

Introtrain (ACE) Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		23–26 April 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
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:

- Overall success rates are outstanding, with almost every learner successfully completing their training within planned timescales, at both intermediate and advanced levels.
- Learners develop excellent vocational skills, social skills and confidence.
- Staff and learners are ambitious, have high expectations and are highly motivated to achieve.
- Many learners progress to higher-level qualifications and are successful in gaining promotion in employment.
- Highly skilled and knowledgeable staff and trainers provide good teaching and learning.
- Academic and pastoral support are particularly purposeful, ensuring learners with specific support needs complete their training and achieve their qualifications.
- Introtrain (ACE) Ltd has strong leadership which has established a secure focus on ensuring learners are successful and trained by capable qualified staff.
- Managers develop staff skills and improve teaching and learning through continuous professional development for staff and the large number of trained salon-based assessors.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Teaching, learning and assessment in the two subject areas inspected are not yet outstanding, and in a minority of training sessions more-able learners are not challenged sufficiently.
- Although learners improve their English and mathematics during their training as a whole, not enough emphasis is put on these subjects during vocational training sessions.
- Observations of teaching and learning do not place sufficient emphasis on what apprentices learn and the progress they make.
- The self-assessment report is not sufficiently self-critical.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tutors provide sufficient pace and challenge in all learning sessions to interest all learners fully throughout, and offer sufficient extension activities, especially for more capable learners.
- Ensure that tutors make better use of naturally-occurring opportunities to reinforce and promote the use of everyday English and mathematics during practical training sessions, suited to the specific vocational context.
- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching and learning by using the findings from the observation of teaching and learning to identify particularly good practice, and the best ways to support and challenge learners, especially those at the higher levels. Share examples of good practice further amongst staff.
- Ensure that the self-assessment report is a working document that presents a detailed and self-critical analysis of the provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
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- Overall, apprenticeship success rates are outstanding. Almost all learners complete their qualification, a proportion that is significantly above the national average. The proportion of learners who complete within planned timescales is also significantly above average. In both hairdressing and beauty therapy, and construction crafts, learners' achievements are outstanding.
- Apprentices quickly complete functional skills in English and mathematics. First-time pass rates are very high with excellent individual support given to learners who need longer to understand more complex elements.
- Hairdressing and beauty therapy apprentices develop excellent skills and in many cases reach levels exceeding the requirements of the qualifications. Construction apprentices demonstrate high levels of expertise in project work and in the workplace. For example, first-year carpentry learners construct window frames using only hand tools.
- Nearly all apprentices make very rapid progress in learning and in the workplace. All apprentices are in full-time employment in hairdressing and beauty salons. Construction learners work in small- and medium-sized construction firms. On completion of their qualifications, learners continue in employment, often gaining promotion, with many progressing onto advanced apprenticeships.
- Apprentices quickly take responsibility for their own learning. They develop workplace skills rapidly, operating independently and alongside experienced peers. Construction learners worked together to design, purchase materials for, and construct an outside decking and seating area at the training centre.
- Apprentices develop excellent social and interpersonal skills. They mature quickly in a demanding work environment where there is little scope for error. They quickly become confident, capable employees, able to work closely with clients to meet their design and styling needs. Learners demonstrate good analytical and discussion skills and good standards in written and verbal communication.
- No significant differences in achievement exist between groups of learners. Many who have underachieved in school quickly gain qualifications in English and mathematics and apply these skills well in the workplace.

