

SMART Training and Recruitment Ltd

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. SMART Training and Recruitment (SMART) was formed as a private limited company on the Isle of Wight in 2003. SMART is a large independent provider of work-based learning in England with 10 training centres across England and its headquarters in Newport on the Isle of Wight. SMART was last inspected in 2007 when 150 apprentices took part in work-based learning.
2. The two owner-directors have overall responsibility for the company which employs 152 full-time members of staff. The directors are supported by a senior management team consisting of a director of learning, a director of business development and a director of corporate services.
3. Each of the 10 centres is managed by a quality assurance manager supported by internal quality assurance staff and a team of training advisers. There are 97 qualified assessors, 35 of whom are also internal verifiers, and another seven members of staff are working towards achieving their assessor qualification. There are 18 business development consultants, a data performance manager and a finance and human resource manager. The remaining staff provide administration and support.
4. In 2011/12 SMART holds a national Skills Funding Agency contract for intermediate and advanced apprenticeships with a funding value of £6.6 million. In addition, SMART has a small Young People’s Learning Agency contract for foundation learning with a contract value of £290,000. All SMART’s income is from government funding. SMART provides training at both intermediate and advanced levels in sales, retail, hospitality and catering, cleaning and support, business administration, customer service, management, information and communication technology and foundation learning.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Foundation Learning	89 learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	2,779 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Grade 4
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	4
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	4
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	
Hospitality and catering	3
Foundation learning	3
Business administration and law	4

Overall effectiveness

- Overall effectiveness is inadequate. Low numbers of learners achieved over the past three years during which time around a third left without completing the apprenticeship framework. The number of learners who completed qualifications on Train to Gain within the planned completion time was low during the same period. Learners in foundation learning progress reasonably well into training and work but the achievement rates for qualifications are low.
- The quality of training and assessment for those currently in training is satisfactory. Training advisers are appropriately qualified and have relevant experience. A reasonable range of programmes is on offer for learners in business administration and law and in hospitality. Effective partnerships with employers sustain training and assessment in the workplace and adequate support is provided for most learners. However, learners' training plans are not always used effectively and teaching methods lack variety. Not all learners are sufficiently involved in sessions and a few are not challenged enough by the

work planned for them. The use of technology in supporting learning is underdeveloped.

7. Leaders and managers have failed to improve the provision since the last inspection. Overall targets for success have lacked ambition. Targets for 2010/11 were not achieved. The provider has given insufficient attention to accurate analysis of data and external benchmarks. Self-assessment has lacked rigour and produced inaccurate judgements. Recently-introduced improvement strategies have appropriate priorities but it is too early to judge their impact on performance overall.

Main findings

- Overall success rates are low. Foundation learners progress to further training, education or work at a satisfactory rate. The achievement rate for functional skills qualifications has been low since the programme started in 2010.
- Success rates for apprentices are low overall and particularly low in the largest programme area, business administration and law, where the success rate in 2010/11 was 68%, 12 percentage points below the national average.
- The overall success rate for 16 to 18 year-olds is particularly low at 60%, which is 14 percentage points below the national average and eight percentage points below the provider's overall success rate. The proportion of learners who completed within planned timescales in the last year of the Train to Gain programme was low.
- The development of learners' employability skills is satisfactory. Learners enjoy learning and have good motivation. Learners feel safe. Most learners demonstrate safe working practices.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory overall. Individual coaching sessions are effective at meeting individual needs in the context of the workplace. However, trainers use an insufficiently wide variety of learning methods and set objectives for learners which are not always sufficiently challenging.
- The current programme meets learners' and employers' needs appropriately. Learners value the visits made to their workplaces and the way training advisers plan and support their learning. Staff are flexible in the way they provide training and assessment.
- Effective partnership arrangements with a wide range of employers benefit learners. Most employers are actively involved in the planning of learning and assessment. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are provided effectively. Learners with additional learning or social needs receive effective support to meet their needs.
- Leaders and managers have failed to improve the provision since the previous inspection. Rapid expansion in the size of the provision has not been matched by improving overall framework success rates, which are below national average rates. Leaders and managers have not set sufficiently challenging

strategic objectives and performance targets for success rates. An appropriate, but recently-introduced, improvement strategy is in place but it is too early to judge its impact on the quality of provision and on learners' success rates.

- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Safeguarding of learners and staff has a high priority and is monitored and managed effectively. All relevant staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and health and safety.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Effective monitoring of recruitment patterns ensures that under-represented groups access training. However, the analysis of data at programme level to compare the achievement of different groups is underdeveloped.
- Self-assessment is inadequate. The analysis of performance data to inform the self-assessment report is weak. Grading is inaccurate and over generous. The observation of teaching and learning lacks rigour. Action planning for improvement is insufficient to develop staff effectively. Observation of other aspects of learning outside formal sessions does not focus sufficiently on criteria relating to learning and attainment.

What does SMART need to do to improve further?

- Increase overall framework success rates by rigorously monitoring learners' progress and ensuring realistic and challenging targets are set that adequately reflect learners' prior experiences and abilities.
- Improve the success rates for 16- to 18-year-old learners by taking prompt action to provide appropriate additional learning support.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by more effective use of individual learning plans and a greater range of methods to ensure increased learner involvement in learning sessions. Improve the use of technology in supporting learning.
- Introduce and achieve more ambitious success rate targets overall and for all centres. Monitor performance more closely and accurately to support improvements in overall success rates.
- Add more rigour, widen the scope and increase the coverage of the observation of teaching and learning process to ensure that training methods are of a sufficiently wide variety and are carried out to a high standard to meet learners' needs and interests.
- Further develop management and staff understanding of success rate data and what constitute challenging targets by improving their understanding of current performance data, external benchmarks and by using data more rigorously and accurately in self-assessment.
- Better identify and close achievement gaps through more detailed analysis of data at programme level to compare the achievement of different groups.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the very enthusiastic and helpful staff
- the good quality of training and support
- that staff get to know them as individuals
- the opportunity to progress in their careers
- being able to gain more confidence at work
- the clear, understandable explanations training assessors provide
- the help the company provides to get another job when learners are made redundant
- the support for learners with English as a second language.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the level of challenge provided in some courses
- the clarity of the course structure and plans
- the high staff turnover, as this causes confusion
- the excessive amount of information at induction
- the range and use of online resources
- the amount of training time and the regularity of assessments.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the good communication between SMART and employers
- that staff are very helpful and flexible in their approach
- the careful selection of apprentices and good initial advice and guidance
- SMART's good understanding of their businesses
- the company's receptiveness to integrating employers' in-house training with its own training
- that SMART is professional, responsive, consistent and maintains an excellent quality service
- that the trainers have good experience and knowledge across different job roles to help a variety of learners in the workplace.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the setting of learners' targets before the trainer's next visit
- SMART's awareness of learners' learning difficulties prior to the placement
- the level and frequency of communication, particularly of progress updates which are often late and need to be requested

- the large amount of paperwork and form filling at visits, as this slows the process down
- the high number of staff changes, which adds to employers' paperwork.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

8. Overall apprenticeship framework success rates have been low for three years and only a small improvement was achieved in 2010/11. The success rate for apprentices in the 16- to 18-year-old group has fallen over three years and was particularly low in 2010/11. Targets set to increase success rates for apprenticeships have lacked ambition. In 2010/11, the targets for success rates were not achieved. Appropriate priorities are now articulated and recorded in the current improvement plan, but some lack of clarity remains in other internal documents.
9. The 2011 self-assessment report was not accurate in making judgements relating to data. Grades published in the report were over generous. The internal process for self-assessment involving staff at the ten training centres lacks rigour and in many cases is not based on an accurate analysis of data in relation to success rates.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

