

SYTG Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

SYTG Limited (SYTG, the company) was formed in 1990. It operates from premises near to Sheffield city centre and provides provision for learners with significant educational and personal barriers to education and training. SYTG receives funding to deliver foundation learning for around 110 learners annually from the Young People's Learning Agency. The company has also a contract with Sheffield City Council to offer a vocational support programme for learners aged 14 to 16 who are disengaged from school.

Since its reinspection in April 2010, the company has restructured. One director is now responsible for all aspects of the company's performance. SYTG also employs a programme manager, three tutors, two support tutors and one administrator on a full-time and part-time basis.

This focused monitoring visit follows the reinspection at which inspectors judged the outcomes for learners, quality of provision, leadership and management, including SYTG's arrangements to promote safeguarding, and equality and diversity and its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. They also judged quality of provision in preparation for life and work to be satisfactory.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has SYTG made in ensuring that the self-assessment process and report uses information and data effectively and that the process is effective and inclusive?

Insufficient progress

At the reinspection, the self-assessment process was weak. The self-assessment report was insufficiently evaluative and information and data were not used to support its judgements. The most recent self-assessment report, which is written by the managers and shared with staff, is not sufficiently evaluative or critical. The report includes too much description and does not use data and evidence, including information from the company's quality system, adequately. For example, findings from SYTG's teaching and learning observation process are not used to inform the assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report does not consider the impact of the identified strengths and areas for improvement on learners sufficiently. The actions in the quality improvement plan are drawn from the reinspection report. However, SYTG has not implemented some important actions, for example improvements relating to the analysis and use of data. SYTG does not monitor and update the improvement plan systematically. The arrangements to

moderate the findings of the self-assessment process, including sharing information with partners, are underdeveloped.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has SYTG made to improve learners' achievement, attendance and punctuality?

Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, SYTG delivered an Entry to employment (E2e) programme in which learners' progression rates and attainment of personal learning objectives were satisfactory. Learners' development of literacy and numeracy was also satisfactory. However, their attendance and punctuality at some sessions were poor. Since then, SYTG has offered a foundation learning programme and data for this are only available for 2010/11. Using the company's data, overall achievement rates improved from 45% in 2009/10 to 72% in 2010/11. SYTG has managed the change from E2e to foundation learning well; taking the opportunity to review the programme to ensure it more effectively meets learners' needs. SYTG has taken a number of good, innovative and creative actions to improve both retention and attendance rates. For example, making telephone calls to non-attendees and collecting them from their homes. Retention rates and punctuality have improved and are now satisfactory. Learners' progress review documents and feedback from staff and learners suggest that many learners satisfactorily develop their personal and wider employability skills and self-esteem. However, tutors do not plan to develop, monitor and record these wider outcomes formally and systematically.

Quality of provision

What progress has SYTG made to improve the quality of teaching, training and assessment?

Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, teaching, training and assessment were satisfactory. Since then, SYTG has significantly improved the initial assessment process which now takes four weeks. All learners receive literacy and numeracy tests and a newly appointed tutor provides them with individual support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Information from the initial assessment process is satisfactorily used to inform learners' individual learning and development plans. However, the actions in the plans are not always sufficiently detailed or recorded. SYTG has revised the qualifications that it offers, for example delivering a 'personal development and contributing to the community' unit which allows learners to gain credit from their volunteering work in, for example, charity shops. All learners are offered work placements lasting from four to 28 weeks depending on the availability of placements and learners' preferences. These placements are very effective in developing learners' skills and motivation. The teaching observed during the monitoring visit identified that tutors were supporting learners appropriately. However, they were not setting and implementing clear expectations about learners' conduct during the sessions observed. For example, tutors did not challenge, or support learners who were using their mobile telephones to send text messages, or listening to their

personal digital music players, to consider the appropriateness of their conduct on their learning and that of other learners.

Leadership and management

What progress has SYTG made to monitor and close the achievement gaps between different groups of learners?

Significant progress

At the reinspection, SYTG did not systematically monitor the performance of different groups of learners in order to narrow achievement gaps. Since then, SYTG has made significant progress in improving this aspect of its work. Following careful analysis, the company identified that learners who were speakers of other languages and who required support in English were less successful than those whose first language was English. SYTG employed an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) specialist tutor to provide both tutoring and specialist support to those learners. The ESOL tutor successfully monitors and analyses the performance of different groups of learners according to age, gender, ethnicity, cultural background and disability. Learners from the minority groups, although smaller in number, achieve better than the majority. SYTG is well aware of changes to recruitment patterns and the recent arrival of Eastern European migrants, and has worked well to plan for them. Staff have a detailed understanding of, and insight into, the cultural barriers for all learners and work well to reduce and, where possible, remove the impact of these barriers to learning. Specific teaching strategies, including demonstration and learning through practical experience, have been very effective in closing achievement gaps. For example, achievements by women have increased significantly as have achievements by learners from an Asian heritage.

What progress has SYTG made to improve its provision through collecting and using learners' and employers' views and feedback?

Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, arrangements for the collection and use of learners' and employers' feedback to improve the provision were insufficient. Following the reinspection, SYTG has improved its arrangements to collect, analyse and respond to learners' and employers' views. The company has also responded well to the findings in the reinspection report regarding learners' likes and what they thought could be improved. SYTG issues and collects learners' questionnaires at set times in the quality calendar. Staff discuss the results of the feedback at team meetings and take appropriate actions. For example, in response to learner feedback, SYTG has implemented a system whereby learners retain all of the work in their portfolios, even 'signed off' units, so that they are clear about the progress they are making. The different units are kept in different colour files. Learners say that this new arrangement has helped them to maintain motivation to complete. To collect employers' views and feedback, the director regularly attends two employer forums, including a 'breakfast club'. This has also been an effective way to maintain up-to-date information regarding employment and placement opportunities in the local area. This direct contact is very effective in informing SYTG of pressures on local

employers in the current economic climate. However, the questionnaire used for learners' feedback is simplistic, using mostly closed questions. The employers' questionnaire focuses on learners' experience at their placements. This questionnaire does not have sufficient focus on improving the provision or on how SYTG can improve its response to employers' comments.

What progress has SYTG made to improve its quality improvement arrangements?

Reasonable progress

At the reinspection, quality improvement arrangements were weak. Since then, SYTG has introduced a quality calendar in order to take a more regular and effective approach towards monitoring and reviewing the quality of provision. The observation of key aspects of its teaching and learning process, including initial assessment, teaching and progress review sessions, is systematic. In 2010/11, all tutors were observed. SYTG has introduced a programme of peer observations to increase the pace of sharing good practice. The observation recording form includes useful sections to encourage observers to evaluate the quality of learning which takes place during sessions, together with an action plan for improvements. However, the recording of some observed sessions is too descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. The programme manager satisfactorily monitors the quality of learners' individual learning and development plans and their portfolios to ensure they have an appropriate range of evidence, including work records. Tutors receive appropriate feedback about any improvements required in completing the plans or the range of evidence in the portfolios. However, the results of this monitoring process are not always recorded. SYTG is in the process of updating its quality policies and procedures and acknowledges that some aspects of its quality system need to be more formal and systematic.

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