

WS Training

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 55448

Name of lead inspector: Gerard McGrath HMI

Last day of inspection: 05 August 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. WS Training (WST) is a private limited company which provides a range of training services across the East of England. WST holds a contract with the Skills Funding Agency for Apprenticeships and Train to Gain (TtG). The company offers Young Apprenticeships, apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at levels 2 and 3 in a range of subject areas. WST also provide a number of commercial training courses. Publicly funded training makes up the majority of training offered by WST.
2. The majority of the contract is delivered in house but some TtG programmes and apprenticeships are sub-contracted to partners in the Eastern Training Partnership and other specialist providers.
3. The head of vocational training has overall responsibility for the management and quality of training and safeguarding. The number of staff and learners has increased since the last inspection.
4. The provider was last inspected in September 2006. Inspectors awarded all subject areas grade 2 except engineering, which received a grade 3. Hairdressing provision was introduced in 2008. This inspection focused on the provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies, information and communication technology (ICT), hairdressing and business administration and law. WST works with a number of schools in Suffolk. In September 2010, to promote learning to pupils at risk of becoming excluded, WST began delivering the 14-19 Young Apprenticeship (YA) in hair and beauty. In September 2010 WST started working in partnership with Suffolk One to deliver VRQs and Diplomas in Hair and Beauty to 14-16 and 16-18 year olds from socioeconomically deprived wards in Ipswich. Inspectors sampled evidence from this programme but they did not give a separate grade for it.
5. The majority of current learners live in Suffolk. Suffolk is a large county with a population of approximately 670,000. The county's three main towns are set within a large rural landscape and include some areas with the highest levels of deprivation in the East of England. The working population has relatively low skill levels. The county's minority ethnic population is relatively small at 2.8%.
6. Unemployment in the East of England is slightly lower than across the whole of England at 6.5%. In Suffolk the rates range from 4.6% (Mid Suffolk/Suffolk Coastal) to 8.4% (Ipswich).
7. In 2010 the number of Year 11 students in Suffolk who achieved five or more A*-C grade GCSE passes, including English and maths, increased to 52.5% from 49.8% in 2009.
8. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - A14 Training services
 - MEAT (East Anglia)

- Suffolk New College
- Suffolk One
- West Suffolk College

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10 |
|--|---|
| Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 | 20 part-time learners |
| Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships | 298 learners 604 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 | 2 |
| Safeguarding | 3 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |

| Subject Areas | Grade |
|--|--------------|
| Engineering and manufacturing technologies | 3 |
| Information and communication technology | 2 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | 3 |
| Business administration and law | 2 |

Overall effectiveness

9. WST is a satisfactory provider of work-based learning. It has maintained the quality of provision and outcomes for learners since the last inspection. The proportion of learners who complete their studies are around national averages and are satisfactory, however, on some TtG and apprenticeship programmes they are high. The majority of learners make good progress and complete their programmes within the planned time. Learners enjoy their training. Most learners go on to further training or gain promotion at work.
10. Training is good. Individual coaching from assessors and employers in the workplace is very strong and helps learners to develop very good skills and a better understanding of their job roles. WST designs programmes extremely well to meet the needs of learners and employers. Tutors satisfactorily plan formal group lessons to meet the needs of most learners. Resources to support learning are good.
11. The care, guidance and support for learners is good. WST staff accurately assess the support needs of their learners and provide effective individual

programmes of support, especially for those with disabilities, which help them to succeed.

12. Leaders and managers are good at promoting ambition for all learners. WST works well with schools, employers and local authorities to promote learning.
13. WST makes good use of the feedback collected from learners, employers and other partners to make improvements to the provision. Quality improvement arrangements are effective. Staff know their learners well and are very responsive to their changing needs. However, the current self-assessment report does not wholly reflect the company's detailed knowledge of their own provision.

