

Acacia Training and Development Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50303

Name of lead inspector: Nigel Evans HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Acacia Training and Development Ltd (ATD) is contracted with the Skills Funding Agency to provide work-based learning (WBL) and Train to Gain in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, and also offers commercial training programmes to employers within the region.
2. ATD is a fully-owned subsidiary of the Somerset Care Group, which is a not-for-profit organisation based in Taunton, Somerset, and has three offices across the South West. The company was originally three separate training providers which were amalgamated to form ATD. Although the training centres are used to deliver some aspects of the WBL provision, the delivery is mainly work based.
3. ATD is led by a board of directors, with the senior management team consisting of two directors, an assistant director, three centre managers, the quality assurance manager and finance manager. Each centre has its own middle management, delivery teams and support staff.
4. Training is offered both for apprenticeships and commercial training in health and social care, dental nursing, childcare, hairdressing, accountancy and finance, business administration, customer services, management and team leading.
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of ATD:
 - West of England Dental Nurse Training.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	496 learners 630 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Health, public services and care	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Business administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

- ATD provides good training. It has developed many of the good aspects of its provision since the 2008 inspection and successfully dealt with the majority of the areas for improvement. Most apprentices have a good learning experience and develop their skills and knowledge well in the workplace. Health and social care learners in particular significantly improve their employability, and business administration learners increase their vocational skills and knowledge well. Hairdressers develop a high standard of practical skills and enjoy taking part in the annual hair show. Learners enjoy their training and are motivated to succeed by their assessors, although too many learners depend too much on their tutors. In too many cases vocational initial assessments do not take full account of the skills, experience and wider training needs of learners. The good relationship and partnership with employers enable regular and flexible assessment and training for learners at work.
- ATD has successfully overcome some organisational and commercial challenges with new and established staff understanding their role in developing the company and improving the provision for learners. The company takes learners'

views seriously and, where appropriate, acts upon them. The health, safety and well-being of learners are priorities for ATD and this is reflected in the flexibility and high level of dedication shown by assessors and other staff. Health and social care learners have a particularly good understanding of the importance of implementing safeguarding in the workplace. ATD has a strong commitment to equality and diversity, but this is not always evident in learners' responses to questions. Most learners are aware of the principles of equality and diversity but not of the specific aspects relating to their industries.

Main findings

- Learners' achievement of qualifications is good. Overall performance has improved since 2008/09 and this trend is continuing. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory or better. There are no significant patterns of varying achievement between groups of learners.
- A high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications within the agreed timescales. The majority of learners improve their confidence, work skills and economic well-being. Learners enjoy learning and are able to identify how their qualifications help them progress in their chosen career.
- The development of work-related skills is very effective. ATD staff work closely with employers to ensure that learners confidence and vocational skills are improved. Opportunities are planned for learners to take on extra responsibility in their workplace. This enables them to gain relevant evidence for their qualification.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners receive individual teaching and support from their assessors. They are highly motivated and are keen to make progress. Assessors provide good support with portfolio building. Coaching and skills development are particularly effective in business administration.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy results are used well to plan additional support; however, the results from the vocational assessment are not used sufficiently to inform and plan for individual learning needs or to set short- term targets.
- ATD meets the needs and interest of learners and employers well. Assessors respond to the individual needs of their learners very effectively. Able learners are well supported to achieve their qualifications more quickly. Employers value assessors' flexibility and consideration and the continuity they provide.
- Partnership work is good. Relationships with employers are strong. ATD has a loyal customer base and actively pursues new partnerships from a wide variety of organisations. Employers value the continuity and consistency provided by ATD. ATD is a highly effective training organisation and leads several regional initiatives.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners receive support appropriate to their individual needs. The support for learners is particularly effective in developing confidence and self-esteem. Learners value the flexibility and frequency of the assessors' visits. Learners whose circumstances have

made them vulnerable are well supported and ATD adapts the training to meet their particular needs.