10. Outcomes for foundation learners are satisfactory overall. The proportion of them who progressed to further training, education or work is satisfactory. The number of learners who have achieved a functional skills qualification is low. Based on further data submitted by the provider during the inspection, the number of functional skills qualifications being achieved has improved recently.
11. Overall framework success rates for apprentices are low. In 2010/11 the proportion of apprentices who achieved a full framework was eight percentage points lower than the national average. The proportion of apprentices in hospitality who achieved a full framework in 2010/11 was 66%, which is just below the national average. In the largest programme, business administration and law, which constitutes nearly two thirds of the total number of apprentices, the success rate was 68% in 2010/11 which was 12 percentage points below the national average. For 16- to 18-year-olds in business administration and law, the success rate was particularly low at 19 percentage points below the national average.
12. The number of learners who completed within planned timescales in the last year of the Train to Gain programme was low.
13. The development of learners' employability skills is satisfactory. Learners enjoy learning and most are motivated to succeed. They acquire skills and demonstrate competence in, for example, office communications, dealing with complaints, using data to identify sales trends, food preparation and cooking. Learners feel safe, have an appropriate understanding of safe working practices and their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. However, a few learners

do not routinely follow high standards of personal presentation and some do not adhere effectively to internet-safety guidelines.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

14. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is satisfactory overall. Trainers are appropriately qualified with relevant industry experience and they use this effectively to support learning with apprentices and foundation learners. They explain things well, and much of the individual coaching and planning for on-the-job practical training with apprentices is effective. However, a few sessions are rushed and plans for sessions are not always timed accurately. Trainers do not use individual learning plans effectively to plan and record learning. Often, an over-reliance on workbooks is evident. Staff carry out reviews of progress but do not always set learners challenging targets. In foundation learning attendance at sessions is poor.
15. Assessment is satisfactory overall. However, some of the questioning for learners at level 3 is not sufficiently challenging and staff miss opportunities to get these learners to take more ownership of their portfolios.
16. Staff meet the needs of current learners appropriately. Learners value the visits made to their workplaces and the way in which training advisers plan and support their learning. A very high and positive response to the pre-inspection survey confirmed this. Employers generally value the training and assessment provided by training advisers who are flexible in their approach. SMART has a good range of provision and flexible delivery to meet the learners' and employers' needs. It makes effective use of optional units to reflect learners' interests and place of work. SMART adapts programme content effectively to support the business development needs of employers. Staff visit at times which reflect business patterns and when learners have the best opportunity to gather performance evidence.
17. Effective partnership arrangements with a wide range of employers benefit learners. Many employers are involved actively in the planning of learning, providing training on the job and in assessment, but not always in progress reviews. SMART takes opportunities to integrate training and assessment with employers' training programmes where possible. It uses partnerships with employers and community organisations effectively to arrange job taster and work placement opportunities for unemployed learners. Good links with local referral and support groups benefit foundation learners.
18. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. SMART provides information, advice and guidance effectively. Learners are involved in regular conversations with staff and receive clear guidance on progression opportunities that are focused on meeting individual needs. Learners with additional learning or social needs receive appropriate support. Staff provide effective individual support for a range of concerns and queries from learners. They respond promptly and efficiently to any barriers learners feel may prevent

them from learning. A few learners are not sufficiently aware of the support available.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

