

West Anglia Training Association

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		2-5 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- The proportion of learners who successfully complete their apprenticeship is below average overall and particularly in engineering, although it is high for the small number of business administration learners.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good and although some is good, too much is no better than satisfactory. Assessors rely too much on learners' written work to confirm competence.
- Most learners make satisfactory progress compared with their starting points. However, very few make better than expected progress.
- The organisation does not set sufficiently challenging targets for itself and for its subcontractors and does not have sufficiently clear actions in place to bring about further improvements.
- Self-assessment does not provide a sufficiently critical view of the organisation's performance to allow managers to plan improvements effectively.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Apprentices train in high quality work environments, often following well-structured training programmes; they gain high levels of skills and progress into good jobs.
- Unemployed learners develop a good range of skills and knowledge to help them gain employment in their chosen field; they improve their confidence and communication skills well.
- Apprentices are able to study qualifications at a higher level than that required by their apprenticeship framework, enhancing their employment prospects and career opportunities.
- Learners have a good understanding of how to stay safe and readily apply safe working practices throughout their training and at work.
- Staff support learners well throughout their apprenticeship responding quickly and effectively to any concerns or requests they have.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by continuing to develop tutors' skills through professional development and ensuring that tutors use a variety of strategies to stimulate and engage learners and maintain their interest.
- Improve the assessment of apprentices' competence by increasing the number of direct observations of their performance in the work place.
- Improve the rate of progress for the more able apprentices by setting more challenging targets at review, and involving employers in setting these and supporting apprentices to achieve them.
- Develop a clear strategic plan for apprentice and young people training that looks further ahead than 12 months and includes clear targets for improvement and appropriate actions to meet these targets.
- Update the organisation's development plan using the results of self-assessment and this inspection report, with measurable targets for improvement and appropriate actions to improve the quality of provision for all learners.
- Agree with subcontractors clear and challenging targets for learner outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and work with the subcontractors to achieve these.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- In 2011/12 around three-quarters of apprentices successfully completed their programme. The proportion who successfully complete has steadily improved over the past three years but remains below the national average for all providers. The number of apprentices who complete on time has also increased over the past three years and is higher than the national rate.
- The proportion of adults on apprenticeships who are successful is around the national average, but apprentices aged 16-18 are less successful at West Anglia Training Association (WATA) than nationally. Learners on advanced apprenticeships are less successful than those on intermediate apprenticeships and are significantly less successful than advanced apprentices nationally.
- In engineering, success rates for apprentices are improving but remain below the national rate. Most engineering apprentices who are successful complete within the allotted time, a significant improvement since 2008/09. Success rates for the very small number of business administration learners are very high; all learners successfully complete their apprenticeship and all within the allotted time.
- The gap in success rates between men and the relatively low number of women apprentices grew consistently between 2008 and 2010, but reduced significantly in 2010/11 and there is currently little difference in their performance.
- Learners develop good social, personal and employability skills. Apprentices develop a good range of technical skills in the workplace and become useful, skilled and confident employees. Learners on access to apprenticeship programmes also develop good technical skills and improve their confidence and communication skills well.
- Learners on access to apprenticeship programmes achieve qualifications well, however too few progress into employment and very few progress to apprenticeships. With very few exceptions, apprentices progress into relevant full-time employment on completion of their apprenticeship.
- A significant minority of engineering apprentices study for a higher level qualification than that required by their apprenticeship framework, typically for a Higher National Certificate, and those who are able study for higher level key skills. Learners on the access to apprenticeship

