

Avant Partnership Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58550

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Avant Partnership Limited (Avant) was established as the consortium lead for Train to Gain and young apprenticeship training in Humberside. It was created in October 2007 as a wholly owned trading subsidiary of the Consortium for Learning (CfL). CfL is a charitable organisation working with, and supporting, a network of work-based learning providers in Humberside. The network includes colleges, charities, group training associations, local authorities, and private local and national training companies.
2. Avant delivers work-based learning programmes in a variety of subject areas. Its largest programmes are business, administration and law; health, public services and care; hairdressing; and Skills for Life. Avant has 539 learners in total, with 473 in the areas inspected.
3. Kingston-upon-Hull is ranked highly in the indices of multiple deprivation. Unemployment in Kingston-upon-Hull is considerably higher than both the regional and national rates. In 2011, 55% of pupils in Yorkshire and Humberside achieved five or GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics, which was just below the average for England of 58%. According to the 2011 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the area is 7%, compared with 13% for England and Wales.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer Provision: National Vocational Qualifications in the workplace Apprenticeships	 242 297

4. The following partners currently provide training on behalf of Avant:
 - Alcrest Academy
 - Carlton Education and Enterprise
 - DKM Assessment and Verification
 - HYA Training
 - Lite Training
 - Pyramid Training
 - Training First
 - Training Futures

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	2
Preparation for life and work	2
Business, administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of Avant's provision is good. Directors provide the company with good leadership, raising ambition for learners and staff. Both outcomes for learners and the quality of provision are good. Teaching, learning and assessment are good; learners are particularly well supported. Avant successfully meets the needs and interests of learners. Although Avant does not deliver any programmes, it manages its delivery partners very effectively for the benefit of learners. Arrangements to safeguard learners are good. Learners feel safe and protected from harm in a secure environment. Avant pays good attention to the health and safety of its learners. The company promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. However, it misses some opportunities to promote equality and diversity during off-the-job training. Quality improvement arrangements are thorough. However, the company has not yet fully implemented some actions in the quality improvement plan. Value for money is good and the company is committed to using its resources sustainably.

Main findings

- Overall success rates for both apprentices and learners completing National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are generally good. Success rates gained within planned timescales are high, except on Skills for Life programmes. On health, public services and care success rates are excellent. However, for the small numbers of information and communication technology (ICT) learners they are low. Learners make good progress and standards of work are high.
- Learners develop good skills which they use very effectively at work. They have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work. They also have a good understanding of health and safety, and apply safe working practices in the workplace. Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding, know how to report concerns and generally feel very safe with Avant.
- Off-the-job teaching and learning are good and they successfully engage learners, particularly in practical sessions. Most sessions are interesting and provide regular reviews of learning, which help learners to make good progress. However, the use of information and learning technology (ILT) to promote learning is underdeveloped, and opportunities to promote equality and diversity within the classroom are frequently missed. Assessment of work is thorough and learners have a good understanding of how to improve.
- The range of programmes successfully meets the needs and interests of learners. Avant is flexible in its approach to the needs of learners and employers. Some partners are working extremely effectively with very disadvantaged and previously disengaged learners, providing them with a range of good learning opportunities.
- Learners receive good personal and social support which helps them to succeed. Staff provide helpful advice and guidance. Good monitoring systems successfully identify further support needs for individual learners.
- Avant's management of the partnership, particularly when responding to external pressures, is good. The company's staff work well with their partners to develop and promote new provision, engaging and supporting new partners particularly effectively. They have created a positive atmosphere within the partnership, based on mutual trust, respect and support.
- The use of management information is improving with group access to a common management information system. Regular monitoring and audits promote individual improvements for each partner as well as improvements across the whole partnership.
- A small group of trustees, from the charity that wholly owns Avant, oversees the partnership satisfactorily. One trustee is also Avant's company secretary. Trustees meet bi-monthly, receiving regular reports from the chief executive. However, these reports do not focus sufficiently on the performance of the partnership, particularly in relation to learners' success rates.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Individual partners have effective policies and procedures in place. However, Avant does not use

information about the success of different groups of learners sufficiently. Although some activity is underway, it is too early to measure its impact.

