

J D Wetherspoon plc

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58928

Name of lead inspector: Neil Edwards HMI

Last day of inspection: 6 May 2011

Type of provider: Employer

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Information about the provider

1. JD Wetherspoon plc (JDW) was founded in 1979 and has over 800 public houses (pubs) and 18 hotels across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The company employs approximately 25,000 people, around 18% of whom are under 20 years of age. JD Wetherspoon plc is recognised as one of Britain's top employers; its head office is in Watford.
2. JDW has provided company-funded training since the 1980s. They began offering government-funded hospitality and catering apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) under Train to Gain in August 2009. These are integrated into the company's training programmes. The Skills Funding Agency, National Employer Service (NES) provide funding for 95 hospitality apprentices, 16 learners working towards NVQs at level 2 in kitchen services, 29 learners working towards NVQs at level 2 in beverage services and 22 customer service apprentices. JDW also provides apprenticeships and NVQ training to approximately 150 employees which the NES does not fund. These were not part of this inspection, nor were the newly started customer service apprenticeships. Learners are mainly employed in pubs around North West England, London and Nottingham where the company decided to pilot the programmes. The company intends to offer apprenticeships and NVQs to all employees in the future.
3. The company's recruitment and training manager, assisted by the apprenticeship and qualifications coordinator, are responsible for all training. Pub managers and training managers provide training and assessment in the pubs. Since August 2010 Charnwood Training Group has been subcontracted to provide internal verification. This is the first inspection of JDW.
4. The following organisation provides internal verification on behalf of the company:
 - Charnwood Training Group.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	45 learners 95 apprentices

Summary report

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

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

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of JDW's provision is satisfactory. Although learners' progress towards their qualifications is slow, recent appropriate actions taken to improve the pace of assessment and verification have started to make an impact and many learners are now soon to complete. Retention, particularly for the licensed trade, is very good and learners demonstrate good practical skills and knowledge in such areas as health, safety and hygiene, customer service, and the service and presentation of beers, wines and food. Learners enjoy their learning and feel safe, and many make a positive contribution to local and national charities and community organisations.
- The quality of provision is good overall, and learners receive a high standard of training in the workplace. Assessment practices and learner support are satisfactory. The chair, directors and senior managers are strongly committed to the ethos of training and set a clear strategic direction. JDW's arrangements for safeguarding are good. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, although the reinforcement of equality and diversity during learners' reviews and throughout training is infrequent.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners demonstrate good skills and knowledge leading to good progression in their jobs. They also demonstrate good personal and social skills, especially when communicating with customers.
- Retention is particularly good. Most learners have made slow progress, although actions taken to improve the pace have recently started to impact positively and some learners are now near completion.
- Learners have a very good involvement in community and charity events. They feel safe in their work; reinforcement of health, safety and hygiene is thorough.
- Training and learning are good. The quality of learning materials is good and learners make good use of these. The well-written workbooks clearly link to the NVQ. Supervisors give clear instructions when coaching and monitor learning well at regular stages. Assessments are thorough.
- Induction is thorough. Learners receive a comprehensive central induction to the company, followed by a detailed programme specific to their apprenticeship. They have good access to a confidential helpline, and receive a detailed employee and apprentice handbook that aids understanding.
- Apprenticeship and NVQ programme planning is insufficiently detailed. Learners' literacy and numeracy support needs are not routinely assessed at the start of their programme; their progress is not reviewed regularly. Target setting and action planning in learners' progress reviews are inadequate.
- The provision meets the interest and needs of all staff well. Senior staff at JDW work effectively with external partners to develop the apprenticeship and NVQ programmes.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. In some establishments, support from managers is good, although this is not consistent across the provision. Appropriate support is provided for literacy and numeracy where a need is identified.
- The strategic direction is clear and the company has a particularly strong focus on training. Senior managers and directors see the apprenticeship programme and NVQs as an integral part of career development within JDW. The career structure is good and senior staff act as good role models.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Learners are well prepared to identify and deal with all situations in their jobs, which is particularly important working in pubs. Thorough risk assessments ensure learners are safe. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, particularly through induction, although reinforcement throughout the programme is insufficient.
- Quality improvement is satisfactory. Self-assessment has accurately identified most key strengths and areas for improvement. The procedures are new and many of the appropriate actions taken are yet to effect fully improvements across the provision. JDW provides adequate value for money.

