

Redwood Education and Skills Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58830

Name of lead inspector: Phil Hatton HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Redwood was set up in 2007, providing consultancy and support to organisations engaged in the skills agenda. Redwood's directors applied for an apprenticeship contract in 2008 and Redwood Education and Skills Limited (Redwood) was established. In May 2011, the Netherlands-based Calder Group BV purchased the Redwood Group, allowing them entry into the United Kingdom apprenticeship market. Currently 162 intermediate and 455 advanced apprentices are on programmes funded by the Skills Funding Agency. Redwood has not been inspected previously.
2. Redwood provides apprenticeships through two channels. A direct delivery team supports learners on programmes in business and administration and a sub contractor provides training mainly in information and communication technology (ICT) and engineering. Two further areas of subcontracted provision were not graded separately. These include new provision with 24 advanced apprentices on an arts, media and publishing framework with Creative Process and 19 children's care, learning and development advanced apprentices just completing with HSU International Ltd. The latter provision is being discontinued. Redwood employs 30 staff including managers, tutors, assessors and support staff. Redwood is a national provider with most of its learners located in London and the South East.
3. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Way to Work (business administration)
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
 - QA Limited (ICT)
 - LUL Nominee SSL Limited (London Underground - engineering)
 - Creative Process Limited (Arts, media and publishing)
 - HSU International Limited (Care)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	4 learners
Apprenticeships	1,210 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		
Engineering		2
Information and communication technology		2
Business administration and law		2

Overall effectiveness

- Learners achieve their qualifications well, particularly at advanced level. The majority of current learners are making good progress towards completing their qualifications within the expected time. Learners develop good work skills and improve their confidence in their chosen vocational areas. Many progress from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships and to higher education. Their readiness for sustained employment is very good. Many are in positions of responsibility at work and gain promotions. Their understanding of customer needs in business administration and ICT is very good.
- Training is good in all subject areas. Tutors are skilled and knowledgeable in their vocational fields and respected by learners. Learners enjoy their practical and theory training and they are taught well in centres that reflect high industry standards. Learners and their employers are fully involved once training commences. Good support is given by assessors to their learners and specialist personal support is readily available when required. Very effective partnerships with employers, other work-based learning providers and external agencies help give learners good training and employment opportunities. Redwood provides a

wide range of main and additional qualifications which assist learners in progressing in their chosen career paths.

7. Management of training at Redwood is very effective. The quality of learners' training and their progress continues to improve each year. Staff share the desire of managers to meet the needs of learners and work together to achieve challenging improvement targets. Staff know their learners and employers well and are responsive to meeting their needs. Redwood collects and makes good use of extensive learner and employer feedback, telling them what has been done in response to their comments. Quality improvement arrangements are very effective and used well to inform self-assessment reports and quality improvement planning. The promotion of equality and diversity to learners following induction could be further improved.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good overall. The overall success rates for engineering are very high, high for ICT and at the national average for business administration. Many learners make significant improvements in their personal and social skills, and increase their confidence levels. Outcomes for learners within the planned time continue to improve, but are satisfactory overall.
- Learners develop high levels of work skills in all areas. Many achieve additional qualifications beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship programme, increasing their prospects of promotion. Many learners progress to higher level qualifications, and to sustained employment. Current learners are progressing well and work to a high standard.
- Learners feel very safe. The approach to promoting health and safety in engineering is outstanding. Most learners have an excellent awareness and understanding of health and safety. They apply safe working practices to the training centres and their workplaces.
- Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers use information and learning technology (ILT) well. Learners take an active role in training sessions, clearly enjoying their learning. Practical training in ICT and engineering are good. Business administration learners benefit from interesting technical certificate workshops, sharing the experiences of learners from different work settings. Checking of learning by questioning does not always include all learners.
- Assessment is good. Learners receive useful feedback following assessments. Good use is being made of electronic portfolios in business administration. Formal reviews of progress are generally used well to monitor progress, but reinforcement of equality and diversity is often insufficient. First review visits are not always prompt enough to ensure that training and assessment start as soon as possible.
- Resources are very good. The London training centre for business administration has excellent teaching resources. Engineering and ICT resources reflect industry standards. Creative Process learners benefit from being in high-quality higher education facilities. Staff are well qualified and highly experienced

practitioners, able to demonstrate a high level of industry skills, gaining the respect of learners and employers.

