

JACE Training and Assessment Centre

Focused monitoring visit report

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

JACE Training and Assessment Centre (JACE) is a privately-owned work-based learning provider that is part of the JANCETT group of day nurseries. Its head office is in Wallington, Surrey, and there are eight training centres throughout London, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. JACE has 428 apprentices, 136 Train to Gain and 28 foundation learners. Additionally, JACE offers childcare qualifications to 14- to 16-year-olds at four local schools and an alternative education programme for young people not attending school. Since the inspection, JACE has introduced programmes in business administration and customer service and no longer offers the Train to Gain Skills for Life programme.

At JACE's last inspection in June 2010, overall effectiveness was graded as good, as was the quality of provision, leadership and management, and, equality and diversity. Safeguarding was graded as outstanding. Capacity to improve and outcomes for learners were satisfactory. Both subject areas that were graded, child development and well-being, and preparation for life and work, were good. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effectively is JACE making improvements, including to the self-assessment process?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, the self-assessment process was inclusive but insufficiently self-critical. As JACE's annual self-assessment is carried out in July, the most recent report was produced shortly after the inspection. The self-assessment report incorporated many of the inspection findings and grades, while reflecting some of the immediate improvements that had been made. Over the last year, managers have strengthened their approach to being more self-critical by completing monthly self-assessment updates. They now have a comprehensive and useful record of judgements and action taken to resolve identified areas for improvement. However, some of the quality improvement initiatives that are used towards self-assessment, such as the observations of teaching, learning and induction and area training managers' monthly reports, vary significantly in their depth and effectiveness. The quality improvement plan is very thorough and regularly monitored. This has resulted in improvements that have enhanced the learners' experience, including to staff expertise, information, advice and guidance, learner recruitment processes, initial and online assessment, and the virtual learning environment (VLE).

Outcomes for learners

What improvements have there been to overall and timely success rates since the inspection?

Reasonable progress

At inspection, overall outcomes for apprentices were satisfactory and improving, although timely success rates were significantly below national rates. Since inspection, managers have taken very successful action to increase timely success rates. They reviewed and adjusted the duration of each programme to be more appropriate. The introduction of online assessment and study workshops has greatly improved childcare learners' levels of motivation and the speed at which learners progress. Timely success rates are now well above national rates.

JACE's decision to transfer apprentices to functional skills has adversely impacted on overall success rates, which dipped in the first six months after August 2010. Some apprentices' achievement was affected by delays while waiting to re-sit tests when they did not pass the first time. Identified staff now lead on functional skills and provide support and advice to their colleagues. Some learners have been transferred back to key skills or other awarding bodies. The company's own data for the last five months show this is starting to improve apprentices' overall success rates. The current cumulative rate is close to last year's national rate and more learners are predicted to achieve before the end of the year.

How well has JACE maintained the high progression rates from foundation learning programmes into further training, education or employment?

Significant progress

JACE was offering the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme at the time of inspection and had very high progression rates, with two thirds of learners going into childcare apprenticeships and other learning. The transition from E2E to Foundation Learning has been well managed and all staff appropriately trained about the differences between the two programmes. Course leaders and tutors have devoted significant activity into ensuring that the revised programme prepares learners well for the world of work and further training and education. They have further developed their work with partners at a local level to facilitate progression opportunities for learners. Tutors continue to offer learners effective help with jobseeking, writing curriculum vitae and application forms, and with interview practice. Many learners use their work experience placement to good effect to progress onto apprenticeships. As a result of this, progression rates remain very high at 67% and the proportion of learners that leave without achieving is declining.

Quality of provision

To what extent has JACE improved the progress review and target setting processes for learners?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, learners did not always have clear targets. Formal reviews of learners' progress were not used effectively to ensure timely completion and there was often a difference between learners' understanding of their progress and the

assessors' reports. Since then, JACE has effectively improved the processes and supporting paperwork for reviewing and monitoring learners' progress. The introduction of the VLE and online assessment enables learners to accurately see their progress towards achieving units, track their overall progress and gain more immediate feedback about how to improve their work. Managers and tutors are more focused in using management information to identify learners near to their planned programme end date and support them to achieve on time. Some tutors recognise that target setting still needs to be further developed. Learners' targets continue to be too varied, ranging from good to not sufficiently clear and tending not to include personal targets.

What progress has been made in redesigning the induction programmes to meet the needs of all Foundation Learning learners?

Reasonable progress

At inspection, induction was satisfactory but the induction handbook was designed for learners at level 2 and above and contained too much detail for foundation level learners. Following the previous inspection, JACE immediately revised the induction programme to be more suited to foundation level learners' needs. Over the past year, tutors have further developed the induction programme and it is now in its third revision. The induction handbook is now comprehensive, visually attractive and well produced. Learners find the handbook a good reference document and it clearly meets their needs. JACE has developed a very good range of induction learning resources that all tutors can access through the VLE. However, there is no clear induction plan that tutors can follow to ensure induction is a consistent experience for all learners. Tutors' lesson plans for learner induction vary too much and do not always use information from learners' enrolment to meet their individual needs.

Leadership and management

To what extent are managers using management information to monitor and manage learners' progress?

Significant progress

The management information being used at inspection was not always sufficiently focused to manage the provision effectively or provide the organisation with sufficient information to identify learners who were progressing too slowly. JACE has taken considerable action to improve this situation. Immediately following inspection, a new management information system was introduced and staff trained so they could use it. Managers and tutors are now using management information very well to track learner achievement regularly and identify those at risk of not achieving or missing deadlines. They use this to direct their support towards learners struggling to complete. Managers have more immediate access to data, enabling them to react much more quickly to trends and monitor the impact of actions and initiatives they have introduced. Senior managers have introduced healthy competition among area offices through league tables based on overall and timely success. Staff at all levels have a much clearer understanding of their performance and take greater account of their role. Managers are continually reviewing the range of management information and reports they are using to meet the evolving needs of the organisation and

themes they are evaluating, for example to assess the impact of functional skills on overall success rates.

What progress is JACE making in using management information to identify trends in the performance of different groups?

Reasonable progress

At the inspection, data and management information were being used well to manage participation levels and the achievement of contracts. However, data were not analysed sufficiently to identify trends over time or compare success rates for different groups. Since inspection, senior managers have identified which groups they want to monitor and started to use the management information system to produce trend reports and graphs. They recognise that they are still at an early stage of using data on performance by different groups. Managers regularly discuss success rates at area office level, enabling them to identify lower success rates in particular geographical areas, such as South London. Some of this lower success has been dealt with through performance management of staff. However, other reasons why some learners are taking longer to achieve have not yet been sufficiently investigated or action taken for improvement. Managers have taken effective action to increase participation by some of JACE's minority groups, for example men on childcare programmes, which should enable them to have more meaningful data to compare their outcomes with all learners.

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