19. Leaders and managers have failed to maintain and improve the provision since the previous inspection. Senior managers have been successful in expanding the provision but have been ineffective at improving the overall framework success rates, which are below national rates. Strategic objectives and performance targets for success rates have lacked ambition. Targets set for framework success rates were not met in 2010/11. Gaps in achievement between different groups of learners are evident. Suitable priorities are now articulated and recorded in the current improvement plan, but a lack of clarity remains in other internal documents. Staff have responded well to the recently-introduced improvement strategy and changes to work-based learning procedures, but it is too early to judge the impact on the quality of provision and success rates.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Safeguarding of learners and staff has a high priority and is monitored and managed effectively. Appropriate safeguarding and safety policies and procedures are in place. The company keeps and monitors a detailed central record of Criminal Records Bureau checks of all staff. All relevant staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and health and safety. Health and safety vetting of employers' premises is thorough and systematic, and appropriate records are kept. The provider maintains a comprehensive incident log and updates this appropriately.
21. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Appropriate equal opportunities policies and procedures support staff in carrying out their responsibilities. The provider has effective arrangements to protect all learners and staff from harassment and bullying which are promoted well through poster campaigns. All learners receive induction and a supporting handbook. Most learners benefit from regular checking of their understanding at key stages of their training programmes, but this is not always done with sufficient depth to expand their understanding. The analysis of data at programme level to compare the achievement of different groups is underdeveloped. For example, the provider was slow to recognise the underperformance of 16- to 18-year-old learners and did not monitor the performance of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
22. The provider engages satisfactorily with users to inform quality improvement and the self-assessment report. It has appropriate learner and employer engagement strategies. The collection and analysis of user feedback is systematic and effective. SMART communicates resulting actions to users via prominent posters. Exit surveys are used, but these have not had much impact on planning to improve retention. Learners' involvement in decision making is underdeveloped.

23. Self-assessment is inadequate. The analysis of performance data to inform the self-assessment report is weak. Grading is inaccurate and over generous. The report makes no reference to low achievement rates. Targets for improving success rates for learners are not sufficiently ambitious to bring about significant improvement in overall performance. Changes in operational management arrangements, to put a stronger focus on quality assurance and improvement, took place in the second half of 2010. The current quality improvement strategy focuses on the right priorities but it is too early to judge the full impact on performance.
24. The management of the process for the observation of teaching and learning lacks rigour. The absence of summary record keeping for the organisation limits the scope for tracking improvement to teaching and learning and reduces the capacity to identify and share good practice. The recording of judgements is poor, lacks specific detail and often does not justify the grade awarded. Action planning for improvement is insufficient to develop staff effectively. Observation of other aspects of learning outside formal sessions is not sufficiently focused on criteria relating to learning and attainment. Not enough of these observations have been carried out to have any impact on the improvement of, for example, individual coaching sessions or key skills learning sessions in the workplace.
25. Value for money is inadequate. Training and learning resources are generally satisfactory. A high number of apprentices left during the period 2008 to 2011 without achieving frameworks. Overall success rates for most learners are below national rates.

Subject areas

Hospitality and catering

Grade 3

Context

26. Some 656 learners are on an apprenticeship programme and 88 are on other programmes at level 2 or level 3. Of these, 55% are women and 7% are from a minority ethnic group. All learners are employed. There are 169 apprentices working towards the advanced award and 487 are working towards intermediate hospitality and catering apprenticeships. A team of 58 training advisers provides the training at the learners' place of work. A learning director has overall responsibility for the subject area.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of apprentices achieving within planned timescales is satisfactory. Overall success rates show an improving trend but are below national rates. Success rates for advanced apprentices are high; however, success rates for 16- to 18-year-old apprentices are low. Progress for some learners is slow and staff do not set these learners sufficiently challenging targets to reflect prior experience in the industry.
- Learners develop good practical skills and a broad vocational knowledge. Learners enjoy learning and are well motivated. They develop a more professional attitude and become more confident at work. Many learners produce complex dishes of a high standard. They progress to further learning or employment at a good rate. Many progress in their job roles, taking on more responsibilities or gaining promotion as a result of their training.
- Learners feel safe. They have a good understanding of safe working practices and use appropriate equipment safely. Most learners adopt a good standard of kitchen and personal hygiene, although a few learners do not routinely follow a high standard of personal presentation in kitchen work. Employers promote health and safety effectively, with in-house training. However, training advisers do not reinforce all learners' understanding of safe internet use sufficiently.
- Assessment is thorough and uses a good range of methods. Assessors make effective use of technology to support assessment decisions. Feedback is constructive and action planning effective. Staff do not challenge advanced apprentices to take ownership of their portfolios and miss opportunities to involve learners fully at times.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Well-qualified staff use their good range of experience to support learning and assessment using relevant examples from current practice in the hospitality industry. Individual learning plans are not always updated with realistic targets that reflect the learner's progress. Insufficient use is made of technology to support learning. The provider has updated its website very recently, but many learners have not yet used it.