- Redwood has very good partnerships with employers, most of whom are small and medium enterprises. Training is often tailored to meet individual needs. Partnerships with other training providers, awarding bodies, support agencies and major software manufacturers are well developed and have a positive impact on the experience of learners. The provision is responsive to a rapidly changing industrial environment.
- Initial advice and guidance are mostly very effective in ensuring that learners are on the right course and working at the right level. Care and support for learners are good. Many learners benefit from extra visits to the workplace and adaptations to assessment methods. Learners with personal problems are also well supported. Literacy and numeracy support is effective.
- Redwood is managed well, with close attention to maintaining the high standards set within a positive and supportive culture. Senior managers use their extensive experience in work-based learning to good effect in strategic planning, target setting, and the planning and development of learning programmes. Management of direct subcontracting is thorough. Resources are developed and used to support learning effectively.
- The promotion of safeguarding is good overall. Appropriate checks are conducted on staff who are suitably trained. Effective actions are taken by safeguarding officers to support learners, led by a director as the designated member of staff for safeguarding. Clear, detailed and comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding, and health and safety, are in place and are used by the subcontractors.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory with well-established policies and procedures. Staff across the provision have participated in appropriate training. Data are used effectively to monitor and analyse performance and engagement by different groups of learners. Learners are provided with relevant information about equality and diversity initially; however, this is not always sufficiently reinforced during their programmes.
- Arrangements to engage with users to support and promote improvement are good. The methods employed to obtain users' views are appropriate and well planned. Redwood has also recently established learner forums, providing valuable opportunities for learners to express their views. Prompt and effective actions are taken to act upon users' views, with careful implementation of identified developments and improvements.
- Self-assessment and improvement planning are very effective in improving the quality of the provision. Processes are thorough, involving learners, staff and subcontractors. Monitoring of the quality of the direct subcontracted provision is rigorous. Data are used well in performance management and action is taken to tackle poor performance. Quality improvement plans clearly identify key actions and are monitored well.
- Redwood and its subcontractors make efficient and effective use of resources to secure good value for money. Learners' development of skills and knowledge

are good. The use of resources is well planned and managed to meet the needs of learners whose views are carefully considered in developing good resources across all programmes.

What does Redwood Education and Skills Limited need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve outcomes within the planned time for learners by ensuring all learners start their training and assessment promptly and are supported where management information systems identify slow progress.
- Improve the consistency and quality of reviews to ensure that all learners have their understanding of equality and diversity, including bullying and harassment, checked and reinforced.
- Extend the sharing of good practice between staff in Redwood, their subcontractors and different centres so that features, such as the good use of questioning to check learning and the use of electronic portfolios, are effectively shared and implemented.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- using electronic portfolios
- the support from assessors and employers
- teaching in workshops
- the chance to progress to higher-level qualifications
- the diversity of the groups
- the industry standard equipment and software
- being taught in a higher education venue
- the small size of the groups and the friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the slow start to being set work
- more advanced notice of workshop dates
- guidance about how to use electronic portfolios.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the apprentices being well supported throughout their apprenticeship
- the flexibility in meeting needs
- the good communication with assessors
- Redwood having the trust and respect of our apprentices