- Apprentices' attention to, and understanding of, health and safety are very good, as is their awareness of safe working practices. Attendance and punctuality at taught sessions are good.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Learners benefit from very positive and supportive learning environments in their workplaces and in the training centres. Hairdressing tutors motivate learners well, providing positive encouragement to achieve, and setting high expectations. Strong relationships between Introtrain & Forum Ltd staff, salon owners and workplace assessors provide a very well-managed, 'joined-up' learning experience.
- Instructors in construction are experienced time-served tradesmen with good teaching skills. They use a wide range of teaching strategies to ensure learners from very diverse backgrounds make good progress and achieve well. For example, a separate workspace has been created, in the training centre, for a bricklaying apprentice who finds it easier to make progress through receiving individual support while not being constantly observed by peers.
- The majority of training sessions are good and some are outstanding. In the very best sessions, tutors use individual coaching expertly to guide and support apprentices to extend their knowledge and skills. Training is well planned and engaging with sessions usually maintaining learners' interests through a variety of activities which suit their individual learning styles. In a small number of sessions, particularly at advanced level, apprentices are not always sufficiently challenged or extended to achieve to their full potential.
- Staff use comprehensive initial assessments effectively to inform individual learning plans and ensure that specific learning needs are met. Learners receive good feedback on how to make improvements to their work and know how they are performing and progressing. Tutors provide good support and conduct frequent visits to the workplace; they ensure that learners, managers and supervisors fully understand what is expected before the next visit. Electronic portfolios for hairdressing apprentices are used very effectively to record evidence and track progress. Many employers look at their learners' electronic portfolios to review the progress being made.
- Apprentices work independently with purpose and focus between visits from assessors. Learners make good use of excellent web-based resources and frequently access these remotely from home or in the workplace. Functional skills are taught well, but tutors do not always integrate these skills into vocational training sessions. First-time pass rates for functional skills tests are very high.
- Assessment is very well planned and conducted frequently. In hairdressing, trained in-salon assessors provide additional support and conduct assessments between visits from tutors. Trained workplace recorders provide construction learners with onsite statements of their achievements. All assessments are thoroughly verified at monthly standardisation meetings. The frequency and high quality of these assessments and the resulting close monitoring of learners' progress have contributed significantly to the outstanding success rates in both construction and hairdressing.
- Staff review and monitor learners' progress very effectively. Target setting and action planning to ensure that apprentices complete work between visits are particularly effective in accelerating achievement. Employers' participation in training and progress reviews is good. Many employers have benefited from excellent in-house training to develop their staff skills and to help them understand the expectations of the apprenticeship programmes. Employers are invited to extra training events for apprentices and many have attended to enhance their skills further.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity and the importance of these themes at their workplace. During learners' inductions, staff set expectations relating to equality and diversity which are further built upon in training sessions. Tutors test behaviour and attitude, and reinforce the standards required during individual learners' performance reviews. However, some tutors miss the opportunity to extend understanding of diversity during vocational training sessions. Learners feel safe and know how to report inappropriate behaviour. Learners have a satisfactory awareness of safety when using electronic media.

Construction craft skills

Good

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and reflect the high overall success rates on both apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes. Training is well planned and provided by experienced staff trained to teach in the lifelong learning sector. However, a minority of tutors do not plan lessons in sufficient detail, and do not consistently identify extension tasks for the more-able learners.
- The coordination of on- and off-the-job training is good and ensures the training provided is meaningful and focused. Staff conduct frequent visits to the learners' workplaces to ensure learning is contextualised and that learners are making good progress. Well-briefed workplace recorders provide good witness reports on learners' work. Employers have a good understanding of the apprenticeship programme and the expectations on learners.
- Assessors consistently use touch-screen computers on site visits to film activities, replaying and using 'freeze frame' to demonstrate where potential errors or improvements are required. Learners' actions to improve their work are recorded on screen to become comprehensive evidence in their portfolios.
- Learning resources and materials are good. Workbooks and printed handouts are of high quality. Workshop facilities in the training centre are modern and provide an excellent learning environment with a good focus on recycling and re-using resources. All equipment is up to date and tools are of good quality. Learners develop good practical skills and use hand and power tools competently and confidently. Learners have an excellent awareness of safe working practices and were observed skilfully cutting mortice joints in carpentry and accurately cleaving brickwork blocks whilst using appropriate safety equipment.
- Initial assessment determines each apprentice's practical and academic starting points accurately. In the better sessions staff use this information very well to plan individual training needs, to set challenging tasks, and to extend learning for each apprentice. However, while tutors are aware of individual learning needs, a minority of sessions do not provide sufficient challenge to the more capable learners and some do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Tutors systematically monitor learners' progress and achievement using a very effective tracking system that quickly identifies slow progress. Frequent pastoral reviews enable learners to ask for help with personal and welfare problems, and have assisted several current learners to stay on programme. Tutors conduct frequent site visits to check on work done, confirm knowledge and consolidate expectations with employers. Progress review meetings provide apprentices with clear attainable and time-constrained short- and long-term targets.
- The development of learners' functional skills is good. First-time pass rates for functional skills tests are high. Carpentry and construction projects are used well to contextualise and give meaning to the work completed in English and mathematics lessons. However, tutors in practical sessions do not systematically reinforce the everyday use of English and mathematical skills when opportunities arise.
- The promotion of health and safety, and particularly safe working practices, is excellent. Good attention is paid to the hazards of working on power lines and learners are able to discuss confidently the correct use of protective equipment, hand tools and machines. They systematically report potentially hazardous incidents and act promptly to minimise risk to themselves and others.
- During learners' induction, staff effectively introduce aspects of equality and diversity and the impact of these themes within the construction industry. Signs and documents around the centre reinforce understanding. Tutors test learners' application and understanding further during reviews and in functional skills sessions. However, the further promotion of diversity and sustainability in the construction industry is not systematically included in training. For example,

