

# WS Training Ltd

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>4–8 February 2013</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of learners successfully complete their apprenticeships or learning programmes within their planned end dates.
- Apprentices make good progress and develop a good range of personal and social skills.
- Staff provide good quality guidance and support and are effective in developing skills and understanding in the classroom and workplace.
- Partnerships with employers are good and enhance learning well.
- Clear strategic vision and effective actions have improved the provision since the previous inspection.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough learning sessions are outstanding. The arrangements for sharing good practice in teaching and learning are insufficient.
- Individual learning targets do not always extend or challenge apprentices to meet their full potential.
- The arrangements for quality assurance and improvement are not yet fully implemented; particularly for the sub-contracted provision.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of learners who successfully achieve their learning goals by thorough monitoring of performance and taking early positive action for those learners who are at risk of not completing.
- Increase the proportion of lessons that are outstanding by further sharing the very best practice in teaching and learning and thoroughly addressing under performance.
- Improve the quality of target setting to appropriately extend and challenge all learners.
- Raise the quality of provision through the full implementation of quality assurance and improvement arrangements.
- Further improve the promotion of equality and diversity by identifying performance differences between groups and take prompt actions to minimise any identified disparities. Develop topics that reflect everyday situations in the workplace and integrate them more effectively within the curriculum.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- Learners attain their learning goals and achieve their individual targets well. The success rate for apprentices has been at or above the national rate for the last three years. The success rate for apprentices who complete within planned timescales has been significantly above the national rate for the last three years. The number of workplace learners who achieve their learning goals within planned timescales is very high.
- Following the previous inspection in 2011, WS Training Ltd (WST) has successfully implemented a range of initiatives to improve standards further; this is reflected in improved success rates. Significant numbers progress from intermediate to advanced level apprenticeships on most programmes. Apprentices, particularly in accounting and finance and information and communications technology (ICT), benefit from a wide range of additional skills training.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning and have a positive attitude to their work. The vast majority make good progress and some are making very good progress relative to their starting point. They develop a wide range of skills that they acquire effectively in the classroom and in the workplace. These include independent learning, personal, social and employability, team working, English, mathematics and practical skills.
- Managers routinely collect and analyse the performance data of different groups and have been successful in narrowing achievement gaps between groups of learners. WST is aware of the need to be more rigorous in its setting and monitoring of targets in order to increase the pace of improvement. It has had some recent success in targeting under-represented groups, particularly in recruiting males onto hairdressing apprenticeships.
- Apprentices gain confidence and develop a good range of skills that they are able to apply successfully in the workplace. They have a good understanding of how to work sensitively and safely with clients in a variety of settings; for example administration apprentices have a good understanding of dealing with complaints and in hairdressing, they learn how to deal with a diverse range of clients.
- Many apprentices are in positions of responsibility and are able to work independently. Many are able to demonstrate real progress in their knowledge and understanding by preparing insurance