- the excellent working relationships with Redwood
- apprentices who have fitted in very well within companies.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the time between becoming employed and starting qualifications
- communication about the start of training at the beginning of the course.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. Although a relatively new provider, Redwood has already established rapid growth in learner numbers along with sound and sustained improvements to its provision. The use of data for monitoring purposes is particularly thorough and effective. Ambitious targets are set, monitored and met, improving outcomes for all learners. Overall, learners' achievements are above the national rate with an improving trend. The company has very effectively developed a clear vision and appropriate priorities, including its work with the subcontractors, to sustain improvement and raise expectations for its learners and their employers.
9. The self-assessment and quality improvement processes make good use of the views of users, and lead to demonstrable impact in improving the quality of the provision and individual programmes. The self-assessment is clearly written and largely accurate. Redwood's management structure is appropriate, efficient and effective. The company has ensured that it has sufficient staff and resources to carry through its plans for improvement. Staff at all levels across the provision are well supported to actively contribute to developing and securing sustained improvements.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Learners enjoy their learning. Achievement of qualifications is good overall and outstanding in engineering. Almost all learners who start advanced apprenticeships achieve their full frameworks. The few gaps in performance by different groups of learners are being tackled effectively. There has been steady improvement in the numbers of learners completing their programmes within the expected timescales. Although this was satisfactory overall in 2010/11, for many current learners progress is now good. Learners in the new arts, media and publishing provision are progressing well and retention is very high.
11. Additional qualifications are successfully completed by many learners, including sought-after ICT specialist qualifications. Learners gain particularly good work-related skills during their training. Employers are able to identify ways that learners are better able, for example, to relate to customers or to use software creatively. Learners can identify a wide range of personal and employability benefits resulting from their training. Progression to higher-level qualifications and promotions in employment are good.
12. All learners feel very safe at work and in centres and have a well developed understanding of health and safety at work as a result of good induction and training activities. Personal safety is outstanding in engineering. Learners show good awareness of their employment rights and responsibilities and fit in well in the workplace.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. Learners enjoy their well-taught theory and practical training. Tutors make good use of information and learning technology (ILT), including interactive whiteboards and informative film clips. Most learners benefit from small group sizes, enabling tutors to give learners very effective one-to-one coaching. Tutors typically use a wide range of activities which challenge and engage learners. Electronic portfolios are well used in business administration and their use is talked about positively by learners. Tutors are well qualified, highly experienced, enthusiastic and clearly enjoy teaching. They encourage good participation from learners and skilfully bring in their experiences of the workplace. Demonstration is used particularly well. Checking of learning is generally good, but a few tutors could make better use of directed questioning to ensure the involvement of all learners. Teaching centres are particularly good, equipped to industry standards and centrally placed for easy access.
14. Assessment is well planned, although there is sometimes a slow start to evidence being gathered and assessed. Learners understand their targets and produce good-quality portfolios with appropriate evidence, including photographs of their work and detailed write ups of their activities. Portfolios contain well-written and detailed assessor observations, including clear guidance on what learners need to do to improve.
15. Redwood meets the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Extra qualifications are offered and a range of additional courses are available to complement the training programmes. The ways in which workshops are offered in business administration are altered to meet the needs of employers. Partnership working, particularly with the large number of small businesses with whom Redwood works, is very good. Unusually, Redwood works well with other training providers to deliver training in partnership. Employers value the responsiveness to their needs. Typically, employers play an active role in supporting learners, allocating staff and time to support training and assessment in the workplace. Although communication is good overall, when waiting for training to start it is sometimes insufficient.
16. Thorough initial assessment ensures that learners are on the right course at the right level. For example, learners in business administration are placed immediately on the right level courses including many to advanced apprenticeships. Learners have good awareness of progression opportunities. Learners who require it receive good individual learning support, including adaptations to assessment and use of specialist equipment, during their training. They are aware that their assessors are readily available by text, email, or by phone to help with both training and personal problems. There are many examples of additional personal support being given, for areas such as homelessness or to complete more quickly because of changes to personal circumstances, that have enabled learners to succeed.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