- Avant's engagement with its users is good. Avant staff maintain good, regular contact with Avant's partners who are responsible for collecting feedback from their learners and employers. Avant has developed a working group to standardise this process across the whole partnership and has created a system to measure the impact of its programmes on both learners and employers.
- Avant has developed good arrangements to improve provision across the partnership. Avant staff use good strategies to include partners in developing and improving key aspects of programme delivery. However, the implementation of joint observations of teaching and learning within the partnership has been slow. Avant's quality cycle addresses most key aspects of delivery; however, it does not focus sufficiently on some stages of the learner journey.

What does Avant need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates on preparation for life and work, and ICT programmes by monitoring learners more proactively.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by increasing the use of ILT and implementing the observation of teaching and learning across the partnership.
- Take actions to improve equality and diversity measures, including better use of data to narrow the achievement gap and better promotion of equality and diversity in sessions to improve learners' understanding.
- Re-focus quality improvement activities to ensure that they fully address key stages in the learner journey so that Avant can be sure that learners receive high-quality provision at each stage of their training programme.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- learning something new every day
- learning in the workplace
- getting regular help and support with their studies
- the accessible and friendly staff
- that everything is clearly explained
- concise training that makes course-work enjoyable.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more time for training and course-work
- more than three hours a week of lessons
- more trips to shows to develop creative skills
- more up-to-date equipment in the training salon
- more straightforward questions as part of the NVQ
- more demonstrations and more detailed theory lessons.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- good communication with partners and with Avant
- the reliable and professional assessors
- frequent visits from Avant staff
- excellent opportunities for joint training with National Health Service (NHS) staff.

What employers would like to see improved:

- more involvement in the programme
- more opportunities to share good practice.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. Avant demonstrates good capacity to improve. It has maintained good quality of provision through a period when many partners have experienced challenge and anxiety about the continuation of their funded programmes. Avant has developed a good partnership of providers who work well as a single entity, providing each other with guidance and support for the good of the partnership. The partnership has a clear strategic aim and successfully develops provision in response to both regional and national priorities. Self-assessment is inclusive of all partners, most of whom are experienced in the process. Partners collect users' views to incorporate into the self-assessment report. Avant is standardising these arrangements, and those to measure impact of learning on employers, across the partnership. Avant's management structure is lean and appropriate with clear job roles, responsibilities and individual objectives for each member of staff. Avant utilises a very inclusive approach that allows partners to lead on improvement. This successfully ensures that partner staff take ownership of change. Trustees provide the partnership with satisfactory oversight.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

7. Overall success rates on both apprenticeships and NVQ programmes are good, rising steadily over the last three years but with a significant increase in 2010/11. Success rates gained within planned timescales are also high for all learners apart from those on Skills for Life programmes. Learners on health, public services and care programmes benefit from outstanding success rates. Learners make good progress through their frameworks or NVQs. They enjoy their learning and develop good skills. Employability programmes are new in the partnership but learners are making good progress and demonstrate a clear understanding of issues related to employability. Success rates of ICT learners, which represent a very small proportion of the learner population, are low.
8. Avant uses management information effectively to assess the success of different subject areas and levels of programmes, and to manage the performance of the different providers. However, the company does not yet use information systematically to identify gaps in the achievement of different groups of learners. Success rates of women on workplace NVQ programmes were five percentage points lower than their male counterparts in 2010/11. Avant was aware of this disparity but took insufficient actions to address the imbalance.
9. Learners make good improvements to their economic and social well-being through learning and development. They make good progress internally from pre-apprenticeship programmes across the partners to apprenticeship provision. Learners display a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work. Health, public services and care learners apply their skills appropriately

with young children, correcting behaviour and creating exciting activities for them. Business administration learners take on additional responsibilities and contribute fully to their team. Learners on hairdressing programmes gain a good understanding of the use of different hair products. Learners on employability programmes create good quality curricula vitae and have a clear understanding of what employers are looking for at interviews. Employers comment very favourably about the progress learners make and their contributions to their businesses.