quotes and accounts for clients and hairdressers work effectively in commercial salons. Employers appreciate the positive contributions that they make to their businesses.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good and clearly contribute to the overall success rates and the rate of completion within agreed timescales, which are mostly high and improving. Staff are well qualified and experienced and most apprentices are keen and enthusiastic about their learning programmes. They develop a sound knowledge base and a good range of useful skills.
- The majority of learning takes place in the workplace and is good. For example ICT and accountancy and finance staff are confident and competent in coaching learners' technical skills. Classroom sessions are generally good. In the better sessions, apprentices are well engaged and involved in a good variety of relevant and interesting activities; in hairdressing they benefit from industry specialists to enhance their learning. However, some hairdressing sessions are not planned effectively and do not meet individual needs and abilities.
- Learning is planned well, effectively using relevant experiences and day-to-day activity to provide evidence of learning and competence. Electronic portfolios are highly effective in recording achievements; they capture, comprehensively, audio and video evidence of performance at work. Feedback from trainers is effective in verifying good practice and identifying improvements.
- Trainers and assessors support learning well through frequent visits to the workplace providing high quality vocational and personal guidance. Many apprentices who have not engaged in formal learning since leaving school cite the good support they receive as instrumental in their progress and willingness to re-engage in learning. They are supported particularly well in the development of English and mathematics skills.
- A good range of effective screening and diagnostic assessments are used to establish individual ability in English and mathematics; individual learning plans are used well to record this useful information. Target setting is generally good. Individual targets set following assessment or progress reviews identify improvement actions well. However, in some cases targets are not challenging enough for more capable or experienced learners.
- Feedback on work presented following assessment is sufficiently detailed, clearly identifies what apprentices have done well and what they need to do to improve. Tracking of individual progress through electronic portfolios is good; access is highly flexible and provides apprentices with a good awareness of how much of their programmes they have completed which acts as a motivator for further achievement. Appropriate comments are made on the correction of spelling and grammar for the majority of submitted work. However, this could be improved for accounting and finance apprentices.
- WST has made good progress in the teaching and assessment of functional skills in English and mathematics; apprentices report that their functional skills are developed in a way that they can relate to through everyday workplace tasks. Many who initially lacked confidence in mathematics and English report great improvements in their ability and confidence after a short time on the programme.
- The information given to apprentices prior to starting with the provider and at the end of their programmes is good. Many make good progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships and have a good range of options to support their employability or progress in the workplace. Staff communicate well with employers to ensure learners are well matched to the job role and that appropriate optional units are selected. The induction process is thorough and memorable.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and learning is an area for improvement. Sensible questioning explores understanding of individual rights and

responsibilities at work but opportunities to explore the way in which learners may apply equality and diversity in the workplace in their day-to-day practice are missed.

## ICT for Users

### Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which supports the high proportion of apprentices that successfully achieve. Overall success rates and success rates in agreed timescales are well above the national average and show an improving trend. Good individual coaching by trainers on employers' premises supports well the development of useful technical skills.
- A good range of assessment strategies and resources are used well to assess and record knowledge and understanding; these include audio recording of discussions and video recording of demonstrations and explanations of a range of tasks. However, opportunities are missed in some sessions to check learning through the skilful use of question and answer techniques. Initial assessment is satisfactory and is used appropriately by trainers to plan and deliver individual learning.
- Highly supportive trainers with good technical knowledge use appropriate activities to engage with apprentices and enable them to successfully acquire relevant knowledge and experience and increase their employability skills. Trainers are effective in closely monitoring tasks and in identifying ways to improve the standard of work. Apprentices are also well motivated to extend their knowledge by studying a good range of additional accredited units.
- The effective use of electronic portfolios promotes independent learning; apprentices regularly upload completed work and use the system to access a wide range of useful learning materials. The electronic portfolio allows apprentices to work at their own pace to complete their tasks or to undertake additional qualifications to enhance their learning.
- Trainers monitor and record progress well and provide constructive and detailed feedback to support improvement. Access to this feedback, which is in written or audio format, is through the electronic portfolio; apprentices have a clear appreciation of the progress they are making and a better understanding of knowledge and new skills they are developing.
- Trainers make good use of appropriate ICT tasks such as using formulae in spreadsheets to develop and improve skills in mathematics. Trainers provide appropriate written feedback on grammar and spelling within tasks in both word processing and email units to further support improvements in English.
- Prospective apprentices and their employers receive useful information, advice and guidance from WST's recruitment team. Appropriate and timely discussions take place at the beginning of programmes to identify programme unit choice and to match the needs of both the individual and their employer. At the end of programmes progression to higher-level qualifications or other relevant programmes are identified.
- Equality and diversity are covered thoroughly at induction. The employee rights and responsibilities handbook covers equality and diversity adequately to promote understanding. However, equality and diversity are insufficiently promoted within teaching and learning sessions.