- Leadership and management are good overall. Directors and senior managers play an outstanding role in the development and implementation of company strategy. ATD researches the market carefully to identify opportunities to expand the business and to identify new funding sources. Leaders and managers set challenging, but realistic, targets and staff at all levels contribute towards their achievement.
- ATD uses management information very effectively. The management information system is comprehensive and extremely well organised. Managers use it effectively to develop and monitor the provision, to manage continuing professional development and to check that all staff have completed essential training.
- Safeguarding of learners is a priority for ATD. Learners and staff receive good guidance and support to ensure they feel and are safe. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding checks. The training provided to staff and offered to employers is good. ATD makes very effective use of the wider support available for learners whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.
- Learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity is at least satisfactory. Training and updating for all staff is regular, although some key staff require more detailed training if they are to support other staff fully. Broad equality and diversity topics are discussed with learners at reviews, however learning materials and other activities are not linked to the different work settings.
- Quality improvement is good at ATD. Success rates are now good and are improving. ATD has good-quality action plans to develop the provision, which are carefully researched to ensure completion within planned timescales and staff and learner engagement. The self-assessment process is inclusive but the resulting self-assessment report is insufficiently self critical. It does not relate closely enough to the good-quality improvement initiatives.

What does Acacia Training and Development Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Raise success rates across the provision by making better use of vocational assessments, individual learning plans and by improving target setting for learners.
- Ensure that equality and diversity are promoted more effectively to learners by using a greater variety of learning resources in order to ensure learners have a better understanding of equality and diversity within their profession.
- Increase the effectiveness of the self-assessment report by ensuring it is a critical and accurate reflection of the key aspects of the provision and is closely linked to the quality improvement plan.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the good support from all ATD staff and the friendly welcome at the centres
- the patience and flexibility of assessors and the way in which they explain the complicated parts of the qualification
- the opportunities to achieve high standards and take part in hairdressing competitions
- improving their confidence, developing a better understanding of their job roles and the workplace
- the flexible timescales that enable learners to work at their own pace
- the key skills support provided.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the rate of progression during the apprenticeship
- the out-of-date text books used
- the lack of flexibility if electronic portfolios do not suit individuals
- the number and the flexibility of assessor visits
- the computers used for key skills.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the very supportive and professional staff
- how well ATD communicates and responds quickly to issues raised
- experienced and helpful assessors and the quality of training and support provided
- the improvements learners make in the workplace, the development of good skills and better understanding of the industry in which they work
- the well-organised training.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the information about planned visits to help plan for shifts and rotas
- the timing and frequency of meetings to review all learners
- the planning of learning programmes and more information about off-the-job learning.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. ATD leaders have a strong ambition for the company which is supported by clear targets for staff, learners and employers. The vision for the further development of the company is clear and takes account of local, regional and national considerations. ATD's contribution to regional groups supports its ambition to play a greater role in influencing and promoting work-based learning across Devon and the surrounding area. The very effective use of data enables ATD to identify and manage underperformance. Since the 2008 inspection, the effective interventions, action planning and target setting have led to improvements in overall success rates and in successful completion within planned timescales in most subject areas. Good financial management supports the sustainable improvements in accommodation and the expansion of the business into new areas, including provision for unemployed people and other commercial training.
9. ATD makes full use of learners' and employers' views to identify necessary improvements and provide confirmation of effective practices. Suggested developments are, in the majority of cases, acted upon. While the self-assessment process is inclusive and effective in bringing about improvements, the report lacks specific judgements and in some instances is overly reliant on learner survey results.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Learners' achievement in most subject areas continues to be good, with the large majority of areas achieving at above the national average. In 2009/10, 74% of learners achieved their qualifications and current company projections indicate this level of achievement will improve further in 2010/11. The overall figure includes the hairdressing provision, where a significant number of learners transferred to another provider during their apprenticeships. In business administration, apprenticeship success rates are well above the national rates at intermediate and advanced level, with nearly 90% of learners achieving their qualification in 2009/10. Childcare learners' success rates are above those for other health and social care learners.
11. Learners' work is of a good standard with many able to demonstrate the improvements in skills and competence they have made during their apprenticeships. Older learners in particular have developed greater confidence and, in many cases, are more willing to take part in the decision-making process in the workplace or offer advice and guidance to less experienced colleagues. The majority of all learners, particularly in health and social care, have either gained promotion or progressed to a higher rate of pay following successful completion of their qualification. The proportion of learners progressing to higher qualifications is at least satisfactory and good in business administration.