10. Learners have a good awareness of safe working practices and of safeguarding issues. They demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety measures. Childcare assistants have a very high awareness of safeguarding matters that they apply appropriately to protect the children in their care. Hairdressing and business administration learners have a good understanding of health and safety issues and regularly demonstrate their understanding by improving their work environment. Learners on literacy and numeracy courses talk confidently about safe working practices. Learners feel very safe both at work and in the centres. Learners appreciate the measures the various providers take to make sure they are safe. They have good relationships with staff and are happy to discuss personal issues with them. They have a clear understanding of who to go to if they have a problem. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of internet safety.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. The quality of teaching, training and assessment is good with some good off-the-job classroom teaching. Learners' engagement during sessions is good and tutors effectively and regularly review learning. Assessment in the workplace is good with motivational one-to-one coaching, particularly for those learners on preparation for life and work programmes. Learners on health, public services and care programmes have access to high quality learning resources to enhance their learning. Question and answer techniques are good, embedding knowledge and successfully checking learners' understanding. However, for some learners on hairdressing programmes, lessons are not as well planned and therefore can be rather dull and less engaging. Opportunities to promote equality and diversity within a small number of the teaching sessions are not fully realised, with the consequence that, for some learners, their understanding of equality and diversity is not satisfactorily developed. The use of ILT to support teaching and learning is underdeveloped despite this being a priority.
12. Avant and its delivery partners successfully meet the needs and interests of learners. For those learners on health and social care programmes, there are good opportunities to undertake additional qualifications, which enhance their prospects and help them to progress. Avant is particularly good at providing co-ordinated progression routes for those learners returning to learning and the long-term unemployed, ensuring these learners develop in confidence and continue with their learning. However, for some hairdressing learners, additional

enrichment opportunities to develop their creative skills further, for example, to attend and participate in shows, are lacking.

13. Avant uses its range of partnerships very effectively to meet the needs of learners. Partners speak highly of the ongoing support they receive from Avant. They are particularly appreciative of being able to keep their own individual identity as delivery partners. They work effectively with employers for the benefit of learners and have a range of flexible approaches to ensure learners access the support and learning opportunities they need to complete their programmes. Learners have good opportunities to progress. For example, unemployed learners have opportunities to progress from pre-apprenticeship programmes on to apprenticeships. Business administration learners have good opportunities to progress from level 1 business administration to level 5 management programmes, but links to higher education for these learners are underdeveloped.
14. Learners receive good individual and tailored support from Avant to ensure they make progress and stay on their programmes. They speak highly of the support they receive and say the advice given by tutors has helped them to make appropriate choices about courses and employment opportunities. Learners new to programmes receive timely and comprehensive advice about suitable programmes of study and programme requirements. For some mature learners returning to study, additional guidance and support motivate them to undertake additional qualifications with the ultimate aim of returning to employment. Learners on business administration programmes receive excellent support, which for some has included very effective personal and social support as well as support for their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

15. Avant has managed the development of the revised partnership structure over the last two years highly effectively by incorporating both previous and new partners into a vibrant new partnership that recognises and builds on each partner's strengths. They have successfully managed the re-focusing of the provision in response to external factors including the imposition of minimum contract levels and changes to adult skills funding. The partners work very well together in a positive atmosphere based on mutual respect, trust and support. Avant staff provide good support to all partners, especially new partners in order to integrate them quickly into the group. There is much sharing of information, employment intelligence, delivery processes and documentation between partners.
16. The use of management information is improving with group access to a common management information system. Regular monitoring and audits promote individual improvements for each partner as well as improvements across the whole partnership. Avant's business plan provides a detailed overview of the partnership's key aims and objectives and highlights a large number of future developments and activities. It lacks detail about specific