Main findings

- On most programmes the number of learners who complete their studies are satisfactory. The number of learners who complete their apprenticeship programmes have increased since the last inspection and some in ICT and accounting and finance are high. The proportion of learners completing within the planned duration of their programme is also increasing. The numbers of learners completing on warehousing programmes and advanced apprenticeships in customer service are low.
- Learners develop good social, vocational and personal skills. Learners typically develop very useful workplace skills and become very effective employees. For example, learners on manufacturing programmes produce high quality bespoke interiors for renovated vehicles. Many go on to take qualifications at higher levels.
- Learners have a satisfactory awareness of health and safety. WST and employers promote the health, safety and well-being of learners appropriately. Learners are introduced to their rights and responsibilities as employees early in their training and demonstrate safe working practices in their workplaces.
- Individual coaching is good. Training and mentoring in the workplace is good. Employer staff and assessors provide strong advice and guidance that help learners progress and develop useful knowledge and skills. Off-the-job training is satisfactory.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Learners receive useful and detailed verbal feedback following assessments. Written records of training and skills development are often brief and insufficiently detailed. Formal progress reviews are used increasingly well to monitor and drive learner's progress; however, agreed actions are insufficiently specific and measurable.
- Partnership working is good. WST works with a wide range of employers to provide an increasing range of training opportunities for prospective learners. Close working with funding bodies, local authorities and schools supported the introduction of provision for 14-19 year olds at risk of leaving education, employment or training.
- Learners receive good care guidance and support. Initial advice and guidance is effective in ensuring that learners are on appropriate training programmes. The

approachability and flexibility of assessors motivate learners. Learners with disabilities receive good support to help them achieve.

- Managers provide clear strategic direction for the company. WST has expanded its provision since the last inspection. Learner numbers have increased and hairdressing provision has been successfully introduced. Better use is made of available management information to monitor performance. Many learners now make good progress. The numbers of learners completing their qualification have risen over the last three years.
- Safeguarding meets current government requirements. Learners say they feel safe. During their induction learners receive information about safeguarding. All staff have regular safeguarding training. WST takes appropriate action when learners or staff raise a safeguarding issue. Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of e-safety.
- WST satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity. The monitoring of the performance of different groups of learners has improved since the last inspection. Assessors make use of a satisfactory range of resources to promote learners' understanding of equalities. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of how to support learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive. WST's self-assessment process is effective in maintaining the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. Arrangements to include the views of learners and employers are good and managers respond quickly to any concerns identified. However, the published report is insufficiently evaluative or well-supported by evidence.
- The current system for observations of teaching and learning is weak. The guidance for judging the quality of teaching is appropriate for formal off-the-job sessions, but does not meet the needs of training which is delivered almost completely in the workplace.
- WST engages well with users to make improvements. The company has an appropriate learner involvement strategy. Learners complete quality assurance surveys throughout their training. Managers make good use of all forms of feedback to improve the provision. The company deals efficiently and effectively when a learner or employer raises a concern.
- WST provide good value for money and manages its available resources very effectively. The company has grown in size in recent years and it continues to meet the needs of learners well. Specialist resources for learners are good. Staff are experienced and well qualified.

What does WS Training need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the proportion of learners who complete their qualification within the planned time by identifying the reasons for underperformance and take appropriate corrective actions.
- Improve assessment practice by ensuring that assessors accurately identify challenging and achievable targets for learners and accurately record the outcomes of formal reviews.

- Develop a robust system for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment processes in all types of delivery and settings.
- Improve the learners understanding of equality and diversity topics throughout their training, by further strengthening the review process.
- Develop a more evaluative and self-critical approach to self assessment particularly when interpreting performance data.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the e-portfolio and the reduction in paperwork
- their improving career prospects
- the ability to fit study into work pattern
- the helpful assessors
- the good support for study from employer
- learning things that help them to perform better at work
- getting qualifications and learning new things.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the length and duration of assessor visits
- the number of assessors visits
- the guidance on how to upload evidence onto the e-portfolio
- the distance that learners have to travel to get to the current training centre
- the amount of time allocated for collecting workplace evidence.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- WST's help in recruiting and training new employees
- the very good communication with WST
- the quality of the training
- the valuable assessor visits
- being offered the right amount of information about the programmes
- visits don't interrupt work
- being kept up to date with learner progress
- the positive impact of improved learner skills to their business.