17. Leaders and managers consistently set high standards and have established a positive and supportive culture. The programmes and organisation are managed well by experienced senior managers. Strategic planning, operational management, target setting and planning and development of learning programmes are all good. Management of the subcontracted provision is particularly thorough and effective. Resources are carefully managed and used effectively to support learning. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. Staff appraisal is closely linked to target setting, training and staff development. Communications within Redwood and with subcontractors and employers are good.
18. Overall, the promotion of safeguarding is good. It is outstanding in engineering. Appropriate checks are conducted on all staff, with suitable risk assessments for new staff. All staff have undertaken suitable training for their roles. A team of safeguarding officers across the provision has been effectively developed with a director as the designated member of staff for safeguarding. Clear, detailed and comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding, including e-safety, and health and safety are in place and are also used by the subcontractors. The vetting of employers' health and safety is thorough and if learners' work involves overnight stays or travel abroad appropriate risk assessments are carried out. In the few cases of learner safeguarding issues that have occurred, the company has responded swiftly and effectively.
19. Redwood and its subcontractors' promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Suitable policies and procedures are well established and implemented across the provision. Staff within Redwood and the subcontractors participate in appropriate training and a member of each internal team acts as an equality and diversity champion. Generally, the ethnic heritage of staff and learners reflects the local areas. Employers have either their own policy for equality and diversity, checked prior to learner placement, or use Redwood's policy. Data are used effectively to monitor and analyse performance and engagement by different groups of learners. The company has identified the few gaps in achievement between different groups of learners and is taking effective steps to narrow these gaps. Learners are initially provided with relevant information at induction about equality and diversity; however, this is not sufficiently reinforced during their programmes.
20. The arrangements to engage with users to support and promote improvement are good in all the programme areas. The methods used to seek users' views are well planned and implemented, including systematic arrangements to survey learners' and employers' views. Additionally, Redwood and the subcontractors have each established a learners' forum, providing valuable opportunities for learners to express their views. Relationships with employers are flexible and effective, and are well supported by the identification of their needs. Prompt and effective actions are taken to act upon users' views, with careful implementation of identified developments and improvements.

21. Self-assessment is thorough and effective in improving the quality of the provision. The process is robust, with good involvement of staff and subcontractors. The quality monitoring of the subcontracted provision is frequent and rigorous. Good use is made of users' views and from observations of teaching and learning. Data are used particularly well to inform self-assessment and performance management of Redwood and its subcontractors. Decisive and effective actions are taken to tackle any poor performance identified, including previous subcontracted provision ceasing or being taken in-house. The quality improvement plan clearly identifies relevant actions for improvement and the progress made is monitored well.
22. Redwood and its subcontractors make good use of resources to secure value for money. Overall, learners' progress, development of skills, knowledge and attainment of learning goals are good. The management and use of resources are efficient, effective and planned well for programme activities, and to meet the needs of learners and their employers. The views of users are carefully considered with regard to the suitability and availability of resources. The quality of resources across the programmes is good. Through its planning and operational management, the company demonstrates a clear and ongoing commitment to managing its resources in a sustainable way.

Subject areas

Engineering

Grade 2

Context

23. Redwood has 91 apprentices in partnership with London Underground, 56 at intermediate and 35 at higher levels. A further 10 advanced apprentices, inherited from a failed national provider, are nearing completion of their programme. Nine pathways are available: track; signals; workshop; escalators; fleet maintenance; non-destructive testing; CNC machining; electrician; and, civil engineering. Learners undertake a year of off-the-job training at the Acton training centre alongside day-release training for a technical certificate at a local college. In subsequent years learners continue with day release while working on the London Underground. Level 3 national vocational qualification (NVQs) in engineering are assessed in the workplace.

