

McArthur Dean Training Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53280

Name of lead inspector: Gwendoline Greaves HMI

Last day of inspection: 18 March 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. McArthur Dean Training Limited (McArthur Dean) was established in 1995 and has a contract with the Skills Funding Agency to provide business administration, management, accountancy and customer service apprenticeships in Hull and the surrounding areas. At the time of inspection, 117 apprentices and 71 advanced apprentices were in training. McArthur Dean also provides full-cost Level 4 accountancy programmes although this area of provision was not inspected. McArthur Dean's mission is to put the learner first through the delivery of high quality training.
2. Two directors, with responsibility for strategic, financial and operational management, lead a team of 11 assessors and seven administrators. Accountancy learners attend the centrally located training centre one day each week for theory. All other learners attend one day each week over a twelve-week period to complete their technical certificate. All assessments are completed in the workplace.
3. Hull has a population of approximately 258,000, of whom 7% are minority ethnic heritage groups. Hull has one of the worst employment rates in the UK, with a 13% unemployment rate compared to the national average of 7%. In 2009, 36.9% of pupils attained 5 GCSEs A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, compared to a national average of 49.8%.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	428 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Overall effectiveness

4. Learners generally enjoy their programmes of study and benefit from the good training they receive from McArthur Dean and their employers. A satisfactory number of learners successfully complete their apprenticeship framework, with a high rate of success achieved by apprentices on business administration programmes. Many learners take on increased responsibility at work which can include supervising other staff. Learners have a good understanding of personal and workplace safety. The choices and levels of programmes and vocational units available to learners are good and supported by good teaching and learning. Assessment is reliable and available through the frequent assessor visits to employers' premises. However, assessors insufficiently use information and learning technology as an additional learning and assessment tool, and learners' involvement in planning assessments and managing their own progress is limited. Initial literacy and numeracy assessments identify learners' additional support needs, which assessors support very effectively throughout their programme. However, a small group of learners were entered for a qualification that is not aligned to the apprenticeship framework requirement. This has been resolved and all learners will achieve a full framework.
5. Learners' career goals are of high importance to McArthur Dean and they support them through working with good employers in productive employer partnerships. However, training completed within the workplace does not systematically contribute to learners' progress reviews. McArthur Dean's strategic aims are carefully considered but managers insufficiently convert them into clearly defined, measurable annual targets. The promotion of safeguarding is good, as is equality and diversity. The company takes good actions in response to learners' and employers' views and their evaluations contribute to self-assessment. A senior manager completes a comprehensive schedule of quality checks that have improved the quality of provision. However, the observations of teaching and learning insufficiently record how assessors can

improve learning. There is insufficient use of management information systems to evaluate ongoing performance against pre-set targets.

Main findings

- Overall success rates and completion within planned timescales, show a consistent trend of improvement and are currently just below the national average. Success rates are high for apprentices on the business administration programme but are inconsistent on too many other programmes. Retention for current year learners is high and attendance at the training centre is very good.
- Current learners are making good progress. The majority of learners pass external assessments first time. The achievement of vocational assessments reflects individual achievement targets and learners demonstrate high standards of work in the workplace. Many learners take on additional responsibilities and complete a wide range of activities within their job roles, which employers value highly.
- Learners feel safe in the workplace and have a good understanding of the provider's safeguarding arrangements. Learners receive 'stay safe' cards and wristbands and assessors effectively promote a freephone hotline. McArthur Dean continues to reinforce safeguarding and safe working practices through good questioning during learners' reviews.
- Teaching and learning are good. Assessors plan sessions very effectively, incorporating good classroom management and activities that challenge and engage most learners. However, assessors' use of information and learning technology to present information in an alternative way is insufficient. The provider's observation of teaching and learning is frequent and mostly accurate but written records do not sufficiently help assessors improve learning.
- Assessment plans are detailed and clear, and assessment is reliable. However, learners, that are more able, take insufficient control of their assessment planning and progress. Initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs satisfactorily contributes to their ongoing support. Progress reviews are good and effectively focus on personal and vocational development.
- The range of provision is very responsive to the needs and career aspirations of learners. They can select from a wide range of relevant optional NVQ units, with some taking higher-level and additional units. Although now resolved, a small group of learners were entered for literacy and numeracy qualifications that are insufficiently aligned to the apprenticeship framework.
- Partnerships with local schools and referral agencies are very effective. Many learners are working in a broad range of primary and secondary schools. McArthur Dean has developed good, long standing relationships with employers that support and provide good workplace training. However, employer training is not systematically informing learners' progress reviews.
- The care, guidance and support learners receive to help them attain their learning goals are good. Learners receive good information, advice and guidance about their next steps in training, education and employment. There is excellent support in finding new employment for learners at risk of redundancy. Provider staff are very responsive to requests for additional help at short notice.