What employers would like to see improved:

- their understanding of how WST plans programme delivery
- the frequency of feedback on learners' progress

- the training for workplace mentors.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

14. WST has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Senior leaders have provided effective leadership during a period of growth for the company. Staff remain focused on meeting learners' needs. Learner and employer feedback on the quality of provision is overwhelmingly positive. Success rates in the last three years have improved in line with national rates and are now satisfactory. Inspection grades for engineering and business administration remain unchanged since the previous inspection. Grades for equality and overall effectiveness have declined.
15. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. WST makes effective use of learner and employer feedback to improve provision. The quality improvement plan is realistic and monitored regularly. The recently revised observation of teaching and learning process requires further improvement before it can work effectively as a quality improvement tool. Self-assessment is an established and generally inclusive process. The company accurately identified some of the strengths found by inspectors. However, it did not identify all of the areas for improvement. Inspectors gave a lower grade for most aspects of provision than those in the self-assessment report.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

16. Following WST's last inspection in 2006, overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes fell, but have risen steadily in line with national averages over the last three years. Success rates on a minority of programmes including accounting and finance advanced apprenticeships and ICT intermediate apprenticeships are high. However, success rates remain below national averages for some learners in customer service and warehousing.
17. Learners typically develop high standards of occupational skills; improve their confidence and interpersonal skills, which are very useful in their job roles. For example; accountancy learners undertake additional responsibilities at work and produce particularly useful technical financial reports. The quality of work in portfolios is good.
18. Learners enjoy their training and make at least satisfactory and often good progress towards their qualification. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the health and welfare of learners and they feel safe. Learners are better prepared for further study as a result of their training and qualifications. However, training plans are not always matched to their individual needs.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

19. Teaching, training and learning are good. In theory sessions, tutors use imaginative strategies for involving learners effectively in sessions. Assessors provide very effective individual coaching and support to build learners' confidence and skill. Learning resources at the hairdressing academy and in workplaces are good.
20. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactory. WST shares information on learners' progress effectively with employers so enabling them to contribute to the learners' development. However, learners' individual learning and assessment plans do not always show what they need to do to complete their awards. The targets set for learners do not enable them to progress swiftly.
21. WST's provision is effective in meeting the needs and interests of the learners and employers. Learners often progress from intermediate level to advanced apprenticeships or awards at level 3. WST make good use of its partnerships to develop programmes for local 14- to 16-year-old learners including those at risk of leaving education, employment or training.
22. WST provide good guidance and support for learners. Staff are approachable, flexible and responsive to learners' individual needs. They liaise effectively with external agencies to obtain advice and support for learners. WST has successfully supported learners at risk from redundancy in finding alternative employment and enabled these learners to complete their training.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. Managers promote high standards and focus well on actions that benefit learners. Operational management is good and successfully drives improvements. Since the previous inspection, the provider has effectively managed a restructuring of the organisation. Staff receive good support from managers. Performance management is particularly good. Assessors receive challenging targets which managers regularly monitor. WST uses the staff appraisal process effectively to drive improvements in performance. Managers make very good use of a wide range of data to set targets and monitor performance.
24. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Senior managers review the comprehensive safeguarding policy each year. Training centres are welcoming. Learners say they feel safe and that staff treat them with respect. Learners receive information about safeguarding during their induction. All staff receive regular training on safeguarding. WST carries out appropriate risk assessments of employers' premises. Assessors reinforce health and safety messages when they visit learners in the workplace. They take appropriate action when learners or staff raise a safeguarding issue. Sound procedures are in place to ensure that all staff receive CRB and other checks.

Staff and learners have a satisfactory understanding of e-safety. However, the company has yet to implement a formal e-safety policy.

25. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The provider meets its duties under gender, race, and age and disability legislation. The equality and diversity committee meets regularly to consider all aspects of equalities. A detailed equalities action plan is in place. WST takes appropriate actions to promote equality and diversity. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups slightly exceeds that in the local population. The company's marketing materials avoid stereotypical images. Assessors make use of a range of resources, including some recently devised equalities-based scenarios, which they use to promote learners' understanding. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of how to support learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
26. Managers monitor key equality and diversity indicators, such as learner recruitment, retention and achievement, to identify any patterns and to reduce gaps in performance. Although managers receive regular reports, there is insufficient formal analysis and action planning resulting from this data. For example, although the data shows differences in achievement between men and women learners, the provider does not formally incorporate this into its action planning. The provider has successfully participated in several funding body initiatives to widen participation by young people at risk of leaving education or employment.
27. Arrangements to gather the views of learners and employers are good. The company has an appropriate learner involvement strategy. Learners complete questionnaires shortly after they begin their programme and again when they are about half way through their studies. Successful learners also complete an end-of-programme evaluation. However, WST has had less success in gaining feedback from learners who leave the programme early. Assessors make good use of reviews to gain feedback from learners. Employers complete a survey annually. Managers make good use of the information from surveys to improve the provision. The company deals efficiently and effectively when a learner or employer raises a specific issue or when they make a complaint. WST does not feed back to users the results of improvement actions it has taken.
28. WST's self-assessment is effective in maintaining the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. The company's head of vocational learning produced the self-assessment report after consulting staff, learners, employers and subcontractors. Judgements are not always sufficiently evaluative or well-supported by evidence. The company accurately identified some of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors. However, the company's interpretation of success rate data was too generous and three of the four curriculum areas were over-graded.
29. WST manages its available resources very effectively, and provides good value for money. The company has grown in size in recent years and it continues to meet the needs of learners well. Managers show commitment to the company's sustainability policy. Specialist resources for learners are good. Staff are well

qualified and most have an appropriate teaching or assessor qualification or are working towards one.

Subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing technology

Grade 3

Context

30. At the time of inspection, 55 learners were following programmes in engineering and manufacturing. Of these, 35 were working towards apprenticeship qualifications and 13 were on advanced apprenticeships. Seven learners were on Train to Gain programmes. All learners are employed. Assessors carry out all training at the learners' place of work. WST has contracts with local further education colleges and private training providers for the delivery of the technical certificate element of the advanced apprenticeship framework.

Key findings

- Learner's overall success rates and success rates within the planned time fell after the last inspection and have been below national rates for the last three years. Learners make at least satisfactory progress. The provider's own data for the current year shows significant improvement in success rates and the proportion of those who complete within the planned duration of their programme.
- Learners develop very good practical skills. They develop trade skills to high industry standards. Learners use a wide range of traditional hand manufacturing skills and modern industrial equipment and techniques to manufacture high quality soft furnishings, electrical equipment, industrial signage and the design and manufacture of reproduction vehicle interiors. Learners become valued employees and an integral part of the workforce.
- Assessors do not record the planning of training for apprentices sufficiently well. Expert employer staff deliver most of the workplace training. They tailor this training to their very specific niche sectors, but they do not record all aspects of the training they provide. Assessment practice is generally satisfactory. However, assessors do not always plan training sufficiently to match individual learners' needs.
- Initial assessment processes do not accurately identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. WST has recently developed a revised process for new learners, which occupationally competent staff administer. However, it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Assessors provide appropriate informal support for literacy and numeracy.
- Assessors do not set sufficiently precise targets for learners during progress reviews. Many targets are poorly written and in some instances, fail to challenge the more able learners. Most individual action logs do not contain tightly defined specific and measurable outcomes. The target dates for learners to complete tasks and provide requested evidence are often unclear.
- Provision is highly responsive to employers' training needs and meets learners' aspirations well. Employers are highly committed to support learning. They

value the responsiveness of WST in providing training in many hard to reach rural locations. Employers receive fewer customer complaints, enjoy reduced staff turnover and recognise the increasing competencies of learners.

- WST has good partnership arrangements. The company effectively markets employer vacancies to available learners. WST provide very useful administration and recruitment support for small businesses. Employers speak highly about the encouragement they receive when nominated as 'learning champions' and many actively support national initiatives such as Apprenticeship week.
- Learners benefit from particularly effective support. Contact with assessors is very flexible and employers show high levels of interest in learners' development. Most employers support learners well, giving them time to complete their qualification. One employer delayed redundancy procedures to allow learners time to complete their programme.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers have a strong focus on improving outcomes. They routinely review management information with staff during programme reviews and team meetings. Staff are aware of their performance targets and are making steady progress in improving provision. Staff are appropriately qualified, morale is high and team working is effective.
- WST gives satisfactory priority to health and safety. Learners have an adequate understanding of health and safety arrangements and adhere to identified industry specific safe working practices. Learners say they feel safe. In the workplace, assessors develop learners' awareness of health and safety as well as equality and diversity topics through the use of questions during reviews.
- The engineering and manufacturing technology section of the self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative. Engineering staff contributed sufficiently to the self-assessment process. However, the report is mainly descriptive and some identified strengths are no more than normal practice and some key areas for improvement are not fully recognised.