**Hairdressing****Apprenticeships**

Good

- Teaching learning and assessment are good. Learners make good progress towards the completion of their apprenticeships. Retention rates are high and a significant number is on target for early completion. Learning sessions are supported well by two members of staff who provide frequent support and assessment to aid progress.
- Good teaching and training provides apprentices with a relevant range of skills, such as perming and creative cutting, that prepare them well for working independently or in a commercial salon. WST has good working arrangements with employers and a variety of visiting guest stylists who demonstrate and coach apprentices in current commercial techniques. This allows them to develop sound technical skills and learn how to deal with a diverse range of clients.
- Teaching and learning sessions motivate and engage apprentices well; the introduction of English and mathematics is particularly effective and managed well through a wide range of useful activities. Staff make good use of commercial salons to extend and reinforce learning and for the effective promotion of safe working practices. However, the planning of learning and planning for individual needs is not always effective and can lead to insufficient challenge or not enough probing questions in some sessions.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of their employment rights and responsibilities, health and safety and safeguarding. They feel well protected and know what to do if they have any concerns. Appropriate additional support is available if required.
- Reviews of individual progress fully evaluate all aspects of apprentices' work. Verbal feedback is constructive and written records capture well the main points and actions of meetings. Individual training targets are closely aligned with workplace training and are very effective in skills development. The introduction of an electronic portfolio enables assessors and learners to better track progression.
- Regular assessments provide clear feedback that effectively supports learning and development. Assessment visits in the training academy and workplaces are both flexible and responsive to apprentices and employers' needs. The increase in salon assessment visits, in particular, has increased substantially the assessment opportunities.
- English and mathematics are integrated satisfactorily in training with client communication and reception skills. Apprentices use the measuring of products and the costing of services effectively in their ICT skills.
- Initial advice and guidance is good. A thorough initial assessment to evaluate English and mathematics levels is used effectively to inform the planning of learning and to establish the level required to succeed.
- The provision is well managed and flexible and provides good opportunities to progress to higher levels in advanced apprenticeships and barbering. Employers and apprentices are able to access basic teaching and assessor qualifications, which they value highly.
- Apprentices have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity. Tutors use a wide range of questions at progress reviews to promote understanding and to discuss client scenarios and how treatments could be modified for a diverse range of clients. However, in some learning sessions tutors do not adequately check that apprentices have explored client diversity before treatments.

## Accounting and finance

### Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which reflects the high proportion of learners who achieve their apprenticeships. Good teaching and learning enable apprentices to improve their confidence and gain good practical skills. Many have progressed within their job, are in positions of responsibility and some have been promoted whilst completing their qualification. Many apprentices are providing insurance quotes and preparing accounts for clients.
- Good one-to-one coaching for finance apprentices develops knowledge and understanding of the financial services industry; for example dealing with complex personal injury claims. Assessors quickly build a rapport to promote achievement and carefully monitor progress and attainment during regular workplace visits. Assessors provide individual guidance enabling apprentices to understand their development needs and overcome any barriers to learning.
- Good support ensures successful completion of learning programmes. Assessors are highly qualified with relevant industry experience and have a good understanding of individual needs. Apprentices benefit from a wide range of additional skills training such as customer service and working with spreadsheets offered by both their employers and WST.
- Good monitoring of progress ensures apprentices remain on target to achieve their qualification. Accurately recorded progress on both paper-based and electronic portfolios motivates and promotes achievement. Revision sessions are planned carefully, prior to exams, and assessors have a very good knowledge of who may require additional support in order to stay on schedule to complete their learning programme.
- Assessors set clear and specific learning targets between workplace visits, which encourages independent learning. Apprentices understand well what they need to do to achieve and are motivated to complete their targets prior to their next assessor visit. However, the targets set for the more able do not always challenge sufficiently or extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Initial assessment is thorough. Apprentices complete an effective skills matrix, which ensures they are placed on the most appropriate qualification and level. A good range of optional units are available which are discussed jointly with workplace mentors and WST assessors in order to select the most appropriate units for current employment and future development opportunities.
- Apprentices know what they need to do to improve because of thorough feedback from their assessor and workplace mentors. Reviews of progress reinforce areas for development well and action plans are updated during the assessor visits. Assessment is planned effectively to provide clear guidance on the evidence required to complete units.
- Teaching and learning promotes a good understanding of English and mathematics. English and mathematics are fully embedded into the qualification frameworks and individual needs are diagnosed accurately. Specialist English, mathematics functional skills tutors provide individual tutorials, which the apprentices enjoy and fully participate in. However, assessors don't always correct spelling and grammar mistakes on written work.
- Apprentices receive appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance, which enables them to progress onto higher qualifications. They have a thorough understanding of future progression routes and training opportunities and many have progressed from intermediate to advanced and higher apprenticeships with WST. Strong links with regional accountancy and insurance companies enables assessors to identify further development and progression opportunities.
- Apprentices have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. Equality, diversity and safeguarding are covered thoroughly during induction and assessors use health and safety and