programme in warehousing achieve a wide range of useful additional qualifications to help them find employment and access work, including the opportunity to learn to drive.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment overall requires improvement and this reflects the need to improve outcomes for all learners. While the teaching and learning of practical topics and key skills are good, the teaching of theoretical subjects in the classroom is too tutor led and often lacks pace and challenge. Learners' attendance and behaviour is good.
- In the best sessions, tutors work skilfully with learners at different levels and with differing abilities, particularly when introducing new topics or concepts, giving learners the opportunity to experiment, ask questions and learn from the experience. Tutors are caring, patient and supportive. They use the good quality learning resources effectively to help learners develop their skills and knowledge.
- In the less effective sessions, tutors talk too much and use a narrow range of strategies to engage and stimulate learners. The training facilities at one subcontractor, although adequate, do not reflect the high standard of equipment learners will encounter in the workplace.
- Workplace learning for the majority of apprentices is well structured and effective. The majority of employers have established detailed training plans to ensure that learners gain skills and knowledge in a variety of work environments and are able to perform more complex tasks as they gain confidence and experience.
- Staff make effective use of the results of the initial assessment of learners' English and mathematics ability to place them on the right programme and to identify support needs. Where additional support needs are identified, staff quickly and effectively arrange appropriate support enabling learners to progress with their programme of study.
- The majority of learners are making the progress expected of them, however few make better than expected progress. The majority of engineering apprentices are allocated up to 48 months to complete their apprenticeship and the more able learners are insufficiently encouraged, or challenged, to progress more quickly. Employers are insufficiently involved in setting targets for apprentices during progress reviews.
- Learners on access to apprenticeship programmes attend well, behave well and demonstrate a willingness to learn. Tutors support them well and help them to develop good vocational skills and to enhance their personal and employability skills. However, tutors do not give the development of job search skills the same priority as vocational skills.
- Assessment is accurate and meets the requirements of learners' programmes. However, in engineering, assessors rely too much on apprentices' written accounts of their activities and do not undertake sufficient direct observation of apprentices in the workplace.
- Learners demonstrate good health and safety practices both during their training and at work. They clearly understand their responsibilities, which staff routinely reinforce, resulting in learners being confident in contributing towards a safe working environment.
- The majority of learners have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity which staff develop effectively throughout their programme. However, a small minority of learners are unable to relate effectively their knowledge of equality and diversity to practical situations in the workplace.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Managers, staff and partner organisations have high expectations for their learners and share a passion to offer young people the opportunity to learn good skills and gain employment which is articulated through the organisation's mission statement. However the organisation's ability to fully achieve this vision is inhibited by its lack of challenging and ambitious targets for improvement and the current quality of its programmes.
- The organisation has successfully formed a small consortium of providers in order to maintain its contract for learning and skills. It has partnered with a similar local engineering provider with which it has a clear empathy, and has diversified into warehousing training through another partner. This has significantly enhanced the organisation's ability to meet the needs of its community.
- WATA closely monitors the quality of training provided by local colleges and providers for apprentices' basic skills training and technical certificates, visiting regularly, and where possible observing lessons. Not all colleges allow WATA to observe lessons. However, these visits do not always result in sufficiently clear and decisive actions for improvement.
- The monitoring of subcontractors within the consortium requires improvement. Frequent visits by staff ensure that operational concerns are quickly identified and WATA works closely with its subcontractors to support their development. However, it has not set clear and challenging targets or expectations against which it can effectively monitor performance and further promote improvement.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good. The organisation has a well-established performance management system which staff understand, but this has not brought about the improvements that managers would like to see in the quality of provision. Training for staff is insufficiently structured to meet the identified needs of the business.
- Managers have a broad view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, as articulated in the current self-assessment report. This makes appropriate use of the views of learners, employers and staff but does not sufficiently focus on the impact of actions taken, or on the quality of teaching and learning. Following the previous inspection WATA made satisfactory progress with its action plan but has been slow to update this in response to the latest self-assessment report.
- The organisation has effective and well-established links with employers and the local community. Its programmes meet the needs of learners and employers well, providing good employment opportunities for learners and supporting the supply of engineers in the region. Access to apprenticeship programmes provide unemployed young people with good opportunities to gain important skills and qualifications, but have yet to sufficiently meet their needs to gain employment.
- The organisation promotes equality and diversity appropriately and is highly inclusive. Staff develop learners' understanding throughout their programme and frequently check employers' policies and practice. Managers are aware that women are under-represented in its programmes and positively promote programmes to women through the organisation's web site.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. WATA takes the safety of its learners very seriously and has thorough and clear processes to ensure that they are safe at work and during their training. Prompt interventions ensure that the organisation's response to incidents and concerns is effective.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

West Anglia Training Association

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
	Overall effectiveness	3		3	3	3			
	Outcomes for learners	3		3	3	3			
	The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3		3	3	3			
	The effectiveness of leadership and management	3		3	3	3			

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Engineering	3

Additional socio-economic information

The provider is situated in Huntingdon but recruits learners and works with employers from a much larger area, mostly within the East of England. The number of pupils attaining five GCSEs at A*-C in the East of England is 1% above the national average. Unemployment is 1.5% below the national average. The main employment in the East of England is retail and wholesale but a significant number of people work in manufacturing.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Phil Romain HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Youth Training Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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