What does WS Training need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of management information to monitor performance and drive up overall and timely success rates.
- Improve the planning of off-the-job training to link employer-provided training more closely to the requirements of apprenticeship programmes.
- Further develop initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language skills to more accurately identify learners' prior attainment and current training needs.
- Provide training on target-setting so that assessors are better able to set realistic and challenging targets to help learners achieve within their planned period of study.
- Modify existing learner review arrangements to explore in more detail learners' wider understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity topics.

Information and communication technology

Grade 2

Context

31. At the time of inspection, 44 learners were on an apprenticeship programme and four were on Train to Gain programmes. Of these, 19 are women, two are from a minority ethnic group and four have a learning difficulty and/or disability. All learners are employed. Around one in five apprentices is working towards the advanced award. Seventy per cent of apprentices are studying units towards the information technology (IT) user's qualification and the remainder are following the IT professional's pathway. A team of five assessors delivers the training at the learners' place of work. A senior team leader has overall responsibility for the subject area. However, this post is currently vacant.

Key findings

- Overall and success rates within the planned time are high for intermediate level apprentices, having improved significantly in 2009/10 to well above the national average. Success rates for advanced apprentices are satisfactory. A high percentage achieve within the planned period of study. In 2009/10, the five TtG learners were all successful. Progression rates to higher levels of training are very high.
- Workplace training is good. Learners develop good vocational and personal skills. They enjoy their programme and make rapid progress. Employers benefit as their staff become more confident and take on greater responsibilities. One apprentice has taken responsibility for a computer repair workshop and another designs complex websites for customers. Learners feel safe and work safely.
- WST assessors provide prompt and particularly informative written feedback on learners' performance using the online e-portfolios. Staff introduced these portfolios skilfully. Learners like the e-portfolios and use them well. Clear, short-term action planning successfully encourages learners' progress, which is carefully monitored and tracked.
- Initial assessment and the recording of diagnostic test results is satisfactory, but the need for additional learning support and action planning for meeting those needs is often poorly documented and not always understood by the learners involved.
- Detailed planning for delivery of the new theory qualification for the IT professional's apprenticeship is insufficient. The content has not been finalised, nor has the method of delivery. Individual learning plans often do not show how on and off-the-job training is to be delivered and the learning hours for each aspect of a programme.
- The regular reviews of learner progress are helpful and detailed. Most reviews involve the learner and their mentor or employer. Assessors satisfactorily test learners' understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity through a standard list of questions. However, assessors do not tailor these to individual learner's circumstances.

- WST's information and communication technology (ICT) provision is narrow, but well matched to employers' needs. WST provides expert help in designing apprenticeships to meet the specific needs of the wide range of small and medium sized companies. Learners have free access to additional training courses offered by WST and many complete these. However, programmes do not include software manufacturers' qualifications.
- Strong partnerships exist between WST and employers. WST provides an efficient and mutually beneficial recruitment service that matches apprentices to job vacancies. Employers value the support from knowledgeable assessors and the flexible, high quality, service that is responsive to their business needs.
- Support for learners is particularly good. Most employers provide generous time during working hours for learners to study. Employers make special efforts to ensure learners have access to relevant work tasks. Learners have good access to assessors who support and encourage them very effectively. Learners benefit from valuable peer support through the on-line forums provided by WST.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and have wide vocational expertise. Communications are effective and the team are well informed about their performance. However, planning for the delivery of new provision is incomplete.
- Safeguarding and the promotion of equality and diversity to learners are satisfactory. Learners have sound knowledge of their employment responsibilities and rights but programmes place insufficient emphasis on exploring their understanding of issues within a workplace setting, particularly those issues related to new technology.
- WST does not systematically share the improvement actions resulting from the analysis of users' feedback with the users. WST regularly collects learners' and employers' opinions of the training programmes and use these to improve programme quality. Response to individuals raising issues is satisfactory. User awareness of WST's quarterly newsletter is poor.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive, but the report is insufficiently evaluative. The report contains insufficient evidence to support the claimed grade. There are no judgements on the quality of training. Some of the strengths identified are no more than normal practice.