12. Learners enjoy learning and having their skills and knowledge recognised. Hairdressing learners are particularly well motivated, raising their levels of skill and creativity by taking part in ATD's annual competition. Too few learners, even at advanced level, take responsibility for the management of their own learning and rely too much on direction from their assessors.
13. Learners feel safe, secure and well supported at work. The systems for reviewing learners' safety are good and thorough. Most employers have a good understanding of how to ensure the health and safety of learners and where assessors have concerns about health and safety arrangements they take swift action. Where appropriate, learners have a good awareness of the relevant 'whistle-blowing' procedure and feel confident in using it if necessary.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

14. Teaching and learning are good. Learners receive good individual teaching and support from their assessors. Learners are highly motivated and are keen to make progress. Workshops for childcare learners held in Plymouth for those wishing to attend are satisfactory. In these sessions, learners are supported with portfolio building and have the opportunity to clarify questions related to their assignments.
15. Feedback from assessors to learners is good. Written work is of a good standard and is returned promptly. Assessors indicate any gaps in knowledge and evidence and check to ensure that the learners have completed their work. Learners find the prompt return of work helps them to make speedy progress and motivates them in completing their qualification.
16. Key skills support is well managed and flexible. When necessary, learners receive additional support to ensure they can pass the key skills tests. However, not all of the key skills assignments are sufficiently work related.
17. The development of work-related skills is very effective. ATD staff work closely with employers to ensure that learners build confidence and improve their vocational skills. Opportunities are well planned for learners to take on extra responsibility in their work place. This enables them to gain relevant evidence for their qualification.
18. Assessment in the workplace takes place regularly and is rigorously recorded. A variety of assessment methods are used. The very flexible assessment arrangements ensure that the needs of individual learners and employers are very well met. During some feedback sessions assessors do not always take the opportunity to extend learners' thinking and understanding.
19. Initial assessment is satisfactory, with literacy and numeracy results recorded on the learners' individual learning plan; however, the results from the vocational assessment are not used sufficiently to inform and plan for individual learning needs or to set short-term targets. Individual learning plans do not record personalised targets.

20. In most cases, learner reviews are well documented. Targets related to unit qualification are recorded, together with key skills achievement and progress against the timeline. Information about learners' progress is promptly shared with employers. However, not all line managers take part in reviewing learners' progress.
21. The response to meeting the needs and interest of learners and employers is good. Assessors make every effort to respond to the individual needs of their learners. Able learners are supported to achieve their qualifications more quickly. Many learners move to higher-level qualifications and achieve more responsibility and progression in their workplace. Employers speak highly of the work done by ATD staff and appreciate assessors' flexibility and consideration together with the continuity they provide.
22. Partnership work is good. Relationships with employers are strong. ATD has a loyal customer base. Employers value the continuity and consistency provided by ATD. Partnerships include hospitals, Jobcentre Plus and local colleges. A positive working relationship enables ATD to respond promptly to suggestions from employers and partners.
23. Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners receive support appropriate to their individual needs which enables them to achieve their qualifications within the agreed time. The support for learners is particularly effective in developing confidence and self-esteem. Learners speak highly of their assessors. Learners whose circumstances have made them vulnerable feel well supported by having their training adapted to their particular needs.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

24. The strategic leadership and management shown by directors and senior staff are outstanding. ATD has managed the merging of three companies into one unified organisation very well. It has introduced standardised policies and procedures across the company and resolved a number of significant management issues. ATD researches the market carefully to identify opportunities to expand the business and to identify new funding sources. ATD sets challenging, but realistic, targets and these are disseminated throughout the organisation.
25. ATD uses management information very effectively. The management information system is comprehensive and extremely well organised. Managers use it successfully to develop and monitor the provision and to manage the key performance indicators of both the company and for individual members of staff. This enables very clear performance monitoring each month to ensure that annual targets are met. Managers use the system to manage continuing professional development and to check that all staff have completed essential training.
26. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good and well established within the company. The two designated safeguarding officers provide good advice

and guidance to centre managers and other staff. All staff completed an e-learning safeguarding course and subsequently assessors have identified more potential safeguarding issues or concerns. The reporting process and monitoring of follow-up actions are good, with no actions outstanding at the time of inspection. Learners who become pregnant have particularly good support and monitoring to ensure learning and working practices are suitably adapted. ATD plays an outstanding safeguarding role with the local safeguarding board and training provider network, promoting and managing the safeguarding e-learning courses for Devon County Council services, local employers and training providers.