- targets and timescales. However, individual staff objectives ensure that management staff are very clear about their individual targets. Regular team and one-to-one meetings carefully monitor progress against these targets. While management meetings focus sharply on contractual requirements and performance they do not record the detail of learner success rates sufficiently.
17. A small group of trustees of the charity that wholly owns Avant oversees the partnership satisfactorily. One trustee is also Avant's company secretary. They meet regularly every two months and receive reports from the chief executive. However, these reports do not currently focus sufficiently on the performance of the partnership, particularly in relation to success rates for learners.
 18. The promotion of safeguarding in the partnership is good. Avant's staff have undergone safe recruitment training and staff recruitment follows required processes. A detailed pre-contract questionnaire checks potential partners' systems and processes. Partner staff details are included on the Avant central register of staff. Promotion and reinforcement of safeguarding has a high profile at the regular partner monitoring visits; promotion at partner sites is good. Avant's staff link very effectively with a number of organisations to maintain up-to-date understanding of developments regarding health and safety and safeguarding.
 19. Overall, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All partners have appropriate policies and procedures to support their activities and aims. Avant has an overarching policy and procedure that addresses all the relevant key issues. They have developed some good quality resources and promotional materials designed to challenge gender stereotyping. However, inspectors recorded missed opportunities to promote equality and diversity in some teaching sessions. Avant has started to analyse management information regarding the performance of different groups of learners but actions to remedy identified achievement gaps have been slow and have not yet shown impact.
 20. Avant has developed good systems to focus on improving provision across the partnership. Avant's staff use good strategies to include partners in developing and improving key aspects of provision. Working groups explore key themes in detail, bringing suggestions to partnership meetings. These make a good contribution to the development and standardisation of approach across all of the partners because the partners take ownership of the process. However, the implementation of the joint observation of teaching and learning within the partnership has been slow.
 21. Avant's self-assessment process is fully inclusive of all partners, utilising each partner's self-assessment report to create an overall partnership report. The report is evaluative, critical and identifies key areas for improvement. A detailed quality improvement plan drives further improvements. Avant checks progress against the actions on the plan at regular monitoring and audit visits to all partners. However, Avant has not yet developed a quality cycle that focuses sufficiently on the key stages of the learner journey.

Subject areas

Health, public services and care

Grade 2

Context

22. There are 238 learners on work-based learning programmes delivered by four members of the Avant Partnership. Of these, 79 are on advanced apprenticeships and 28 on intermediate apprenticeships. There are 74 learners on advanced and 57 learners on intermediate adult skills programmes in health, public services and care. Most learners are White British females aged 19 years and over. A minority of learners have a declared disability.

Key findings

- Both overall success rates and those gained within planned timescales on apprenticeships and workplace NVQs are outstanding. Success rates have been increasing over a three-year period during which learner numbers have risen substantially. Current learners are on schedule to achieve their learning aims in 2011/12.
- Learners enjoy their learning and make good and timely progress. Employers value the skills learners develop and the increased quality in their performance in the workplace. Learners make good progress as evidenced in their portfolios and in their practical assessments. The development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is good and mature learners are encouraged to acquire these alongside their adult skills programmes.
- Learners feel safe and have a high awareness of safeguarding and health and safety issues in relation to their work with children and vulnerable adults. They also have a good knowledge in relation to their own safeguarding in work and life. There is an emphasis on safety during assessments and reviews reinforcing their learning and application in the workplace.
- The recruitment and induction process is highly effective in ensuring learners are enrolled onto the correct programme. Initial assessment informs the learning plan for each learner and ensures that assessors are able to plan and support individuals well throughout their training. Assessors provide learning support but no specialist support is available.
- Teaching and training are good. Tutors and staff plan their lessons thoroughly and use a wide range of teaching and learning methods that actively engage learners. In health care sessions, one-to-one coaching is excellent and enables learners to make very good progress. Feedback to learners is constructive and informs the evaluation of each session. There are missed opportunities for using technology.
- Assessment practice is good. Assessments are thoroughly planned, flexible and regular. Assessors set targets that are clear to the learners, enabling them to make progress between sessions and develop their knowledge and skills. However, targets for those learners on childcare programmes are insufficiently