What does WS Training need to do to improve further?

- Urgently complete the planning for the delivery of the new technical certificate for the IT professional's intermediate apprenticeship framework so that learners' progress is not delayed.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity and health and safety in progress reviews by including e-safety topics and by framing questions in the context of the learner's own work experience.
- Improve the action-planning and recording of learners' additional learning support needs so that they receive the necessary support to help them achieve.

- Ensure that improvement actions taken as a result of user surveys are shared with users so that they know how much account WST takes of feedback on their learning programme.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 3

Context

32. WST provides apprenticeships to 126 learners in hairdressing. Ninety apprentices and 36 advanced apprentices are working towards hairdressing and barbering qualifications in 65 salons across the region. Off-the-job training is provided through fortnightly sessions at the WS Academy in Ipswich. The vast majority of learners are women.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Success rates have improved since WST took over the provision from another provider in 2008/09. All of the very small number of learners on barbering programmes achieved all parts of their framework in 2009/10. Advanced apprenticeship success rates are good at 88%. Intermediate apprenticeship success rates are around the national average.
- Apprentices in their first year of training are slow to start collecting workplace evidence for their main qualification. Initial assessment and recognition of prior learning is insufficient to allow learners to progress quickly towards their learning goal early in their training. Advanced apprentices make good progress towards timely completion of their key skills.
- Learners enjoy their training. Attendance at off-the-job training sessions is good. Most learners make good progress. They develop relevant knowledge and understanding of hairdressing terms, practical techniques and processes through regular training in the salon. Learners demonstrate professionalism in their work and interact effectively with clients. Portfolios are well presented.
- WST and employers provide good additional learning opportunities to extend learners' technical knowledge. Some learners attend demonstrations of manufacturers' products, which enhance their future employment prospects. Learners fully understand their rights and responsibilities as employees. WST has involved learners in charity fund-raising activities and skills competitions.
- Learners understand the importance of workplace health and safety. The academy provides learners with a safe environment. However, the promotion of healthy living is insufficient. WST ensures that learners are informed about sexual health matters, but the company has not provided information to raise learners' awareness of healthy eating, smoking, drugs and alcohol.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Coaching in the workplace by assessors and employers is very effective in teaching learners new skills. However, in group sessions, learners are not sufficiently challenged. Tutors use insufficient visual examples to enhance learners' understanding of complex techniques. Tutors do not always recognise opportunities to discuss diversity topics.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Learners have a clear understanding of the assessment process. Assessments are often carried out when learners attend the academy. However, a shortage of appropriate clients restricts opportunities

for assessment. Too few assessments are carried out in the workplace. The quality of feedback is sometimes insufficiently detailed and too brief.

- Progress reviews are satisfactory. Discussions are productive and evaluate all aspects of the learner's programme. However, action plans fail to set clear and measurable targets. Written records of reviews do not always capture the quality of discussions. More focused targets, agreed during assessments, offer learners clearer directions, but these are not routinely shared with employers.
- WST satisfactorily meets learner and employer needs. The provision offers good progression routes to advanced level and includes barbering courses. However, the advanced level optional units offered by WST are limited. WST works well with an increasing number of employers, has good partnerships with a school and works well to support disadvantaged learners.
- Initial advice and guidance is effective in providing learners with a good insight into all aspects of training programmes and the extent of personal and learning support available. Learners have a good awareness of employment rights and responsibilities, but have insufficient knowledge on how best to deal with clients from a range of disabilities.
- Curriculum management is satisfactory. The introduction of hairdressing provision has been managed effectively. Strategies to improve success rates following WST's acquisition of the hairdressing programme from a failing provider have been effective. Staff are well qualified and communicate well; however, there is no formal mentoring system for new tutors. Most learners and employers complete quality surveys.

What does WS Training need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of management information to monitor performance and drive up both overall and timely success rates.
- Improve individual learning plans to support assessment planning and recognise learners' prior experience so enabling them to progress more quickly.
- Improve the planning of teaching and learning by including a better range of learning strategies to challenge and extend learners' understanding.
- Ensure staff promote and reinforce equality and diversity during teaching and reviews, making the best use of opportunities to widen learners' awareness in relation to the diverse needs of their clients.