- Induction is satisfactory. Staff use clear procedures and a well-planned process. Good paper-based materials support this, but a minority of learners do not complete these to the standards required. Much information is covered, but this is over reliant on tutor input. Staff miss opportunities to incorporate the use of technology and signpost learners sufficiently to web-based materials. Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory. Most workplace supervisors are closely involved and learners receive clear feedback.
- SMART has a good range of provision and flexible delivery to meet the learners' and employers' needs. It makes effective use of optional units to reflect learners' interests and place of work. The company adapts programme content effectively to support the business development needs of employers. Staff visit at times which reflect business patterns and when learners have the best opportunity to gather performance evidence.
- Effective partnership arrangements exist with a diverse range of employers. SMART uses these links effectively to provide placement opportunities for learners as 'tasters' or to extend learning. Employers are very supportive. Many are actively involved in learners' programmes
- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff provide effective individual support for a range of concerns and queries from learners. Staff respond promptly and efficiently to any barriers learners feel may prevent them from learning. Guidance on progression opportunities as learners complete their learning programme is clear and focused on individual needs. A few learners are not sufficiently aware of the support available.
- Management of the hospitality and catering programmes is satisfactory. Most staff have a clear understanding of their objectives and responsibilities. Managers monitor these effectively at monthly meetings. However, a few staff are insufficiently clear about success rate targets, and targets set are insufficiently challenging. Staff have access to performance data but most lack sufficient understanding of current overall success rate data and how these relate to them.
- Health, safety and safeguarding arrangements are good. Staff receive appropriate training and are confident in responding to issues. Many good-quality workplaces are used and clear vetting procedures are in place. Risk assessment procedures are applied effectively. Staff and apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity which are reinforced with learners in the context of the workplace.
- Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Standardisation and team meetings are effective in sharing good practice. Self-assessment includes staff, employers' and learners' views. The report is reasonably accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement, although the judgements regarding data are over stated and grades awarded are too high. Quality monitoring activities do not cover all aspects of learning adequately and staff do not receive sufficiently-detailed feedback on areas for improvement.

What does SMART need to do to improve further?

- Improve overall success rates by ensuring that learners are set challenging targets that adequately reflect their prior experiences and abilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by more effective use of individual learning plans and a greater range of methods to ensure increased learner involvement in learning sessions. Improve the use of technology in supporting learning.
- Further develop staff understanding of success rates and what constitutes challenging targets by improving their understanding of current performance data, internal and external benchmarks and by using data more rigorously in self-assessment.
- Further develop quality improvement arrangements to ensure that all aspects of the learners' programmes are effectively monitored. Provide training advisers with detailed areas for improvement in their performance and its impact on the learners' programme.

Foundation learning

Grade 3

Context

27. SMART provides a Foundation Learning Programme including functional skills, vocational skills and personal and social development (PSD). Currently, there are 25 learners on the programme, of whom 13 are female. There are 24 White British learners and one learner is Bangladeshi. All programmes are part time and run for a minimum of 16 hours a week for an average of 24 weeks, although this varies in response to demand. The Foundation Learning Programme is located at one centre in Newport, Isle of Wight.