specific to inform learners about the actions they need to complete before their next session. There are missed opportunities for the use of ILT in assessments.

- The provision successfully meets the range of users and their interests within the health and social care and early years' industries, enabling employers to support their workforce in gaining appropriate qualifications. Employers value the training and support their learners receive from the providers and an NHS trust which works cooperatively with the Avant Partnership to deliver specialist units.
- Avant works with a variety of partners to meet learners' needs. For example, a specialist childcare provider has recently completed training for a foster care centre, enabling a group of long-established foster carers to gain a qualification. It works with the local child-minding association to provide training. A very effective partnership with the local NHS trust provides good training and access creating good opportunities for staff to maintain professional currency.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Assessors provide good support to their learners and the timing of visits allows, where required, extra support for learners. Information, advice and guidance are good and delivered at appropriate times throughout the programme. Some learners progress to degree programmes and management qualifications.
- Leadership and management are good. Delivery partners hold regular team meetings and share good practice across the partnership. Staff contribute fully to the self-assessment process. An effective appraisal system identifies staff development needs and staff have good access to development opportunities. Staff feel valued by their managers.
- The management of both safeguarding and equality and diversity is good. However, men are under-represented in the provision.

What does Avant need to do to improve further?

- Improve target setting in childcare programmes by making them more explicit and time bound so learners can clearly identify what they have to do.
- Increase the use of ILT in teaching, learning and assessment by developing the use of laptops and electronic evidence and by providing staff training in its use.

Hairdressing

Grade 2

Context

23. Currently, 57 learners are working towards apprenticeships in hairdressing. Of these, 16 are working towards advanced apprenticeships and 41 are following the intermediate apprenticeship route. Most learners are aged 16 to 18 and are female. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Sixteen per cent of the learners are identified as having learning difficulties.

Key findings

- Both overall success rates and those completed within the planned timescales are good. Learner progression from intermediate programmes to advanced levels is high. Learners display high levels of confidence and competence in their work. They enjoy their work and have a good attitude to employment.
- All learners feel very safe and display a good understanding of safeguarding. Theory lessons prioritise health and safety which are reinforced during practical lessons. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety. For example, when completing highlights learners always use personal protective equipment.
- Teaching and individual coaching are good. In background-knowledge lessons, teachers use a good variety of strategies to stimulate learning. Learners benefit from robust individual assessment that allows tutors and assessors to plan individual learning very effectively. Learners particularly enjoy the small group sizes in off-the-job sessions. Lesson plans are satisfactory. However, some taught sessions seen by inspectors were rather dull and uninspiring and ILT was used insufficiently to promote learning.
- Assessment is fair, reliable and timely. Reviews are satisfactory and enable learners to reflect appropriately on their progress. However, the delivery partner is not planning on- and off-the-job training sufficiently to make a fully coherent programme.
- Provision effectively meets the needs and interests of learners. However, opportunities for learners to undertake additional activities, for example, to attend hair shows to enrich their learning, are underdeveloped.
- The provider has strong partnerships with three local secondary schools, Hull City Council and a wide range of salons. Learners make good progress from pre-apprenticeship provision into mainstream programmes through these partnerships. The wide varieties of employer partnerships give learners good access to placements that successfully develop skills and are readily accessible geographically.
- Assessors and tutors give good pastoral support as well as very effective guidance within the industry. Learners appreciate the caring style of the staff that enables them to discuss personal issues fully. The provider has well

established links with specialist support agencies. For example, learners with dyslexia are referred for further in-depth diagnostic testing.