equality and diversity question and answer sheets during workplace visits. However, answers are not always explored to check understanding and written records are not left with apprentices in order for them to reflect and review their comments.

## Administration

## Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and match apprentices' improvements in outcomes, which are also good. Staff have high expectations of apprentices to achieve their qualifications and extend their knowledge and skills which is communicated effectively during learning and assessment sessions.
- The standard of work is good and electronic portfolios are used very well to collect and assess evidence. A good variety of resources is available via the electronic portfolio, which is used effectively to support learning in vocational areas as well as in the promotion of health and safety and equality and diversity.
- Assessors provide good individual coaching in the workplace, particularly for functional skills in English and mathematics. Work produced is of a good standard. Assessors skilfully provide feedback and help the less confident to understand what they need to do to improve to pass their tests.
- Apprentices benefit from very good assessor support to help them achieve their goals. Assessors are enthusiastic, flexible and responsive to apprentices and employers' needs. They make good use of their vocational knowledge and expertise to motivate and encourage. Apprentices make good progress, enjoy their learning and are highly appreciative of the care and guidance they receive to succeed.
- Workplace learning and skills development are enhanced well by good partnership working with employers. Workplace mentors have a good understanding of apprentices' progress and are present at their programme reviews. They ensure a good range of workplace activities are available to support learning and are able to offer valuable knowledge and experience.
- Assessors communicate very well with employers to plan training to meet individual needs and are quick to respond to requests or queries between visits. However, mentors have insufficient information at the start of programmes to be effective at the first assessment visit or provide appropriate witness statements in support of learning that has taken place.
- Assessors are well qualified and use a good variety of technologies and resources to support and engage apprentices effectively. Assessment is satisfactory. However, apprentices are not always clear on what they need to do at the start of their programme and need more help and understanding in choosing units that relate to their job roles.
- Teaching and learning strategies are very helpful in improving confidence and occupational skills in the workplace, which enables apprentices to understand their job roles better. For example, understanding how to deal with customers and complaints, arranging successful meetings, speaking more confidently on the phone and improving time management skills. Work skills are well developed to help apprentices to quickly become productive and useful employees.
- Initial assessment is used well to identify extra support and develop English, mathematics and ICT skills. Apprentices improve their skills and confidence, particularly in mathematics and their written work. Monitoring of progress is satisfactory. However, not all assessors set targets that are sufficiently challenging, time-bound and lead to improvements or further progress.
- Induction is thorough. Apprentices receive clear information on health and safety, equality and diversity; they have a good recall of this throughout the programme. They understand well

progression opportunities and higher-level qualifications which are appropriate to their jobs. Initial advice and guidance arrangements are appropriate and meet individual needs.