27. ATD is an inclusive organisation. It monitors the performance of different groups very carefully. Where differences are identified, these are analysed carefully and effective action is taken. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and up to date. All staff receive regular equality and diversity training, although ATD has been slow to train staff key to equality and diversity to an appropriate level. Learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity are satisfactory, although these are not routinely related to learners' work environments or wider experiences.
28. ATD engages with users very effectively to promote improvement. Views from learners and employers are sought on a regular basis. The information is reviewed and, where appropriate, the organisation takes action to implement improvement. Improvements include changes in the style of delivery of the provision, improved resources, changes in documentation and additional safeguarding information. ATD promotes partnership working actively and networks extensively with local employers, colleges, agencies, schools and volunteer organisations.
29. Quality improvement is good at ATD and is well supported by the very effective use of the management information system. Assessors monitor learners' progress very carefully. Overall success rates are now good and are improving, as is the proportion of learners who complete their programme within the allocated time. ATD has good quality action plans for the development and enhancement of provision. These are carefully researched to ensure that learners complete according to planned deadlines and that learners and staff are fully engaged in improving the provision. The self-assessment process is inclusive and has involved staff at all levels, but the resulting self-assessment report is insufficiently self critical and does not relate closely enough to the good-quality improvement initiatives.
30. ATD is very effective in using resources to secure value for money. Learners progress well with flexible provision to meet their needs. Training centres are well equipped or in the process of being refurbished. Resources within the training centres are good. Staff are well qualified with appropriate vocational experience.

Subject areas

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Context

31. ATD currently has a total of 1,092 learners on health and social care apprenticeship programmes. There are 540 on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes and 552 on diploma qualifications and credit framework programmes. Of these, 173 are on childcare programmes and 919 are on courses for adult social care. ATD provides courses at levels 2 and 3 in childcare and additionally at level 4 in health and social care. The majority of learners are on intermediate programmes and the largest group of learners are aged over 25.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good and almost all learners enjoy learning. Success rates are good and improving. Learners make good progress and attain their learning goals. They are sufficiently challenged and work at a pace well suited to their individual needs. Their work is generally of a good standard and they develop good practical skills, which improves standards in their workplaces.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills and demonstrate increased confidence. They have a good level of awareness of key issues, such as the importance of effective communication, and respecting rights and dignity. Most learners are aware of the level of progress they are making and what they have to do to complete their course.
- All learners improve their employability significantly as they develop very useful skills, for example more effective planning of young children's learning and better management of junior staff in care homes. The majority receive promotion and are given increased responsibilities and higher pay upon gaining their qualification. Many learners are ambitious and motivated to be successful.
- Learners feel safe in their workplaces. ATD gives good attention to safe working practices and to raising awareness of health and safety guidance and procedures. The understanding of the importance of safeguarding the people with whom learners work, and for whom they care is good, and they know what to do to report concerns.
- The quality of teaching, training and assessment is good. Assessment is well planned and effective and assessors use a good variety of interesting methods to motivate learners and assess their competence. Assessors have good skills and experience which they use well to enhance learners' professional skills. Assessments are rigorous and the pace of learning is well matched to learners' preferences, needs and interests.
- Induction and initial assessments are thorough and used effectively to prepare learners for their programme and to plan support and assessment. However, written learning plans do not contain personal objectives or address wider

aspects of learning and development, and assessors do not always encourage learners to develop broader interests or take greater responsibility for their learning.

