

Matrix Training and Development

Focused monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Suite 07
Grosvenor House
Hollingsworth Road
Telford
TF2 9TW

Telephone number: 01952 293367

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

The most recent inspection report for Matrix Training and Development (Matrix) was published in January 2008. All key aspects, including overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management were judged as good for both work-based learning and Train to Gain. Equality of opportunity was judged satisfactory. Of the two subject areas inspected, engineering and manufacturing technologies was judged as good and business, administration and law was satisfactory.

Matrix currently has a subcontracted arrangement with the three counties consortium to provide Train to Gain programmes for 230 trainees, and has substantially increased its direct provision of work-based learning to 22 learners in the current year.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Matrix made in its self-assessment and quality improvement planning to drive improvements in provision?	Reasonable progress
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Matrix has addressed most of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and has made improvements to its quality improvement practices. It has simplified feedback from learners and employers with the design of a new questionnaire, which makes concerns easier to identify and has led to improvements. For instance, recent improvements in the business improvement techniques programme resulted from user feedback. However, there is an over-reliance on questionnaires. Other ways of obtaining learners' and employers' views are underdeveloped. The self-assessment process makes better use of data to support its judgements, although references to the quality of teaching, training and assessment in the report are underdeveloped. The company's quality improvement plan has been simplified and improved. It is closely and regularly monitored, with progress against targets well recorded.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has Matrix made in improving learners' progress and outcomes since the last inspection?	Reasonable progress
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Matrix had two apprentices in 2009/10 who successfully completed the programme. Prior to that, completion rates varied considerably. In the current year, 22 learners started apprenticeships with one completion and one withdrawal to date. In-year retention is high. Most learners are making satisfactory progress, although nearly a

third of learners are identified as making slower than expected progress. Matrix identified success rates for Train to Gain learners completing within the expected time as low in its self-assessment report. Consortium data suggest that between 2008/09 and 2009/10 success rates within the planned timescale improved significantly to at, or just below, sector averages. In the current year, the data suggest that success rates within the planned timescale are high. Matrix's own progress monitoring identifies a quarter of Train to Gain learners as making slower than expected progress. Learners are developing expected skills in the workplace.

Quality of provision

What progress has Matrix made in addressing target setting for individuals?

Reasonable progress

Matrix has begun to analyse the time taken for learners to complete programmes and how the information gathered through initial assessment might be used to set more appropriate long-term targets for learners. However, learner files and individual learning plans show only a little consideration of the results of initial assessment to set targets. For example, one learner with acknowledged spelling issues has no target identified for this. Another with GCSE mathematics is set to achieve foundation level in maths; the minimum for the framework.

Short and medium-term targets and progress reviews are satisfactory. Progress reviews are frequent and thorough, and although employers are not always present they do have the opportunity to contribute and are appropriately informed of the outcomes.

What progress has Matrix made in the implementation of its functional skills strategy?

Reasonable progress

As Matrix increases its apprenticeship programme, significantly more learners will be taking functional skills. Initial assessment for apprentices is satisfactory and provides a clear picture of individual needs. However, it is not always used sufficiently well to inform learning plans and to set challenging targets.

Matrix's strategy is for assessors to support their learners through the functional skills using a range of workbooks and teaching resources. All assessors have undertaken some training in functional skills and are working towards the functional skills awards at the same level as apprentices. There are no current plans for staff to qualify at a higher level. Early evidence suggests that the strategy is effective. All of the first cohort of learners who took external exams in a range of functional skills modules were successful.

What progress has Matrix made in improving assessment planning and practice?

Reasonable progress

Assessment is well planned. Matrix has identified for each qualification the overall assessment plan which identifies the range of observations and evidence required by each learner. This is flexibly implemented for each learner in response to the opportunities they have for assessment in the workplace. Each part of the process is allocated a weighting which is used to measure progress. Assessment planning in the workplace is also good. Assessors set clear targets for learners at the end of each visit that are agreed with the employer and identify specific evidence and assessment activities for the next visit. Assessment practice is rigorous and appropriately recorded. Matrix is investigating the use of e-assessment and e-portfolios with other providers and suppliers of these systems. However, the engagement of employers in assessment is underdeveloped and currently limited to agreeing plans and supplying witness testimonies.

Leadership and management

What progress has Matrix made in promoting equality and diversity?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, Matrix has appointed an equality and diversity champion to improve its promotion of equality and diversity. Equality and diversity are standing agenda items at the standardisation meeting and the champion has a regular opportunity to share good practice and promote training materials and approaches. Equality and diversity continue to be appropriately promoted at induction and the focus of internal training has been on improving promotion in reviews. The company has expanded its range of resources and materials available to tutors and assessors. While there is some evidence of materials being used, the recording of equality and diversity discussions in review documentation is sparse. Nevertheless, learner surveys suggest that learners' understanding is improving because of these initiatives. At the last inspection, Matrix monitored recruitment but not success rates by different groups. They now monitor the achievements of learners. No major differences between the achievements of different groups have been identified, apart from that of females undertaking business improvement techniques.

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1231231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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