What does J D Wetherspoon plc need to do to improve further?

- Increase learner achievement rates by improving monitoring and tracking of learners' progress.
- Improve target setting with learners to make certain they complete their apprenticeship and NVQ programme on time.
- Ensure all learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills to identify and provide the required levels of support.
- Reinforce aspects of equality and diversity throughout the programme to strengthen understanding amongst learners.
- Extend the quality improvement arrangements to ensure the appropriate monitoring of all aspects of the provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- good opportunities to gain qualifications for the first time
- good support from colleagues and managers or supervisors
- learning new skills and gaining knowledge about the business and the job
- the ability to learn at work whilst earning money
- the opportunities to progress within the organisation and gain promotion
- working with people and being valued as a team member
- the opportunities to be involved in charity and community work.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more challenging targets to help them complete the programme more quickly
- more time to complete the workbooks
- communications and information for all staff to identify what makes the apprenticeship and NVQ programmes different from other in-house training
- further development of the interactive electronic learning.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. JDW has demonstrated that it has satisfactory capacity to continue making improvements. Senior staff and directors have a very clear vision and strategy to take the NVQ and apprenticeship programme forward and continue to raise its quality. The self-assessment process is thorough and, although JDW has no overarching quality improvement plan, suitable use is made of learners' views to inform improvements. Appropriate use is made of data to inform the process and to support judgements made. The clearly written self-assessment report accurately identifies key strengths and areas for improvement, but most grades in the report are higher than inspection grades. Although actions taken to improve the speed of assessment and verification have started to have effect, many actions have yet to have a full impact on improvements. Senior staff recognise the improvements made and are fully aware of those areas where work is still needed.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

8. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Retention is very good, particularly for the licensed retail industry, and only eleven apprentices and two NVQ learners have left the programmes since they started. Three of those who left early are due to return after maternity leave. Of the 95 apprentices that started the programme in September 2009, 56 have completed. Five of the 45 NVQ learners who started from August 2010 have completed. While the remaining learners have made slow progress, with many having gone beyond their completion date, progress for these learners has now started to improve following actions taken to increase the pace of assessment and verification. Many of the learners left on the programmes have now almost completed. Outcomes for different groups of learners have no notable variations.
9. Learners develop good practical food and beverage service skills and knowledge. They are highly motivated by working in the licensed trade with customers and well-qualified colleagues. Learners enjoy their work and work well together in teams and independently. They mature and gain in confidence and self-esteem whilst on their programme. Learners feel safe at work and JDW pays close attention to health, safety and hygiene in the workplace and to the welfare of its learners. The company offers flexible working arrangements for learners who have childcare responsibilities. All staff are supplied with personal protective clothing which they wear with pride.
10. Well promoted healthy eating and drinking leaflets help improve staff knowledge and understanding of food and drink choices. These leaflets also help to inform other staff and customers. Many learners enjoy raising funds for local and national charities through events such as tug-of-war competitions and sponsored walks. Some learners are also enthusiastically involved in community work in their local area. This is highly encouraged and well supported by JDW.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. Training and learning are good. All staff complete a well-structured in-house training programme, although planning for those on the NVQ or apprenticeship programmes is insufficiently detailed. Learning materials and workbooks are of particularly high quality and updated regularly to ensure they meet the needs of the business and match well to the NVQ standards. Apprentices, NVQ learners and pub managers/training supervisors use the clearly written workbooks effectively to support good individual and group coaching. JDW is in the process of developing online learning materials to improve the provision further. Learners benefit from very good practical resources in the pubs.
12. Assessment practices are robust. Assessors have supportive relationships with learners and internal verifiers offer flexibility in arranging visits to meet their working patterns. Internal verifiers have a good knowledge of the licensed trade. Monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory, although some learners are unaware of the extent of their progress. Progress reviews are intermittent and target setting is often weak. Not all learners are aware of target dates to complete their programme but, of those that are, some are frustrated that they have not completed in time. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not routinely assessed initially. Managers have recognised this and are developing systems to test all new learners.
13. Arrangements to meet the needs and interest of learners are good. They have good opportunities for progression, with around 70% of learners already having gained promotion whilst on their programme. Pub managers are encouraged to complete a professional diploma and many go on to complete a degree in licensed retail management. JDW works closely with a university which provides accreditation. Partnership working is good. JDW works well with other national companies and a good range of external organisations to develop the apprenticeship and NVQ programmes further to meet the needs of the business and staff.
14. Learners receive a comprehensive induction to the company, followed by a detailed NVQ or apprenticeship induction. Learners' understanding is checked thoroughly through an online test. Learners have good access to a confidential helpline and receive a detailed employee and NVQ or apprentice handbook. This contains a wide range of information including details of external support agencies. Counselling and childcare vouchers are available for all staff through company schemes.
15. Support for learners overall is satisfactory. Some learners receive good personal and learning support from their managers, although this is not consistent across the provision. However, learners enjoy and value the support they get for key skills projects, which are made relevant to the business needs. Adequate support is provided for those learners identified with needs to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

16. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers and directors set a clear direction and see the NVQ and apprenticeship programmes as an integral part of a continuous career development within JDW. The career structure is good and pub managers and senior staff are good role models for learners, with many having gained promotion from within the company. JDW shares its values and vision particularly effectively with staff and learners to provide a positive training experience. The company has an open and supportive management culture, creating a positive work and learning environment. Staff feel valued which encourages the sharing of ideas and helps continuous improvement. Staff and learners' success is celebrated through the company's magazine and in-house publications.
17. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. Safeguarding is a priority within the company and thorough risk assessments are carried out to ensure learners and other staff are well cared for. For example, younger learners have appropriate shifts to ensure they do not have to work late. Pub managers have developed strong and positive relationships with local police forces to ensure the protection of all staff. Effective use is made of posters to inform learners of the risks they may encounter in their jobs. Good use is made of the company's magazine to remind staff of safeguarding issues.
18. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Coverage at induction of topics such as diversity, harassment and bullying is appropriate. However, reinforcement throughout the programme and during reviews is not sufficient to ensure learners are fully confident. Learners are made aware of the organisation's complaints policy and what action to take if needed. Pub managers and other staff undertake appropriate training and have a satisfactory awareness of equality and diversity. Equality and diversity issues are covered satisfactorily within the learners' and staff handbooks.
19. Effective use is made of the strong partnerships with other organisations to develop training programmes and benefit learners continuously. JDW has successfully lobbied the sector skills council to introduce a new qualification in kitchen services to meet needs of the organisation. Good service level agreement and monitoring arrangements are in place with Charnwood Training Group.
20. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Although the company has robust quality assurance processes in place, these mainly focus on the monitoring of company procedures and compliance. Quality monitoring and the improvement of training and the assessment and verification processes are insufficient. The self-assessment process makes good use of learners' and staff feedback and the report has identified many of the key strengths and areas to improve. Although no quality improvement plan is in place that identifies clear dates for actions and responsibilities, managers have taken appropriate actions to improve key areas. Although the pace of assessments has improved the progress for learners, it is too early to recognise fully the impact of these

actions. JDW provides satisfactory value for money. It invests in staffing and learning resources well, although learners' progress in completing their full qualification has been too slow.

Information about the inspection

21. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's apprenticeship and qualifications coordinator, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's first self-assessment report, comments from the National Employer Service and data on learners and their achievements since the start of the programmes.
22. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners. They also looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

J D Wetherspoon plc

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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	140	140
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>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
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?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<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?	3	
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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