- The delivery partner prioritises continuous improvement throughout the organisation. Communication and teamwork are good. Success rates within planned timescales have improved following tighter progress monitoring. Managers make good use of management information to manage performance. Staff are vocationally well qualified and have strong industrial experience. Resources are generally satisfactory.
- Arrangements for managing equality and diversity are satisfactory. Staff have adequate training and development. However, they do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently in lessons.
- The self-assessment report is very comprehensive, self-critical and broadly accurate. Staff consult learners and employers regularly through forums and incorporate their views into self-assessment and quality improvement measures. The provider's observation of teaching and learning process has effectively promoted improvement. However, it is currently not in place while the provider re-evaluates the provision.

What does Avant need to do to improve further?

- Develop a better planning system that ensures learners have a coherent programme including both on- and off-the-job learning, and increase the participation of employers.
- Develop a broader range of enrichment activities to enhance learners' experience.
- Prioritise the implementation of the observation of teaching and learning process to assess and continually improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 2

Context

24. There are 57 learners on the adult skills-funded preparation for life and work programme which is delivered by two of the partners. The partners offer learners accredited qualifications in literacy, numeracy, ICT and employability. One partner also delivers functional skills as part of the wider apprenticeship programmes.

Key findings

- Overall success rates for learners on Skills for Life programmes are good. However, those gained within planned timescales are satisfactory. Learners on literacy programmes, particularly those on entry level courses, have excellent success rates. Although the employability programme is very new, learners are making good progress and developing a good understanding of work-related issues.
- Progress in sessions is good. Learners develop good literacy, numeracy and employability skills. Learners also develop good independent thinking and communication skills as well as effective reflective practice. This supports them in evaluating their own progress and making decisions about their futures.
- Learners develop in confidence and self-esteem and are able to make informed choices about their learning and employment. They interact fully in sessions and develop good communication skills. They undertake tasks both at home and at work that demonstrate good understanding of how to apply skills in different contexts.
- Learners display a good understanding of health and safety, and safeguarding, supported through induction by completing assessment packs covering each of the topics. Learners feel safe and appreciate the processes and measures in place which ensure their safety.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and carefully matched to each individual learner's needs. Sessions are well planned and staff use a range of methods to assess learning. Individual learning plans and progress logs effectively drive progress. Learners are fully involved and enjoy both individual and group sessions. Staff do not use ILT sufficiently to support teaching, learning and assessment.
- Assessors and tutors meet learners' and employers' needs very flexibly, often working around the learners' shifts patterns and tailoring the individual programmes. The range of programme levels available is satisfactory. However, there are insufficient ICT programmes and programmes for learners with English as a second language.
- One provider has a very good partnership with the NHS that gives good job opportunities for learners as well as offering them the chance to develop good

skills in a varied work environment. The other partner has particularly good links with community and voluntary organisations which gives the learners good support through wider partnership networks.

- Learners receive a high level of support throughout their programme. Information and advice from tutors are very good and enable learners to make informed choices about their programme and progression into further education, training or work. Learners undertake a detailed individual assessment which identifies any learning needs such as dyslexia. They are referred to specialist provision for further assessment where appropriate.
- Team work both within the individual partners and across the wider Avant partnership is good. Partners effectively share good practice. Staff have good experience in working with anxious learners who have many barriers to learning. Management arrangements for safeguarding and health and safety are good. Equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory.
- Delivery partners' self-assessment processes are good. They involve all staff and the report accurately reflects provision. Learners' views are collected through satisfaction surveys and through the review process. These are used appropriately in self-assessment. Providers participate fully in Avant's self-assessment process.