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Context

33. WS Training provides apprenticeship and National Vocational Qualifications in retail financial and accounting, business administration, team leading and management, sales and customer service from intermediate through to higher level in East Anglia and the South of England. Learners are employed in a range of organisations from large national companies to small businesses in rural locations. There are currently 335 learners; of these 323 are apprentices of which 124 are following advanced and higher apprentice programmes. Twelve are on Train to Gain programmes.

Key findings

- Success rates for advanced apprentices in accounting and finance are good. The proportion of learners completing within their planned duration is very good at 20% above the national average. Intermediate accounting and finance apprentice success rates are below the national average due to a significant number of learner redundancies in a large regional employer.
- Success rates for business administration learners are satisfactory. Advanced apprenticeship success rates are around the national average. Success rates on intermediate apprentice programmes improved to 74% in 2009/10 but remain too low. The provider's own data for the year to date show further improvement.
- The quality of learners' work is good. Portfolios are well presented. Learners use technology well to collect a range of evidence including video, voice recordings, email and case studies. Learners are well-motivated to complete programme tasks and upload their evidence to their electronic portfolio between assessor visits. Learners make satisfactory progress.
- Learners develop very good occupational skills. Learners increase their confidence, self-esteem, teamwork and understanding of their job role. Many learners take on additional responsibilities such as account management and producing directors' reports. Many gain promotion. Most learners progress to higher level programmes or further professional qualifications.
- Learners feel safe and well protected. Employers have effective health, safety and equality practices. Learners receive basic information on safeguarding and equality and diversity at induction and assessors use standard questions to check learners' understanding during their regular visits. However, not all assessors sufficiently check and challenge learners' understanding.
- Good one-to-one coaching is provided by assessors in the workplace. Assessors are very skilled at helping learners to reflect on their learning and clearly link this to work experiences. Assessors provide very good encouragement for learners to develop their independent learning skills. Accounting and finance learners also benefit from individual coaching prior to their professional exams.

- Assessment is satisfactory. Learners receive regular assessor visits. Assessors use a range of assessment methods and most feedback is timely. However, some assessed work by business administration learners, is not always recorded clearly. Progress reviews are satisfactory; however, targets set by a few assessors are insufficiently specific and measurable.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners complete a skill scan, which helps to identify their training needs. Assessors provide satisfactory informal guidance for learners identified as requiring additional support for literacy and numeracy. However, other learners would also benefit from some literacy support in completing their programme.
- The range of qualifications meets the individual needs of learners and employers well. There is a good choice of subjects and levels that are relevant to learners' and employers' needs. These choices are discussed between the assessor, employer and learner to ensure that they support the learners' future professional development and promotion prospects.
- Good productive employer partnerships promote learning. Assessors communicate well with employers about their learners' progress. Assessors have a good knowledge of the employers and their business needs. Employers often adjust work patterns and tasks to suit the development needs of the learner and many employers are involved in planning on-the-job training for learners.
- The operational management of the programmes is good. There is a positive and supportive culture that drives improvements. There are good formal and informal communications to share best practise across the programmes. Resources to support learning are well managed and although staff regularly receive training, this is not always occupationally relevant and specific.
- Quality improvement is satisfactory. There has been significant improvement in monitoring learners' progress and identifying learners at risk of leaving the programme early. Staff contributed to the self-assessment report which broadly identified the key issues; however it was insufficiently detailed to inform specific strengths and future action plans.

What does WS Training need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of management information to monitor performance and drive up both overall and success rates within the planned time, particularly for intermediate apprentices in business administration.
- Make targets in action plans for learners more specific and measurable so that learners can work towards realistic and manageable goals to help them achieve within the planned period of study.
- Develop initial assessment processes to ensure all learners receive appropriate literacy and numeracy support.

Information about the inspection

34. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's head of vocational training, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
35. 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 each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
WS Training

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 | 564 | 564 |
| 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? | 3 | |
| <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 | |
| 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 | 2 | |
| 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? | 3 | |
| 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? | 2 | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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