opportunities are missed to tackle gender stereotypes and to explore renewable planting and sustainability of materials.

Hairdressing and beauty therapies

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and contribute significantly to the very high overall success rates for both apprentices and advanced apprentices in 2011/12 which were well above corresponding national rates. The proportion of learners remaining on courses in the current year is high in hairdressing and on the new beauty therapy programme; most learners are making good progress and achieving well.
- Progression rates from apprenticeship to the advanced apprenticeship programmes are high. Advanced apprentices complete training in salons and most have their own clients. Tutors work closely with salon owners, trainers and assessors in the workplace to provide excellent support and guidance to learners. All tutors have extensive hairdressing experience and are qualified to teach in the lifelong learning sector.
- Learners demonstrate very good employability and interpersonal skills. Training is conducted in salons and in the Introtrain Forum training centre. Learners demonstrate good hairdressing skills, for example competently sectioning hair for roller setting, and handling scissors and combs professionally when completing one-length haircuts. Beauty therapy learners demonstrate highly professional interpersonal skills when dealing with their clients.
- Practical training sessions in the training centre and in salons are good. Tutors focus on developing the detail of the more complex technical skills that employers require in the workplace. Learners benefit from excellent practical demonstrations. However, questioning by tutors is not always effective in confirming and checking learners' understanding and background knowledge of the tasks the learners complete.
- The better theory sessions, at the training centre, focus well on the needs of learners; groups are small and learners appreciate and benefit from very good individual support. In these sessions, learners use laptop computers to conduct research on the internet. However, the weaker sessions lack sufficient pace and challenge to interest all learners fully.
- Hairdressing salons are well resourced, and provide a good learning environment. Salon staff are committed to training apprentices and recognise the importance of helping them. Resources are good in beauty therapy, and are fit for purpose in the hairdressing training centre.
- Initial assessment and evaluation of learners' academic and pastoral support are good and information is used well to inform training needs. Tutors provide good individual support for learners. Learners unable to attend the training centre have been able to continue their training using flexible learning packs and a computer-based learning site. Tutors have high expectations for learners and work hard to help them continue in training despite some significant personal problems. Staff contact external organisations quickly to support learners with serious problems.
- English and mathematical skills are integrated very well into many aspects of training. Learners comprehend and understand the relevance of ratios and volumes when mixing products and colours for hairdressing. They appreciate the importance of correct spelling and grammar when completing diary entries and updating clients' files.
- Learners' progress reviews are frequent, well managed and focus on the achievement of units and full qualifications. Tutors constantly check previous targets and agree new targets with learners and employers. Most learning targets set by tutors during reviews are specific; however, a small proportion is too general and lacks the necessary detail to guide the learner. Tutors consistently challenge learners to ensure they achieve their qualification within the timescale set for completion.