What does Avant need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates within planned timescales by monitoring learners more proactively.
- Improve the use of ILT within teaching by providing focused staff training and development and by using the observation of teaching and learning system to assess impact.
- Improve the range of programmes across providers through increased planning to ensure a good range of subjects, including ICT and English for speakers of other languages, are offered to learners across the geographical area.

Business, administration and law

Grade 2

Context

25. Currently, 121 learners are undertaking business administration programmes, including customer service, administration, and management. Ten per cent of learners are adults following NVQ-only routes. Most learners are apprentices completing certificates and diplomas. All learners are in a work placement or are employed in a diverse range of businesses. Off-the-job training is available as an option. However, most learning and assessment take place in the workplace.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Apprenticeship success rates are good. Success rates for NVQ-only learners are outstanding. Completion within planned timescales is good. Many learners achieve their learning goals well ahead of their planned end date and most are making very good progress. Learners produce a good standard of work for their qualifications and during training sessions.
- Learners engage enthusiastically with the training and are highly motivated to achieve. They attain good levels of knowledge and skills and quickly begin to take on new roles and responsibilities at work. A significant number of learners enter apprenticeships from foundation courses and progress to higher-level qualifications. Learners are very effectively introduced to the world of work and contribute confidently to the businesses for which they work. Learners' achievement of key and functional skills occurs early in their programmes and some learners exceed the required level.
- Learners' employability is significantly enhanced through methods such as job rotation and shadowing of experienced staff. Most learners on placements gain full-time positions following their programmes. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, feel safe in training and at work, and adopt safe working practices. Learners that have progressed from foundation courses enter apprenticeships with a strong sense of community following engagement in a range of charitable projects. Learners have a broad, satisfactory understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Off-the-job training sessions are carefully planned to meet learners' particular needs. Learners receive very effective coaching in the workplace. Employers provide good training and support and there are improved links between these and the learners' programmes. Trainers make frequent visits to learners, maintaining a good pace of work and progress. Staff monitor progress systematically during workshops and workplace visits. Learners have a clear picture of their progress and targets. Currently, staff are compiling a web-based library of resources for learners.

- Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors are thorough and assess learners rigorously while providing them with a good level of support. Learners' progress is enhanced by the use of a good range of evidence including observations and discussions. Assessors' judgements are fair, accurate and fully recorded. Assessment planning is detailed and clear. Assessors make insufficient use of technology; their lack of skills and confidence in its use restricts improvements.
- The partnership meets the needs of users very effectively. Excellent links with employers are well established. New employers' needs are very carefully identified through a thorough recruitment and induction process. Staff engage them in selecting appropriate units and qualifications to match their business priorities. Employers particularly appreciate the supportive approach to learners' needs adopted by trainers and the successful interventions used to improve punctuality and workplace behaviours.
- Partnerships are good. Joint working with employers to design programmes and support learners is particularly strong. Recruitment staff and trainers adapt appropriately to collaborate successfully with small private enterprises and large public-sector organisations. Partnerships with other organisations broaden learning and employment opportunities for potential learners. The delivery partners currently have no partnerships to promote progression into higher education.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners gain good insights into their individual starting points and learning styles at the start of their programmes. They gain a good knowledge of the different parts of the training programme and progression routes. Support for learners from their trainers is particularly good and has a clear impact on achievement. Trainers work intensively in tandem with employers to enable learners to overcome personal difficulties and barriers to learning and work.
- Leadership and management are good. Staff work effectively as a team to promote good learning and achievement. They have implemented changes successfully to address a number of areas for improvement, although progress is slow in some aspects such as staff development and support in the use of technology.

What does Avant need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the pace of quality improvements and particularly those relating to the use of technology for assessment and learning.
- Deepen learners' understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding by making them relevant to the context of their workplaces, customers and personal circumstances.
- Develop partnerships with higher education to promote progression for learners achieving beyond advanced level.

Information about the inspection

26. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the company director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report, data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.
27. 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)
Avant Partnership 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	539	539
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	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>	n/a	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a	
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?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3	
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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