Key findings

- Outcomes for foundation learners are satisfactory overall. The proportion of learners who progressed to further training, education or work is satisfactory, with 66% of those who started since 2010 progressing. During the same period, the number of learners who achieved PSD awards is satisfactory with 72% of learners who entered achieving.
- The number of learners who achieved a functional skills qualification, as a proportion of those who entered since the programme started, is low at 48%. Based on further data submitted by the provider during the inspection, the number of functional skills qualifications achieved has improved recently.
- The development of learners' confidence, motivation and social skills is effective and learners are enthusiastic about learning. Learners receive effective support which is flexible to meet their needs. However, there is lack of stretch and challenge for a few learners.
- Learners make good progress and achieve employability skills. Preparation for apprenticeships is good. A good variety of community and work placements helps learners to develop a wide range of skills in preparation for employment or continued learning. Placements include, for example, local retail outlets and care homes. Learners feel safe and demonstrate good, positive attitudes within the centre. They behave well and treat each other with care and respect.
- Initial assessment is effective and clearly identifies learners' existing skill levels in reading, writing and spoken English. However, tutors do not use the results sufficiently to inform lesson planning in order to meet individual needs. Learners are not fully aware of their starting points or steps they need to take to improve, and use learning records to log activities completed rather than identify skills to develop and progress.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Group sessions are constructive. Learners show a good understanding and confidence in answering questions on job seeking and interview techniques. Tutors develop a good rapport with learners to interest and motivate them. However, they do not plan in sufficient

detail to challenge all learners fully. Planning often focuses on activities to be completed at differing levels rather than on skills and attitudes to be developed.

- Tutors use a limited range of activities and rely too much on whole-group feedback to check progress.
- Links with partners are effective. Partners and other outside support agencies value the way foundation learners develop skills and are able to contribute to external activities and work. SMART provides very effective support for learners, particularly in responding to personal and welfare needs.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Tutors receive good support from managers. Good communication takes place and team working is effective. Staff development arrangements are effective. Managers and staff have a clear view about their responsibilities with learners and their development. However, the staff team does not identify improvement priorities sufficiently clearly. Nor does it have a clear view of the achievement targets for the Foundation Learning Programme. The management of attendance lacks rigour.
- Arrangements to promote safeguarding are satisfactory. Learners are aware of basic safeguarding procedures. All staff are trained and are well aware of safeguarding and of their roles. Safeguarding is promoted to learners but is not embedded within all teaching sessions. SMART uses learners' and partners' feedback effectively to inform programme development.
- The provider promotes equality and diversity effectively. Learners have a reasonable understanding of equality and diversity and the way in which they affect their life and work. Tutors do not use opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons. Data are not used effectively to identify actions to remedy under representation of particular groups.
- The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Reviews of the quality of the provision are structured. The process involves both staff and learners and informs the self-assessment report effectively. Judgements in the self-assessment report are over generous and result in higher grades than the evidence supports, particularly with regard to data analysis.
- Lessons which are observed are often over graded. Improvements required in teaching and learning are not always recorded as actions for staff. The areas for improvement resulting from the inspection were not identified in the self-assessment report.

What does SMART need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of learners who achieve an appropriate level of functional skills by ensuring effective learning takes place to challenge and stretch all learners.
- Make better use of initial and diagnostic assessment to inform detailed lesson planning and set clear, specific and measurable targets for the development of individuals' literacy and numeracy skills. Involve learners in recognising, recording and evaluating their own progress and setting specific targets.

- Focus on more demanding objectives and challenge the learners by entering them at appropriate levels of qualifications. Raise their expectations, including introducing ambitious targets for attendance and punctuality.
- Increase the focus on improvement priorities by better analysis of data and by improving the evaluation of teaching and learning and quantifying centre improvement targets, including attendance.

Business administration and law

Grade 4

Context

28. SMART provides work-based learning for 1,692 learners on apprenticeship programmes, of whom 645 are on customer service programmes, 378 on team leading, 241 management and 428 on business administration. Just over half are female and 10% are from a minority ethnic heritage. Learners are employed in a range of organisations in the public and private sector.