Key findings

- Success rates are very high. Nearly all learners who start the four-year engineering programme achieve the full apprenticeship framework. Many progress onto higher-level qualifications including foundation degrees. Although success rates are high, last year some learners at intermediate level took too long to achieve their qualification after key skills assessment was delayed.
- Standards of work are very high. Learners work to exacting standards in both the workplace and training centre. Clear guidance is given on procedures involved in safety critical activities such as signalling maintenance and escalator repair. Workshop projects are completed to a very high standard.
- Learners feel particularly safe in a potentially dangerous working environment. In their initial visit to the workplace learners are given clear guidance on safety procedures and who they should contact if they have concerns over personal safety. A whole-team approach to safety and welfare helps ensure that high numbers of people are available to support learners.
- Teaching and learning are good in the training centre and the workplace. Classes feature small numbers of learners receiving individual attention. Learners value and enjoy the standard of basic training which prepares them well for the rigours of the workplace. Aspects of the provision subcontracted to a further education college do not always meet the high expectations of learners.
- On-the-job training is very well organised. Each learner has a detailed three-year plan. Placement supervisors set assignments requiring learners to take photographs and gather job information and testimonies. This is used as evidence towards industry licensing. Learners take the initiative in requesting types of work and are valued members of the workforce.
- Resources for training and assessment are very good. Learners practise service and repair techniques alongside qualified technicians on a full-size track with

signalling facilities. Learners thus rehearse procedures in a safe and supportive, realistic working environment. Good workshop facilities enable learners to develop their hand skills using a wide range of tools and machinery.

- Learners on higher apprenticeships gather high-quality evidence in the workplace. However, assessment and verification of this evidence are left late in the programme, confusing learners about how the NVQ at level 3 is assessed. Significant amounts of evidence are often assessed and verified on the same date, leading to slow progress if more evidence is required.
- Learning plans do not contain sufficient detail. Learners undertake a variety of programmes with several options, additional qualifications and industry licensing requirements. Details of these highly individualised programmes are not recorded sufficiently. Similarly, the many targets set in the workplace, college and training centre reviews are not collated so that progress and achievement can be easily measured.
- Support for learners is outstanding. All staff assume responsibilities for safety and welfare. Comprehensive support services include links with external agencies for specialist support. Learners have been supported through bereavement, homelessness, debt and rehabilitation into the workplace after illness. Laptops are provided for learners with dyslexia.
- Management of the provision is good. Redwood has formed productive relationships with London Underground and the division of responsibilities is clear. The blend of educational and technical expertise in both parties benefits learners through the efficient planning of their programmes. Redwood assisted London Underground by delivering teacher education qualifications to staff and key skills to learners.
- Safeguarding is outstanding. Learners feel respected and safe in the workplace. They are acutely aware of their rights and responsibilities, readily voicing concerns over their own and others' welfare if necessary. Points of contact for safeguarding concerns are well publicised to learners and prompt action is taken if any incidents of suspected discrimination or bullying occur.
- Feedback from learner forums is honest and comprehensive. Course representatives voice any concerns. Learner focus groups involving all four years of the programme are used. Improvements to the provision frequently result following feedback. For instance, a mathematics session was moved to an earlier time slot after learners found it difficult at the end of a long day.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All staff receive mandatory training. Whilst apprentices generally represent the make-up of London in terms of ethnic heritage only one current learner is female. The provider has contacted local schools and colleges to promote engineering to females, but this has yet to have an impact on numbers.

What does Redwood Education and Skills Limited need to do to improve further?

- Improve the understanding of the assessment process of learners on the NVQ at level 3 by earlier introduction of assessment and verification of learners' evidence.
- Individualise learning plans more so they accurately record learners' starting points and their progress in achieving the many targets learners are set.
- Increase the number of women on engineering programmes by actively participating in initiatives aimed at attracting women into engineering, including continued promotion locally to schools and careers advisers.
- Develop and implement a more detailed performance-based service level agreement with the main subcontracted college, with a focus on the quality of teaching and learning and the management of programmes for London Underground learners.

Information and communication technology (ICT)

Grade 2

Context

24. Some 276 learners are on apprenticeships working towards ICT for practitioners qualifications. All learners are employed. The length of the programme is 12 months, of which 14 weeks is off-the-job training. The majority of learners are aged 16 to 18. About 12% of learners are women and 31% are from a minority ethnic heritage. Redwood offers ICT provision through its subcontractor, QA Limited, from centres in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, London, Reading, Slough and Stockport. The majority of learners are in London and the surrounding area.