- Learners demonstrate a high level of motivation and interest. Feedback is purposeful and constructive. Portfolios are very well organised and reflect the high standard of work completed. Equality and diversity are delivered through induction and mandatory training but are not always promoted well enough during assessment and review.
- Since the last inspection, ATD has improved the way in which it delivers its training by introducing more thorough initial assessment, setting clear individual timescales, and through more regular and thorough review processes. These changes have increased success rates and improved the learners' experience.
- Assessment and support for literacy and numeracy are good. Many learners benefit from well-planned progression opportunities from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships. Partnerships with many employers, including an NHS Trust and local authority, are strong and productive. Line managers generally support learning very well, but too few are encouraged to attend progress reviews to help plan for additional learning opportunities.
- Care, guidance and support are good overall. Learners receive good, timely information at induction to support their progression from intermediate to advanced level qualifications and good, accurate advice is available on university nurse training and allied health and early years professions. Arrangements for personal support and meeting specific additional needs are particularly good.
- Leadership and management are good. The revised management structure and recent appointments of business managers and training coordinators are improving performance and quality. The use of data to set performance targets is also good. All staff share a firmly held determination to ensure learners' interests remain a central focus in all decision making across the company. All staff have appropriate awareness of priorities and of the strategic direction of ATD.
- Arrangements for monitoring the welfare and safety of learners are good, although in some workplaces the arrangements to ensure the safety of lone working are not sufficiently thorough. The self-assessment process is effective and has led to significant improvements including more effective communication, better use of technology, and more precise target setting. However, the self-assessment report is not evaluative enough.
- ATD is an inclusive organisation which gives great attention to ensuring individual needs are met, particularly for learners facing barriers to learning. There are no significant variations in the achievements of different groups of learners and equality of opportunity is covered thoroughly during induction.

What does Acacia Training and Development Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that learning plans and practices include personal objectives in order to develop wider learning and work-related skills further.
- Ensure health and safety assessments take into account the effectiveness of lone-working policies used by employers, particularly those who provide care for people at home.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Grade 2

Context

32. ATD provides work-based learning in hairdressing apprenticeships and barbering across Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. ATD works with 31 employers mostly in Newton Abbot, Taunton and the Plymouth travel-to-work area. At the time of inspection, there were some 77 learners on hairdressing courses. Of the 65 apprentices in hairdressing, 47 are on the level 2 apprenticeship programme and 18 are on the advanced apprenticeship programme. Twelve learners were undertaking the NVQ level 2 in barbering before progressing onto the advanced apprenticeship.

Key findings

- Overall success rates are satisfactory. Success rates for advanced apprentices are consistently good and above national rates. However, success rates for intermediate apprentices are below national averages. The number of learners completing within the allotted time is improving and is broadly in line with national rates. The loss of a substantial proportion of learners to another provider has adversely affected overall success rates.
- Practical skills are good. Learners on both intermediate and advanced apprenticeships produce high standards of hairdressing skills that meet the needs of their customers. The annual hair show that all students attend raises learners' levels of creativity and skills. Learners benefit from the low learner to assessor ratio.
- Key skills attainment is good. Learners develop good standards of literacy and numeracy which build on prior knowledge and support their practical application of work-based skills. This improves their employability opportunities. Learners demonstrate a good awareness of their employment rights and responsibilities, which gives them confidence to address personal concerns.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners develop good technical skills such as colouring techniques, cutting and styling. They develop good levels of personal and professional confidence. Learners make good use of opportunities to acquire additional qualifications offered, such as barbering.
- The promotion of safe working practices is good. Learners feel safe. They understand how to use chemicals safely, the possibilities of dermatitis, tool usage, such as scissor handling, and correct posture. ATD collaborates with employers to embed health and safety and comprehensive risk assessments.
- Target setting is insufficient. Learners are unclear about their short-term targets and how to achieve them. Assessments completed do not always link to short-term targets or allow learners to understand sufficiently how to move forward to the next stage of their qualification.
- Learning programmes are good at developing learners' skills and knowledge against hairdressing standards. Training coordinators and assessors provide learners with good resources to develop their theoretical knowledge and

understanding. Internal verification procedures are thorough, well organised and follow regulatory body requirements.

- Learning and initial assessment are not sufficiently linked to learner reviews and assessment. Whilst initial assessments of learning needs are thorough they do not link sufficiently to planning individual training and ongoing reviews and assessments.
- ATD meets the needs and interests of learners well. This has improved since the last inspection. Assessors have regular contact with those salons that deliver their own training and take an active part in the delivery and assessment. Employers' involvement in developing programmes of learning is satisfactory. Strategies for planning learning and assessment are not always clearly defined.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Vulnerable learners, such as pregnant learners, are supported and adjustments made to enable progression and achievement. Additional assessments are available if a learner requires support or to accelerate achievement.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Managers and staff regularly monitor and update safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff receive suitable training and are fully aware of their role and responsibilities for safeguarding learners. ATD works effectively with employers to ensure the safeguarding and protection of learners.
- Leadership and management are good. ATD has a positive and supportive culture. Improvements in the quality of provision are satisfactory. However, the planning of salon learning has not improved, which was a recommendation from the last inspection. The promotion of equality and support for diversity is satisfactory. Learners receive useful information at the beginning of their programmes but this is not always sufficiently reinforced and related to their work environment.