- Assessment is very well managed, is frequent and fair. Introtrain & Forum Ltd has invested significantly in training and qualifying a substantial number of employers' staff as workplace assessors. They are immediately available to conduct assessments in the salons. Tutors also conduct formal planned assessments in the training centre. Comments and feedback provided by assessors and tutors are developmental and clearly inform learners of what they need to do to improve and progress.
- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is good. These topics are introduced thoroughly and promoted well at induction and reinforced and tested further during progress reviews. The promotion of equality and diversity is generally good. Signs, documents and posters around the training centre further reinforce understanding, which is also tested by tutors during pastoral and vocational reviews and in some functional skills sessions.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers consistently demand high standards and have successfully created a strong culture of ambition to succeed. Staff are systematically challenged and held to account for their performance and that of their learners. Introtrain (ACE) Ltd has successfully developed a strong team spirit and works closely with all staff, including subcontracted staff, to ensure high levels of professionalism and motivation. Staff share the directors' enthusiasm and dedication to ensure that learners are successful and that they achieve.
- Investment in facilities provides learners with safe practical workshops and classrooms which meet the needs of learners and employers and are equipped to a satisfactory standard. Hairdressing learners work in industry standard salons and receive good on-the-job training. Construction learners work in small- and medium-sized firms and staff encourage them to re-use and recycle materials in an environmentally friendly way. Hairdressing tutors take learning material into the workplace and learners collate evidence on a well-managed electronic portfolio. A recently introduced computer-based virtual learning environment provides easy access for staff and learners to learning materials.
- Introtrain (ACE) Ltd has a clear focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment. Senior staff use performance management systems effectively to encourage and challenge tutors to improve. Staff are supported with good professional development opportunities. Managers observe teaching and learning sessions frequently and use the information collected to improving teaching practice. However, the findings are not yet consistently used to share best practice in supporting and challenging learners, especially those at the higher levels.
- Staff track and monitor learners' progress thoroughly and accurately. Managers and staff clearly understand the position of each learner within their programme. Action is quickly taken to overcome training problems or to manage slow progress. Subject areas and the resources within each are well managed. Specific staff take responsibility for the quality of resources and have clear areas of responsibility.
- Staff forge good working relationships with learners and employers and the coordination of on- and off-the-job training is highly effective. Introtrain (ACE) Ltd acts quickly to meet the changing needs of learners and employers and frequently seeks their views to influence improvements to provision. Significant investment has been made to train salon staff as assessors to maximise assessment opportunities for learners on hairdressing courses. Managers ensure that staff and training centres share good practice. Training programmes are well planned and organised and provide good opportunities for learners to contribute to their local community.
- The self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative or critical of the provision and does not, in itself, contribute sufficiently to the quality improvement cycle. However, the self-assessment process provides a useful forum for the collection and analysis of staff views on strengths and areas for improvement. Regular surveys of employers and learners also feed in to the report.

- Quality improvement plans, developed to tackle areas for improvement, are effective and are based on reliable and well-presented data; they have benefited from the full involvement of staff through the self-assessment process. Appropriately detailed action plans ensure change is implemented and evaluated as managers' review and reset targets. Outcomes for learners have improved significantly in construction and the excellent performance in hairdressing has continued.
- The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet statutory requirements and risk is managed appropriately. Health and safety aspects have a high profile and are promoted well to both learners and employers. Equality and diversity are promoted effectively. Specific marketing in schools has encouraged male pupils into hairdressing and female pupils into construction. Support for learners is good, particularly for those with specific or complex needs. Staff and learners understand clearly what is expected of them, resulting in a pleasant learning environment where bullying and discrimination are not tolerated.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Introtrain (ACE) Ltd**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	1	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Construction crafts	2

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Additional socio-economic information

Introtrain (ACE) Ltd was established in July 2011 and is located in Oxford, working closely with hairdressing salons and construction businesses across Oxfordshire and surrounding counties. Introtrain (ACE) Ltd provides work-based apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in hairdressing, barbering, customer service, beauty therapy and construction, brickwork and site carpentry. All learners are employed with local companies and attend the training centre or receive training and coaching in the workplace on a part-time basis. Around 110 apprentices are recruited annually, with many progressing on to advanced apprenticeships. Four owner-directors have overall responsibility for the company. All aspects of training and assessment are subcontracted to Introtrain & Forum Ltd, ACE Training Ltd and the Oxford International College of Beauty.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Martin Hughes HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the director 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 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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