Key findings

- Overall, outcomes for learners are good. In 2010/11, both overall success rates and success rates within the planned time improved significantly. Overall success rates are now good, but success rates within the planned time are low, partially reflecting the design of the programme.
- Current learners are making good progress. Learners develop high levels of confidence and a good industrial standard in using ICT. They complete a good range of additional qualifications in using specialist software and hardware. Learners enjoy their courses and are motivated to gain experience and to progress in their jobs.
- Learners feel very safe. They have completed health and safety training in the workplace and have a good understanding of potential issues. Learners know who they should approach in the event of any concerns including safeguarding matters.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners benefit from the experience and expertise of well-qualified staff. Tutors use information and learning technology (ILT) well to explain complex concepts. One-to-one coaching at employers is good. In some lessons tutors do not ask sufficient questions to check learners' understanding and problem-solving skills.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. Good work placements help learners develop valuable employability skills. Progression to employment is high. Additional qualifications taken by learners are particularly relevant. Redwood has recently developed NVQ at level 4 qualifications, providing learners with further progression opportunities. Learners benefit from a wide range of additional training in the workplace.
- Redwood, through its subcontractor, has developed good partnerships including with a major software company to increase the range of provision. Redwood has also developed good partnerships with local schools and careers agencies. QA Limited offers a wide range of commercial training for employers and uses its partnership with these companies well to find employment for learners.

- Tutors and assessors offer good information, advice and guidance. Support and communication with most learners is regular and very effective. Learners at risk of not completing their qualifications are supported well through additional visits to employers. However, tutors do not visit learners early enough in their work placements to help them start collecting evidence for their portfolios.
- Leadership and management are good. Redwood and QA Limited have taken successful action to significantly improve learners' overall success rates. Tutors and assessors are supported well to improve their teaching, for example by better use of ILT. Data are used well to monitor the attendance of learners at the centres and at employers.
- Safeguarding is good with appropriate policies and procedures in place. Swift action is taken if incidents occur. Learners receive clear information about who to contact if they have any safeguarding concerns. During an induction session at one employer the assessor provided very effective examples of safe working practices particularly relevant to the work environment.
- Most learners' views are systematically sought and analysed. The company generally responds to learners' concerns well and informs them about the improvements it has made as the result of their feedback. Learner representatives attend well-planned annual events to discuss areas for improvement. This arrangement is very effective. Redwood responds well to feedback from employers.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners receive a wide range of information on equality matters during induction. Most assessors discuss employment rights and responsibilities effectively with learners. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted during progress reviews or during the training sessions.
- Self-assessment and quality systems are very effective in bringing about improvements. Observation of teaching and learning is systematic and suitably moderated. Some records of observations focus too much on teaching and not sufficiently on learning. Quality improvement planning is detailed and effective. However, good practice is not sufficiently shared between staff in the training centres.

What does Redwood Education and Skills Limited need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates within the planned time by ensuring that learners are visited at their employers soon after they start their placements so that they are aware of how to gather evidence of their competencies at the earliest opportunity.
- Improve the promotion of equality and diversity by ensuring that learners' understanding is developed through progress reviews and during training.
- Ensure that further opportunities are provided for staff in different centres to share good practice in order to improve aspects such as questioning and target setting.

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Context

25. There are 197 learners in this area. Of these, 112 are on intermediate-level apprenticeships and 85 on advanced-level apprenticeships. Some 59 are aged 16 to 18, 66 are aged 19 to 24 and 72 are over 25. About 87 are taking administration qualifications, 73 are taking business management qualifications and 37 are taking marketing and sales, including customer service qualifications. Apprentices are working with 76 employers across London. There are 118 female and 79 male learners. Four learners have a disability and 92 are from a minority ethnic heritage.