What does Acacia Training and Development Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Develop strategies that highlight learner support needs within the review and assessment procedures in order that assessors better meet the needs of individual learners.
- Ensure that targets discussed with learners at reviews are broken down into manageable targets that enable all learners to progress in measurable stages.
- Develop training plans and guidelines for those employers that do not produce their own in order to provide clear guidelines and improved partnership arrangements.

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Context

33. ATD offers apprenticeship training. There are 80 learners currently working towards administration and 76 towards management qualifications. Of the current learners, 80 are apprentices and the remaining 76 are advanced apprentices. All management learners and 75% of business administration learners are aged over 19. The majority of learners are female. All learners are employed and complete their programme in the workplace.

Key findings

- Apprenticeship success rates are high. In 2009/10 the overall success rate was above average, with most learners completing within the agreed timescale. In-year overall successes look positive with the proportion of learners completing within planned timescales significantly above national averages. Progress for current learners is generally good, although a few learners would like to make more rapid progress through their qualification.
- Learners increase their vocational skills and knowledge significantly. They learn more about their organisations, increase job skills in administration, customer service, team leading and management and become more confident in their roles. Learners take on more responsibility, gain promotion and many progress to additional qualifications and higher levels.
- Learners feel very safe in the workplace. They have a good understanding of safe working practices and know what to do if there are any concerns. Employers have good standards of health and safety, which the provider monitors effectively.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Assessors provide good coaching for learners, developing job skills and knowledge. Assessment is thorough, with effective action planning and a sufficient variety of evidence and assessment methods. However, most learners are too reliant on their tutors. Employers provide effective on-the-job training to meet job needs.
- Vocational initial assessment is not used effectively to plan learning to meet individual needs. The learning plans are too generic and focus on assessment and qualification achievement rather than training. Reviews are satisfactory, with a clear record of progress, but they do not review the learners' job role and other needs sufficiently.
- The apprenticeship programme meets employers' and learners' needs well. Learners enjoy learning and develop good employability skills. Employers value training that helps learners to work more productively and take on more responsibilities. However, too little involvement of line managers throughout the programme results in insufficient coordination of training.
- Support for learners is good with good relationships between assessors and learners. Assessors give clear explanations and keep learners motivated and on

target. Learners feel well supported and speak highly of their assessors. Visits are flexible to meet different needs and additional visits are made where required. Some learners attend the centre for good-quality key skills training.

- Leadership and management are good, resulting in improving success rates. Managers communicate well and monitor staff performance very effectively via monthly meetings including tracking and monitoring of learners' progress. Staff training and development are effective and reviewed quarterly. Partnerships with employers are good. However, progress to improve the planning and coordination of training identified at the last inspection is slow.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Useful information is given to learners at the start of programme and assessors check whether there are any issues at the regular reviews. However, this checking is narrow and does not sufficiently explore learners' understanding of issues such as bullying and harassment. Staff recently took part in training to improve their own understanding.
- Quality improvement arrangements are good. Staff and learners' performance is monitored well resulting in good and improving completion of qualifications within planned timescales. Internal verification is effective in monitoring assessors' performance, with frequent standardisation meetings. The self-assessment report is inclusive and broadly accurate. However, it relies too much on learners' views rather than other quality monitoring activities.
- Value for money is good. Learners are achieving well, enjoy their learning and develop good employability skills. Staff are well-qualified and vocationally experienced.

What does Acacia Training and Development Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that planning and coordination of on- and off-the-job training include more effective vocational initial assessment and more line manager involvement in order to develop learners to their full potential.
- Develop a sense of ownership of learning and assessment, particularly for level 3 learners, by increasing involvement in action planning, target setting and assessment decisions.
- Promote equality and diversity more effectively by embedding these aspects throughout the programme and by checking learners' understanding at reviews more effectively.

Information about the inspection

34. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality assurance manager, 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 body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, 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)
Acacia Training and Development Ltd
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		
Part-time learners	1,319	1,319
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
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>	-	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	-	
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	2	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	-	
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?	2	
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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