

# Rocket Training Ltd

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 54158

**Name of lead inspector:** Mike White HMI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

### Context and focus of visit

Rocket Training Ltd (RTL) was founded in 1981 as the Brothers of Charity Youth Training Workshop. In 1994 it became a limited company wholly owned by its director. The company has two training centres: one in Liverpool and one in the Wirral. It works with 100 Merseyside employers.

RTL offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in motor-vehicle engineering, information technology, business administration, customer service and retailing. It also offers foundation learning training. None of the training is subcontracted. In total, RTL has 112 apprentices, 28 advanced apprentices and 65 learners in foundation learning.

At the previous inspection overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, quality of provision, leadership and management, equality and diversity, and provision in preparation for life and work were all found to be good. All other aspects of provision, including provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies, and business administration and law, were judged to be satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

<b>What progress has Rocket Training made in strengthening the effectiveness of the self-assessment and quality improvement plans to secure and sustain improvements?</b>	<b>Insufficient progress</b>
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At the previous inspection self-assessment was judged to be very effective. However, the self-assessment report did not identify the number of learners who do not achieve within the planned time period as an area for improvement and some grades were overstated.

As recognised by the provider, progress in implementing some of the recommendations for improvement from the February 2010 inspection has been slow and they continue to be identified as areas for improvement in the December 2011 self-assessment report.

On the basis of evidence from the monitoring visit some grades in the most recent self-assessment report are too generous and do not give sufficient weight to the decline in performance of apprenticeships since the previous inspection. Some judgements do not accurately reflect the evidence they are based on and areas for improvement do not always follow from the evidence in the self-assessment report. Many sections of the most recent self-assessment report have identical wording to the report from the previous year and from the 2010 inspection report. The quality-improvement plan includes all the identified areas for improvement but has

insufficiently detailed or measurable success criteria and does not include milestone progress targets for longer term actions. Actions that are not achieved do not always feature in the next self-assessment report.

## Outcomes for learners

**What progress has been made towards improving outcomes for learners and, in particular, apprentices' retention, achievement, and progression?** **Insufficient progress**

At the previous inspection outcomes for learners were satisfactory. The majority of Entry to Employment learners progressed to apprenticeships. However, significant numbers of apprentices left the programmes early and a high proportion did not complete within their planned timescales.

Apprenticeship success rates have declined sharply since the inspection in 2010. In motor vehicle engineering, overall success rates fell to 2.5% in 2010/11. Since November 2011 this programme is no longer offered and recruitment has stopped. However, 52 apprentices currently remain on programme. In business administration and customer service, apprenticeship success rates also fell to well below national averages in 2009/10. Actions to improve outcomes showed some impact in 2010/11 but success rates remained well below national averages. Data for current apprentices does not indicate any further improvement in 2011/12 for business administration although predicted outcomes in customer service are better with only one of the 34 apprentices currently beyond the planned completion date.

The transition from Entry to Employment to foundation learning was satisfactory. The number of learners achieving their functional skills and developing the skills needed to enter employment is increasing. Progression to apprenticeship programmes remains strong. However the achievement of vocationally specific qualifications is low.

## Quality of provision

**What progress has been made in foundation learning towards ensuring all teaching and learning sessions include a range of activities to meet the needs and interests of all learners?** **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection, in the better sessions, tutors used a range of activities and resources to stimulate and engage learners. In other sessions, however, there was too much focus on tutor exposition and there was an insufficiently wide range of teaching and learning activities.

Since the inspection several steps have been taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The provider has supported two members of staff to complete their teacher training qualifications. Team leaders have attended courses and disseminated ideas on improving practice to tutors. The development of the company's intranet to store and share course materials, including schemes of work and teaching resources, is improving the quality and consistency of planning and the range of teaching resources available to staff. Discussions with managers and learners, classroom observations during the visit, and RTL's internal observation records indicate that in many sessions tutors are now using a wider range of activities that involve learners.

**What progress has been made towards improving the quality of target setting and monitoring at progress reviews?** **Reasonable progress**

The previous inspection found that assessors did not always set sufficiently specific targets for learners at their progress review meetings.

RTL has made several changes to address these issues. For apprentices, the introduction of e-portfolios provides an up-to-date record of progress towards completion and of work that remains to be completed. The introduction of more frequent progress reviews has improved assessors' capacity to encourage and support timely progress. Assessors now set clear short-, medium- and long-term targets for completion of assignments as well as individual measurable targets tailored to apprentices' individual needs. New approaches to monitoring progress provide foundation learners with a clear view of the progress they are making.

Assessors now work more closely together, meeting to share practice and discuss individual learners' progress. In future, tutors will make a greater contribution to decisions about apprentices planned completion dates to better use their knowledge of individual learners. Early indications are that these developments are having a positive influence on outcomes, but they are too recent to assess the full impact.

### **Leadership and management**

**What progress has been made towards improving the system of observations so that judgements are more evaluative and lead to improvements in teaching and learning?** **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection managers did not have a clear picture of the quality of teaching and learning. Most observations were those carried out for staff taking teacher training qualifications but the outcomes were not routinely shared with managers. No arrangements were in place to ensure the accuracy of grades and consistency of judgements.

Since then, more systematic internal arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning have been introduced. New recording forms are now in use and better planning has helped to ensure that all tutors and assessors are regularly observed and that observers give constructive evaluative feedback. Teachers feel that this has led to improvements in their performance through, for example, raised levels of confidence, better presentational skills and improvements in session content. However, progress reviews have not yet been observed, and the observation of classroom sessions places too little emphasis on learning as opposed to teaching. This means that the evidence does not always adequately reflect the grade given. At this stage, opportunities are being missed to use the outcomes of observations for overall quality improvement. For example, there is no overall analysis that can be used as evidence for self-assessment.

**What progress has been made towards further developing the safeguarding arrangements which were judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection safeguarding was satisfactory with a recommendation to further develop the arrangements by extending the training of staff to the next level. Specific guidelines on the safe use of the internet were not in place.

Key safeguarding staff have undertaken further training in safeguarding and online protection, subsequently using team meetings to update staff and share materials and resources. Further training for all staff is planned on a rolling basis starting in January 2012. A range of externally produced resources to further develop learners' understanding of safeguarding and broader every child matters themes has been purchased and used on the foundation programme. A wider use of external agencies has benefitted learners on the foundation learning programme which now includes an externally delivered certificate on personal awareness and safety, sexual health and safety. The operations manager sits on the Wirral local children's safeguarding board and has particular involvement in a project focused on e-safety and the development of working protocols for providers operating under the local children's safeguarding board. A redesigned induction provides learners with a better awareness and understanding of e-safety. The implementation of new networking software provides better monitoring and management of the usage of computers and internet access within the training centres.

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