Key findings

- Overall success rates are satisfactory, with an improving trend. In 2010/11, overall success rates were at the national averages, but progress towards achievement was too slow for many learners. Significant improvements have taken place and current success rates are high. Overall progress of current learners is satisfactory, with some making very good progress.
- Learners develop their job skills and knowledge very well. They make good progress in their jobs, working to a high standard and taking on more tasks and responsibility. They develop good skills in customer service and team leading. Learners significantly improve their confidence in their jobs and have good motivation to achieve qualifications and progress in their careers.
- Learners feel very safe, both during training and in the workplace. Induction by employers and Redwood is thorough and learners have a good understanding of safe working practices, knowing what action to take should they have any concerns with health, safety or welfare issues. However, the reinforcement of their understanding of safeguarding legislation is insufficient, particularly at reviews.
- Training is good. Off-the-job workshops are of high quality. Learners are enthusiastic and participate very well in a range of interesting and useful activities that they apply to the workplace. They enjoy sharing their experiences with other learners. The planning of workshops is good, introduced early in the learners' programme, with highly effective teaching.
- Resources are of a good standard. In addition to the good quality e-portfolio, assessors use laptops and smart phones well to support assessment. Training venues are of high quality and easily accessible for learners, including a central London location. Assessors use internet and paper-based resources well to support learners, for example in key skills and preparation for tests.
- Assessment is thorough with a wide range of methods, including a very good quality e-portfolio. Independent learning is developed effectively. Progress reviews are sometimes ineffective. Some set good targets, whilst others are insufficiently specific or challenging, not focusing sufficiently on workplace and

personal objectives. Some reviews are not timely and employers are not consistently present.

- Redwood meets the needs of learners and employers well. Programmes are flexible and assessors work well with line managers and employers to keep them informed of learners' progress. The matching of new apprentices to job vacancies is good. Many young learners are able to commence at a level 3 qualification. Learners are encouraged to progress to higher-level qualifications.
- Partnerships are good. The provider works well with other providers and local councils to deliver apprenticeships and to share good practice. Redwood has good links with the national apprenticeship service's vacancy matching service, placing learners in employment and working well with employers to set up apprenticeship schemes. Redwood is very responsive to issues raised by partners and employers.
- Support for learners from assessors and employers is good. Learners use the e-portfolios well to get feedback and action from assessors. Employers provide good workplace support, including time to work on their qualification. Communication at the start of programmes is sometimes insufficient, with delays in learners and employers receiving information, for example knowing when assessor visits will commence.
- Operational management is good. Managers monitor staff performance closely via effective one-to-one interviews. Communication is good, with regular meetings, including standardisation. Redwood supports partners well by providing training and mentoring to share best practice. Redwood has undertaken significant action over the last year, leading to improvements both in success rates and in overall quality of delivery for learners and employers.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Data are analysed and shared with staff at meetings. Redwood is aware of some shortfalls in success rates by age and gender and has taken effective action to tackle this issue. Induction and workshops are effective in promoting learners' understanding of aspects of equality and diversity. However, the reinforcement of this understanding at reviews is inconsistent and sometimes insufficient.
- Quality improvement arrangements, including self-assessment, are good. The self-assessment process is inclusive and the report broadly accurate. The quality improvement plan has clear actions, with regular reviews. The observation process identifies clear judgements and training and development needs, but is underdeveloped in relation to reviews of learners' progress. Redwood has successfully implemented improvements following learner and employer feedback.

What does Redwood Education and Skills Limited need to do to improve further?

- Improve learners' understanding of safeguarding, as well as equality and diversity, by better reinforcement at reviews and follow up visits.
- Further develop the observation process to include more reviews of learners' progress, to ensure that all learners have a good-quality timely review that

includes specific and challenging objectives and more consistent involvement of line managers.

- Improve communication at the start of programme to ensure learners and employers are aware of programme start dates.

Information about the inspection

26. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Operations Director, 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, and data on learners and their achievement.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider and the inspection service provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments, progress reviews, assessor training, assessor meetings and an assessor performance review. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Redwood Education and Skills Limited**

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	617	617
Part-time learners	-	-
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2	
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
A3. How safe do learners feel?	2	
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?</i>	NA	
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?</i>	NA	
B. Quality of provision	2	2
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
B3. How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?	2	
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?	2	
C. Leadership and management	2	2
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?</i>	NA	
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
C7. 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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