

Start Training Limited

Independent learning provider

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| Inspection dates | | 22-26 July 2013 |
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Good-2 |
| | Previous inspection: | Good-2 |
| 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:

- Good teaching and learning enables apprentices to make rapid progress and gain new skills that they apply well at work.
- Training advisers' high vocational knowledge and technical skills enable the effective delivery of specialised training. Learners benefit from highly experienced and motivated trainers who set high aspirations for their learners.
- Success rates are high for the large majority of learners and a few are outstanding. Most apprentices complete their programme within the planned timeframe.
- Apprentices benefit from very effective support and have a good knowledge of their progress, which ensures that they are on track and know what to do next.
- Strong performance monitoring of the training advisers provides managers with good detailed information about apprentices who are falling behind in their work or at risk of not completing their programme on time.
- Learners benefit from the high expectations that their training advisers set, particularly in the organisation and preparation for training and assessment.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- All teaching, learning and assessment are not yet outstanding. Although most teaching is good, Start Training Limited (Start Training) has not yet ensured that all staff know how to improve further. Learners' knowledge and understanding is not always sufficiently checked through in-depth questioning.
- English and mathematics are well integrated into learning, but training advisers do not use every opportunity to extend, reinforce and develop learners' knowledge and skills beyond the level expected for their apprenticeship or to develop independent learning skills.
- Employers and learners are not fully aware of how learning at work is incorporated into overall learning plans. Some learners do not benefit from knowing where learning will occur.
- Although quality assurance arrangements are generally well developed, leaders and managers do not always make best use of available information and intelligence to ensure that quality improvement is effective.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Accurately identify through quality assurance and the observation of teaching, learning and assessment best practice across the provision so that all learners benefit from high quality aspirational teaching, coaching and learning. Ensure that all staff know and understand the characteristics of innovative, outstanding learning and are confident in the use of information learning technology (ILT) to best match learners' needs.
- Further improve the development of English skills, by closer monitoring of learners' attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation in all areas of the provision. Extend the stretch and challenge to apprentices to ensure that all of them make further progress in improving their English and mathematics as well as their development of independent learning skills.
- Increase the engagement of employers in planning learning so that individual learners' needs are fully met and ensure that opportunities to gain useful work experiences are linked to targets that are used when reviewing learners' progress.
- Maintain and improve success rates further, particularly in the small number of programmes that are currently performing less well. Accelerate improvement by focussing on improving the completion of learners' frameworks, within their planned timescale.
- Review and improve the use and analysis of available data to enable rapid and effective identification of issues, trends and risks to performance. Use the outcomes of performance-management processes more effectively to improve the skills of training advisers and set clear priorities for improvement.

Inspection judgements

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| Outcomes for learners | Good |
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- Outcomes for learners are good and in a few programme areas success rates are outstanding. Success rates and the number of learners who complete within their planned timeframe have remained at or above national rates for the previous three years. Success rates for the small number of learners on workplace learning provision are very high.
- Success rates for learners on short employability training courses are also good. However, few of these learners progress to sustained employment. Learners gain useful qualifications and skills which enable them to learn about roles in their preferred occupational areas and learn new skills that better prepare them for work and to make job applications.
- Managers have effectively secured improvement since the dip in performance for apprenticeships in business administration during 2011/12. For the few areas that were underperforming, the provider's data for the current year confirm that the large majority of apprentices now succeed and most complete within their planned timeframe.
- Few differences exist between the achievement of apprentices in diverse ethnic groups. Although the gaps are not significant, managers are working effectively to identify and reduce the achievement gap between the performance of males and females. Although they remain high, success rates for a small number of apprentices aged 16 to 18 are slightly lower than other age groups. Apprentices aged 19 to 21 achieve particularly well.
- Learners enjoy their studies and demonstrate that they have increased their personal confidence and motivation. Learners develop good skills in mathematics and English; effective feedback to learners ensures that they continually improve. In a few cases errors in the use of grammar and punctuation are uncorrected. Some more-able apprentices are insufficiently challenged to achieve higher levels of understanding.

- Learners make good progress and develop good work skills. Learners gain confidence in their skills and improve their employability. Many take on additional responsibilities at work, such as in office management. They perform interesting and demanding tasks in domiciliary care, dental nursing and administration. Employers value the skills that apprentices develop and can identify the positive impact for their company.
- Learners with additional learning needs achieve as well as their more-able counterparts. Support effectively enables them to work at a similar pace, or catch up where needed. Learners benefit from the good attention to developing their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices have a good understanding of the application of these skills within their chosen career and how these might improve their job prospects.
- Where appropriate, learners make suitable progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships, particularly in business administration. Some learners progress to higher-level qualifications and on to higher education. Attendance at learning and assessment sessions is generally good. When learners cancel appointments, they are quickly rescheduled. Absences are followed up and appropriate action taken.