- McArthur Dean places learners and their career aspirations as their highest priority. Business planning takes very good account of local, regional and national priorities, but although strategic aims are well established some lack sufficiently measurable annual outcomes.
- The well established promotion of learner safety is good. All learners are able to speak confidently about how they can keep safe. Very sound vetting processes audit employers' health and safety practices. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Senior managers effectively monitor the achievement of diverse groups and the strategies used to attract under represented learners are good. Learners and staff value the inclusiveness of the company.
- Self-assessment is sufficiently evaluative to support the majority of judgments. A comprehensive quality assurance process systematically evaluates all aspects of provision which, in many cases, leads to improved practice. However, managers are not effectively using centralised management information systems to evaluate in-year progress against pre-set performance targets.
- McArthur Dean systematically collects, evaluates and makes improvements in response to learners' and employers' feedback. Overall, resources are satisfactory. Staff are adequately equipped to support learner success. However, although e-learning is a strategic aim, there is little use of information technology in formal learning or assessment.

What does McArthur Dean Training Limited need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on underperforming programmes by taking full account of the training completed by employers. Promote more challenge for more able learners by encouraging them to take an active role in managing their progress and the planning of assessments.
- Improve the observation of teaching and learning through the setting of individual improvement actions that focus on learning rather than the process of teaching.
- Replace the existing literacy and numeracy certification arrangements as the provision changes to functional skills to ensure their alignment with the apprenticeship framework.
- Improve the use of information technology when setting and evaluating in-year performance targets. Promote better use of information and information technology to enhance the learning and assessment experience of learners.
- Establish strategic aims that are annual, detailed and measurable activities, and targets that are frequently monitored to improve their timely achievement.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good and interesting teaching that helps them understand related theories
- the frequent individual reviews that identify and help them achieve their next targets
- supportive employers whose training and attention help them progress and succeed
- the range of qualifications that helps them gain more responsibility and promotion at work
- the good advice and guidance that help them make good career choices
- the regular contact with, and flexibility and accessibility of, assessors
- how all the staff are very supportive and helpful
- the flexible programme that has a good mixture of on- and off-the-job training.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the reliability, and better use of, information technology at the training centre
- redecoration of the training centre to brighten the rooms and stairs
- less disruption when tutors are ill or on leave.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the positive contribution that the training makes to learners' workplace practice and their ability to take on additional responsibility
- the good communication and helpfulness of provider staff and their quick response to any issues
- the professionalism of the staff and their good matching of highly appropriate apprentices to employers
- how McArthur Dean openly encourages employers to be part of, and contribute to, the frequent learner progress reviews
- how their learners enjoy the training.

What employers would like to see improved:

- a more flexible approach to exams using information technology
- more formal feedback in the form of reports on the progress learners are making
- continuation of the very good levels of communication that occur at the beginning of the programme.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. McArthur Dean exhibits a clear commitment to improving the quality of learning and providing good support that helps learners achieve their career goals. Well informed business planning effectively links to local need. Long term strategic targets have sufficient challenge but are not all developed into sufficiently detailed annual targets. Success rates have consistently improved each year. Success rates for apprentices on business administration are constantly high. Success rates on other programmes vary considerably and fluctuate between years. McArthur Dean has maintained most of the strengths from the previous inspection and has remedied many of the weaknesses. Quality of provision is good, as is the good employer-partnership working and learner support, particularly for those learners facing redundancy. Quality assurance is effective in identifying changes in practice that benefit and improve the quality of provision. However, self-assessment has not fully remedied the fluctuating and inconsistent success rates. Management information systems are under developed and performance management is too reliant on data collected by individual assessors and not held centrally.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

7. The overall success rates have improved each year over the last four years, taking the 2009/10 success rate of 76% to slightly below the national average. The success rate of apprentices on business administration, the largest group of learners, is high. Conversely, the success rate of advanced apprentices on business administration is low. In accountancy and finance, the improved and high success rate in 2008/09 has not been sustained and success has dropped to 4 percentage points below the national average. The success rate for the small cohorts of learners on management and customer service programmes is low but improving.
8. Learners enjoy their training programmes and current learners are making good progress. The majority of learners are completing units in accordance with their individual learning plan and achieving high pass rates on external assessments. Those learners aged 16 to 18 are more likely to be successful than older learners, but there are no significant differences between other learner groups. Current retention is good at 86%. Provider data show that of those learners who leave their programme early, 24% are redundancy related.
9. The standard of learners' work is high, resulting in many gaining increased responsibility, some for other members of staff and apprentices within their workplace. Employers speak highly of learners' skills and their ability to instigate new systems and processes within the workplace.
10. Learners' have a good understanding of health, safety and safeguarding. They are extremely aware of personal safety and their responsibilities when using the internet and social networks. They have a good understanding and comply with all workplace health and safety requirements. Employers are fully aware of their responsibilities to learners, providing clear guidance during workplace

