the previous inspection. A clear plan is now in place for observing all staff across the next twelve months. The range of observation activity is good, taking in reviews, assessments and tutorials in addition to classroom teaching. Observation records are detailed and, from observation commentaries,

managers are gathering a good range of information about the quality of teaching, training and assessment in the company. Senior managers are currently exploring the ways that outcomes of observations will be used to promote further good practice sharing through staff development and self-assessment activity.

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