Key findings

- Overall framework success rates in business administration and law are low. The success rate was 68% in 2010/11, 12 percentage points below the national average. For 16- to 18-year-olds in business administration and law, the success rate was particularly low at 19 percentage points below the national average. Customer service success rates are also particularly low.
- Current learners are making satisfactory progress and the standard of work they produce is at expected levels or above. Learners develop good employability skills such as communication, report writing, use of modern office technology and customer service practices. Learners are articulate and well motivated and enjoy their learning. As their confidence and self-worth develop, they take on more responsibilities at work, such as training teams or mentoring other apprentices.
- Learners feel safe. They have a good understanding of what action to take if they are treated inappropriately at work. They treat others with respect and understand the need for personal and data security. Training advisers carry out thorough risk assessments of the workplace at the start of training. However, not all learners understand the need for internet safety.
- Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Experienced and qualified training advisers explain topics well, using their commercial experience to bring realism to training. They provide effective coaching on tasks learners are undertaking at work such as using information technology. However, learning is often inhibited by time constraints and an over reliance on workbooks. Few learners use the provider's online resources. Target setting lacks rigour and challenge.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Staff use a good variety of assessment methods and give prompt and constructive feedback to learners. They make good use of digital recorders for professional discussions, but questions are not sufficiently probing and do not challenge learners at level 3 sufficiently. Initial assessment is appropriate and individual needs are identified and recorded effectively.
- The range of programmes meets the needs of learners and employers satisfactorily, enabling learners to progress. The provider matches learners well

to jobs, meeting learners' and employers' aspirations. Advisers work flexibly to suit learners' work patterns and employers' needs.

- SMART's partnerships with employers bring benefits to learners. Participation by employers in training and assessment enables learners to progress. Employers help to design key skills projects which meet the learners' and the business' needs. Employers provide development opportunities such as store management, event planning and meetings with clients on site. Employers also involve learners in the community through charity projects.
- Support, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Staff contact learners frequently between visits. They meet learners off site to save them travelling, and give interview practice to unemployed learners. Numeracy support helps learners calculate stock and sales accurately at work. Staff provide advice and guidance appropriately during the programme.
- Leaders and managers failed to meet modest success rate targets in 2010/11. High numbers of apprentices and other learners have left without achieving their learning aims or qualifications over the past three years. Leaders and managers monitor staff performance, although staff are not always clear about the targets they are expected to achieve. Actions to raise success rates are now in place but it is too early to judge their effectiveness overall.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity and treat others with respect. Equality and diversity are promoted at induction and at progress reviews. However, staff sometimes lack confidence in discussing wider issues and do not always develop learners' understanding effectively.
- Quality improvement has been slow. Managers have not always made improvement priorities and targets for improving success rates clear to staff over the past three years. Managers have addressed this in the recent past. Other recent changes have improved internal verification and quality monitoring arrangements. Little observation of assessment or training was carried out until the autumn of 2011.
- Self-assessment is not accurate. Self-assessment reports generated at the training centres lacked a clear analysis of outcomes in relation to data, judgements were not supported by sufficient evidence and the grades awarded were over generous.

What does SMART need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates through more rigorous monitoring of learners' progress and more challenging target setting for staff and learners.
- Use a greater variety of interactive methods in training by developing staff skills and sharing best practice.
- Raise learners' awareness of internet safety by embedding it more thoroughly in the learning process.
- Widen staff understanding of equality and diversity through sharing good practice.

- Implement a more rigorous approach to self-assessment by realistic, critical analysis and interpretation of data. Monitor actions to improve more rigorously.

Information about the inspection

29. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's surveys, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the three main subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
SMART Training and Recruitment
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	2,800	25	2,775
Overall effectiveness	4	3	4
Capacity to improve	4		
Outcomes for learners	4	3	4
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4		
How well do learners progress?	4		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3		
How safe do learners feel?	3		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	na		
Quality of provision	3	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3		
Leadership and management	4		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	na		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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