

DV8 Training

Focused monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Nigel Evans HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: The Outset
2 Grange Road
Walthamstow
London E17 8AH

Telephone number: 017927 00611

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

DV8 Training (DV8) runs work-based learning programmes in music, media, fashion and events management across London and the South-East and is based in the Walthamstow area of London. Current provision includes Foundation Learning, the recently-developed apprenticeships programme and the DV8 Diploma in Creative and Digital Media as well as programmes funded by the local authority, schools and the European Social Fund. DV8 has considerable experience in working with young people from the NEET (not in education, employment or training) group, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Learners on full-time courses generally attend between three and four days per week whilst apprentices and diploma learners attend one day a week for off-the-job training.

At the time of the visit, 15 learners were undertaking apprenticeships in creative and digital media and 15 live events and promotion. Foundation Learning programmes had 180 learners and the diploma programme 10 learners. At the 2008 inspection all areas were judged to be good with the exception of equality of opportunity, which was outstanding.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in developing quality improvement arrangements to improve the provision for learners, share good practice and fully involve all relevant stakeholders in the self-assessment process?

Reasonable progress

At the 2008 inspection some aspects of quality improvement, including the observation of teaching and learning, were judged to be underdeveloped. The observation process is developing well and improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the company. Recent observations show that increased attention is being given to the quality of learning taking place. The quality improvement plan (QIP) concentrates on the key aspects of DV8's provision and the improvement objectives are all appropriate. Target setting in the QIP is improving, although the lack of internal benchmarking and unclear success measures reduce the effectiveness of the QIP. Progress in meeting improvement targets is not clearly recorded in the regular management meetings.

DV8 recognises that the current process for the producing the self-assessment report does not fully meet the company's needs. A more streamlined report that is linked closely to the learner experience and gives tutors, learners and other stakeholders greater opportunities to contribute is in development. Increased use of on-line surveys and other informal means of collecting feedback are beginning to give DV8 better information about the quality of its provision.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in maintaining or improving the outcomes for learners?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection outcomes for learners were judged to be good. DV8 has maintained high achievement and progress rates on foundation programmes, and new courses introduced have experienced significant improvement in success rates. For example, in their second year, advanced apprenticeship rates are now above comparable national averages.

Following recent changes to the management of qualification registration, assessment practice and direct qualification accredited status, DV8 has become far more flexible in the range of courses offered to meet the needs of learners and the further development of their personal and social skills. Learners recognise how the significant increase in the range of skills development activities offered improves their career prospects and life chances. The number of learners has much increased and progression opportunities within DV8 have improved considerably. Learners can now progress from a diploma programme in Year 10 to an advanced apprenticeship with DV8. Feedback from learners clearly records very high satisfaction rates.

Quality of provision

How successful has the implementation of functional skills been with learners, and how effective are links between functional skills and the development of relevant vocational and employability skills?	Significant progress
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The integration and relating of functional skills with vocational subjects are excellent. All tutors are involved in developing activities and other resources to engage learners, demonstrate the value of understanding functional skills and improve individual competence. The approach to overcoming barriers to learning is wide ranging and particularly effective in inspiring learners to set personal challenges and raise their aspirations. Excellent use is made of positive role models to enthuse and motivate learners. Most learners can identify how their skills are improving and how their likelihood of being successful in the music, events or fashion industry is increasing.

The outstanding use of real events from an early stage in the programmes encourages learners to use and develop a wide range of valuable skills. The involvement of vocational tutors in developing and delivering functional skills is a particular strength of the provision, demonstrating to learners the fundamental importance of having an appropriate level of competence in order to be successful in their chosen industry.

Good use is made of diagnostic tests and induction activities to identify barriers to learning and start planning to meet individual needs. Learners with specific or more generalised learning difficulties benefit from smaller groups and more specialised support.

What progress has been made in engaging and involving employers in developing and supporting the apprenticeship programmes?

Reasonable progress

The previous inspection judged the links with employers to be good. Since then, DV8 has introduced the advanced apprenticeship programme. Links with employers are improving and learners report how much they enjoy the opportunities given at their placements.

Learner progress reviews in the workplace are functional. Assessors record learner progress and set clear assessment targets. However, the standards and expectations of learner performance at work are not used sufficiently well to set improvement targets and measure progress. For example, the poor time-keeping raised as a concern by an employer was not incorporated into the learner’s learning plan.

Employers’ familiarity with the apprenticeship programme and knowledge of the learner progress have much improved since the introduction of the programme. Employers are very positive about the training and understand their involvement in supporting learners. However, the number and range of placement opportunities do not yet fully support learner or qualification needs. In some cases learners have difficulty in producing evidence to support the achievement of the qualification and a few learners report that placements are not always aligned with their career aspirations, although in general they very much enjoy and value the opportunity to work in the industry.

How effective are the partnership developments, and to what extent are they adding value to the learner experience and improving outcomes for learners?

Significant progress

Since the previous inspection, DV8 has further developed its broad links with other training professionals and the industry to share best practice and develop learner understanding even further. The links with external partners are leading to greater improvements in learners’ vocational knowledge. Staff consistently use their professional expertise, experience and contacts to the benefit of learners, teaching current industry practice whilst offering learners opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills through live events. Links with other industry professionals are well established and learners regularly experience a range of industry guest speakers and take part in activities that inspire them to learn and develop their skills further. For example, Radio 1Xtra recently broadcast live from DV8’s premises, and the activity fully involved learners in planning, production and broadcasting.

Links with local specialist support services and agencies are good and improving, particularly since the recruitment of a full-time additional learning support manager. Potential barriers to attendance and success, such as transport, housing and finance problems, are now dealt with effectively and promptly. The good links with local schools are particularly effective for some learners by providing positive alternative provision and good opportunities for progression.

Leadership and management

How effective are recent actions in improving and developing safeguarding arrangements for learners, and how well are vulnerable and potentially vulnerable learners supported? **Significant progress**

Safeguarding and the wider welfare of learners are given a high priority by DV8. The safe recruiting of staff procedure is well established and ensures the necessary checks and references are in place. The designated safeguarding officer is well trained and has good links with the local safeguarding board. Learners' awareness of the support available is very good and learners feel confident that any concerns or problems they raise will be taken seriously and acted upon. DV8's access to the essential contact details of learners has improved, and in an emergency learner details are accessible to key members of staff via the secure network. The e-safety safeguarding arrangements are thorough and regularly reviewed. Learners showcasing their work and creative skills through the DV8i-port (interactive portfolio) are very aware of the precautions necessary to protect themselves.

The risk assessment process for all activities is well managed and the recent revisions reduce the bureaucratic aspects of the previous system. The good staff training and regular updates ensure staff have a very good awareness of their roles and responsibilities if a safeguarding incident should arise. The recently appointed additional learning support officer is providing very good practical support and guidance.

How well are data used to manage, record and monitor the progress of learners? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection DV8 has further developed its management information system to monitor and track learner progress and achievements. For example, attendance and punctuality are now formally recorded and the resulting data used well to plan for improvements. Staff clearly understand the management information system and managers regularly use it to review and monitor individual learner performance. DV8 recently introduced an improved system that records, monitors and analyses the achievements of learners with personal and learning support needs. DV8 recognises that further development is required to easily capture achievement of all learners' individual learning targets and not just those linked to accredited qualifications.

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