- Assessors promote a good understanding of equality and diversity at assessments and progress reviews. A wide range of issues is discussed at reviews to improve understanding that is appropriate to the workplace. For example, discussions on disability awareness helped an apprentice to understand how to work more effectively with disability in the workplace.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong personal commitment to raising of standards through the identification and adoption of good training practice that benefits all learners. Senior managers provide a clear and well-communicated vision for improvement that contributes well to improving success rates and standards. Strategic priorities have rightly focused on building capacity to effectively manage the provision's development and support the successful operational responses to areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection.
- Senior managers very effectively monitor the achievement of key strategic objectives many of which make a valuable contribution to the achievement of regional and national priorities. Operational management is good and vigorously challenges under performance to ensure all staff are accountable for the delivery of timely improvement actions.
- Managers make very good use of a wide range of operational data, to monitor performance and contribute to decision-making that drives improvement. Use of a colour coded rating system to monitor learners' progress is particularly thorough and makes an excellent contribution to improving success rates within planned timescales. However, as identified by the provider, too few individual programme success rate targets are sufficiently challenging or ambitious.
- WST appropriately monitors its small amount of subcontracted provision for contract compliance purposes. However, managers have made slow progress in introducing effective arrangements to quality assure all aspects of training. In addition, the provider has yet to work with all subcontractors to identify a comprehensive range of actions to contribute to improvement planning.
- Managers have correctly prioritised the development of appropriate arrangements to improve teaching, learning and assessment that fully address the shortfalls in practice identified at the previous inspection. Trained staff now appropriately assess the quality of taught sessions through direct observation and provide detailed feedback that guides improvement actions well; this is linked effectively to staff development and appraisal. However, the full implementation of this key quality assurance process has until recently been too slow.
- The self-assessment process is good with managers making particularly good use of success data, comprehensive collection and evaluation of users' views and the outcomes of quality assurance processes to evaluate the provision. The usefulness of the self-assessment report has improved since the previous inspection, with the most recently published version more appropriately evaluative and self-critical. Managers know their organisation well and very effectively improve the learners' experience through regular and thorough implementation and monitoring of the associated development plan.
- WST makes good use of detailed data analysis, linked to collaboration with regional partners, to respond flexibly and quickly to the needs and interests of learners and the wider community. The available qualifications provide a coherent and well-planned provision that offers users a good range and variety of vocational training and progression opportunities. Employers and learners highly value the provider's use of its commercial training work to offer apprentices a wider range of development opportunities than those required by their frameworks.
- WST successfully promotes equality and diversity. However, the raising and reinforcing of learners' understanding is not always consistently high enough across all sectors. The provider is



successful in using its extensive network of external partners to introduce prospective learners to the benefits of undertaking vocational training. Managers very effectively use subcontracting arrangements to widen participation, for example by offering training to the dependents of military staff working overseas and providing football coaching sessions at a local football club. Arrangements to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can participate fully in vocational training are sound.

- Recruitment patterns generally conform to national stereotype, however in some sectors such as hairdressing; WST has significantly increased the number of males participating in training. Managers routinely use data to identify and successfully narrow the achievement gap between different groups of learners. However, the provider recognises that actions to promote more rapid improvement, including the setting and monitoring of targets, have yet to be fully effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good and meet statutory requirements. The identification, monitoring and support of learners at risk are good and include appropriate referral to external agencies to address the specific needs of vulnerable individuals. The provider effectively protects learners from harassment, bullying and discrimination and ensures their health and safety so all can attain to their full potential. Learners report feeling safe whilst participating in training and are confident WST will appropriately address any concerns raised.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

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

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>ICT for users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Hairdressing</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Accounting and finance</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>WS Training Ltd.</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 782
	Part-time: 132
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Jane Vincent
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	August 2011
<b>Website address</b>	wstraining.co.uk

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Part-time</b>	0	1	0	11	0	0	0	24
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	245	314	55	186	0	0		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Needham Market FC</li> <li>■ Ipswich Town FC Charitable Trust</li> <li>■ VTQ</li> <li>■ JEB.</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

WST is an independent training provider based in Bury St Edmunds. It has a training centre and a hairdressing training academy in Ipswich. It provides apprenticeship and workplace training for learners predominantly in the east of England. Eight hundred and twenty apprentices are on programmes, mostly employed in local small to medium sized businesses. Three hundred and fifty eight are male, 47 are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 57 have a declared learning difficulty or disability. Thirty-six learners are on short courses funded by the Adult Skills Budget.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Robert Hamp HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the head of vocational training 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, telephone calls 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 areas 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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