inductions. Centre facilities include places to relax with the availability of free refreshments.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. Teaching and learning are good. In the better sessions, there is good reinforcement of previous learning through well considered revision activities. Most learners are fully involved, keen to participate and share their existing knowledge. Assessors use question and answer techniques effectively to assess learners' knowledge and understanding. However, information technology is very rarely used and activities do not fully reflect all learners' needs. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but it does not sufficiently focus on learning or clearly record how assessors can improve their practice. Overall, training plans are satisfactory but a small cohort of current learners is completing adult literacy and numeracy awards rather than a key skills certificate. This is now resolved and all learners will achieve the full framework.
12. Most employers provide learners with good training and development opportunities. However, McArthur Dean takes insufficient account of the good training and development employers provide and learners' workplace experiences do not sufficiently inform target setting and assessment planning during reviews.
13. Assessment plans are detailed and clear. Assessment outcomes are reliable with a good use of work products and questioning to maximise the learners' evidence. McArthur Dean has introduced online testing at the centre. However, too few assessors use technology to support workplace assessments and more able learners are insufficiently encouraged to take control of collating their portfolios of evidence or planning their assessments.
14. Induction provides learners with satisfactory programme information and clear guidance on their rights and responsibilities. At the regular progress reviews, assessors and employers effectively evaluate learners' development and set appropriate progress targets. Health, safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding are further reinforced, with the employers and learners responding to questions to extend understanding.
15. McArthur Dean has a good range of provision from intermediate to level 4. Progression into higher education is good. Learners progress well between levels and in some cases between programmes. Good choices of units match learners' job roles, with some learners completing additional units from higher-level programmes. Learners and employers have a choice of attendance options to suit their personal and business needs.
16. Partnership arrangements with employers are well established and very productive, with learners progressing into responsible positions. Employers value McArthur Dean's very professional approach to workforce development and succession planning. Many employers recommend McArthur Dean to others and view the recently developed employer forum as an opportunity to share views and ideas. Good employer working has benefited learners threatened with

redundancy, with learners transferring to other McArthur Dean employers wherever possible. Partnerships with local schools and referral agencies are very effective with many learners now working in a broad range of primary and secondary schools in the area.

17. Information, advice and guidance are good and provided by an experienced team of recruitment specialists. Comprehensive recruitment arrangements allow learners to demonstrate their aptitude and employability. Initial literacy and numeracy assessments result in timely additional support in the form of coaching in the workplace and appropriate workbooks. McArthur Dean staff provide good personal and vocational support and advice throughout the learning programme, with excellent support given to learners at risk of losing their employment. Learners and employers receive a good range of leaflets and information guides on higher education and professional studies as they leave their programmes.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

18. Senior managers place a high importance in providing programmes that support learners' career goals and promote success. In a time of economic down turn, McArthur Dean has recruited specialist staff that have successfully increased the number of employers and settings, widening learners' career opportunities. Communication is good and staff have a good understanding of the company's vision. Through good partnership working, McArthur Dean is well positioned to respond to new national, regional and local priorities. Company business and improvement plans effectively reflect the five strategic priorities. However, too few have specific and measurable annual milestone targets. Curriculum planning is satisfactory overall. However, current literacy and numeracy awards take insufficient account of apprenticeship framework requirements. The provider is currently implementing appropriate changes to the curriculum.
19. The promotion of learner safety is well embedded and good. An appropriate safeguarding policy covers all key aspects of adult safety with particularly good guidance on e-safety. The policies for recruiting staff and maintaining appropriate central staff records are detailed. Senior staff have established good links with local safeguarding boards. All staff have completed appropriate training and are conversant with good practice in safeguarding. The promotion of personal and occupational safety is good, with all learners able to speak confidently about how they can keep safe. Very sound vetting processes audit employers' health and safety practices, with particular attention paid to employers' ongoing commitment to safety and related training.
20. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners and staff value the company's inclusive, open and supportive approach. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, which is further reinforced through carefully phrased questioning during learners' progress reviews. McArthur Dean is currently amending its equality policy in line with the new single equality standards. Success rates are effectively monitored which has resulted in actions to improve success rates for adult learners. Good and effective strategies to increase male learners have resulted in a significant increase in applications.

21. Learners' and employers' views form part of the ongoing quality assurance processes. Questionnaires report on all aspects of the provision. Summary reports and evaluations inform staff and effectively lead to improvements. Employers' and learners' forums have recently been introduced, which employers find particularly beneficial.
22. Self-assessment is inclusive with stakeholders and staff informing judgements. Although in parts the report is overly descriptive, it provides sufficient evaluation to support the majority of its judgments. A comprehensive quality assurance process systematically evaluates all aspects of the learner experience. McArthur Dean has introduced improvements to the quality of provision. The predicted outcomes for learners nearing the end of training are discussed fully with assessors during monthly meetings, as are those learners at risk of redundancy. However, senior managers do not have access to centrally held data on learner progress, which limits their ability in evaluating progress against pre-set milestones or any evolving trends.
23. Resources are satisfactory overall. Staff are well qualified and adequately equipped to support learner success. However, although e-learning is a strategic aim, there is little use of information technology in formal learning or assessment.

Information about the inspection

24. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. 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 subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
McArthur Dean Training Limited
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer 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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	188	188
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	3	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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