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| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good reflecting the development of good work skills for all learners and the high number of learners gaining qualifications. Learners receive good training and assessment and they quickly improve in confidence. Employability learners become much more confident in their job search and interview techniques such as understanding the importance of researching the organisation in which they want to work.
- Training staff have high expectations of their learners. Good directed support motivates them to achieve and learners are enthused to do well. Learners enjoy their training programmes. The standard of most apprentices' work is good and many learners quickly master the technical work skills that their programmes require. Well qualified and experienced training advisers use good examples from their own experiences to help learners learn. Trainers' good subject knowledge and awareness of the qualification standards support accurate assessment of learners' performance.
- Teaching and learning are good, with some outstanding features. Training advisers skilfully use initial assessment to plan and individualise learning. Many training advisers demonstrate good questioning skills, adapting questions to stretch and challenge the learners; however, the practice is inconsistent. Not all learners are challenged sufficiently to develop their higher-level thinking skills. Planning to integrate the learning that takes place at work is often insufficient.
- Resources are good overall and give learners a high-quality experience of learning. ILT is not always fully utilised. There is not yet a comprehensive system to ensure that all learning resources are adequate, consistent and suitable to provide interesting and imaginative learning materials across the programmes.
- Assessment practices are good, thorough and fair. Learners benefit from a good and flexible range of assessment methods to capture their learning and skills development. Learners who are producing paper-based portfolios have regular effective access to assessment through frequent monthly training adviser visits.
- The large majority of business and management learners complete their portfolios electronically and most use the system with confidence, work independently and take responsibility for their learning and progress. However, for a few apprentices the frequency of the remote contact with their training adviser is insufficient and the technology is not fully utilised, for example to mark and provide feedback on learners' work.
- Initial assessment is particularly effective. Good use is made of initial assessment for most learners, who benefit from rigorous recruitment and assessment processes that correctly identify vocational potential and aptitude. On-going assessment is thorough and well planned with clear feedback that learners understand.

- Training advisers give good feedback, both orally and written, giving clear guidance on how learners can improve. It helps learners to reflect on their learning and complete further independent study. Although the standard of apprentices' written work is mostly good, not enough training advisers routinely correct grammatical or spelling errors.
- Training advisers conduct extensive formal reviews at regular intervals which are thorough and detailed covering all aspects of the apprentices' framework. However, the reviews do not always sufficiently focus on the learning that has taken place. Some employers are fully involved in progress reviews; however, many learners would benefit from more employer input.
- The integrated teaching and learning of English, mathematics and information and communication technology, supports learners in developing those skills in their work roles. For example, a training adviser explained the difference in meaning between the two spellings of 'board' and 'bored'. Learners who require support to achieve their learning goals receive focused additional help. However, not enough learners are challenged to go beyond the level required for their frameworks.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Training advisers are knowledgeable about the options open to learners, who benefit from the good range of advice and guidance on their next steps in learning. Employability learners often attend the training centre after they have completed their course for support in their job search. Induction arrangements are very effective.
- Learners demonstrate a good awareness of diversity and acknowledge the importance of this at work. For example, a learner was able to answer an interview question confidently on how they would deal with potential neglect of residents in a care home. Learners treat each other and staff with respect. The promotion of equality and diversity at induction and in reviews is good, although questioning does not always stretch and test understanding. In the majority of sessions, training advisers promote equality and diversity well. However, a few training advisers lack the confidence to broaden discussions.

Health and social care and nursing and dental health

Apprenticeships

Employability

Other work based learning

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good, and this correlates with good outcomes for apprentices and an exceptionally high and increasing success rate for dental nursing. Learners benefit from very well-organised training advisers. Staff set particularly high expectations for their apprentices.
- Apprentices are motivated by training advisers' very good levels of vocational knowledge and experience, which are used effectively. For example, employers and apprentices regard training advisers as experts and this makes them highly credible in the workplace. Effective use is made of ILT by showing short videos to illustrate key learning points, such as the correct procedure for applying a wound-clamp following dental surgery. However, these methods are under-used, particularly during extended periods of professional discussion and coaching.
- Apprentices' initial assessment results inform effective individual target-setting which stretch and challenge apprentices. Staff monitor apprentices' progress very closely and respond quickly with further support should concerns arise. Learning sessions are effective because they provide a clear focus on progress and achievement. However, apprentices are insufficiently encouraged to develop independent learning skills, such as research techniques, analysis or finding new ways to develop their initiative.
- Current apprentices benefit from very effective communication and frequent visits from training advisers to the workplace, which ensure they make very good progress. Feedback is very detailed and helps apprentices to develop a clear understanding of what they have to do to

improve. Flexible arrangements for assessment schedules take into account and respect the demands of busy employers.

- Apprentices understand the relevance of theory to practical settings in care and dentistry, such as planning domiciliary care to respect independence and promoting good dental health through national initiatives. This inspires apprentices, helping them to develop greater awareness of the principles and values which underpin effective care and dental services.
- Apprentices improve their skills in English and mathematics during planned tasks and activities, such as calculating percentages and averages and introducing specialist language such as 'anaphylactic shock'. Almost all training advisers promote correct use of spoken English but do not routinely correct grammar or spelling as they mark written work. Not all apprentices are encouraged to progress further in mathematics and English, beyond the level required for their framework.
- Strong links with employers ensure apprentices receive very good support for their learning. Most employers are kept fully informed of apprentices' progress. However, employers are not routinely involved in planning training or assessment schedules which could be tailored to their individual circumstances. Not all employers are sufficiently involved in reviewing apprentices' progress.
- Apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance. Apprentices look forward to meeting their training advisers and value highly their generous support. High priority is given to ensuring apprentices keep themselves and each other safe in the workplace.
- Apprentices understand equality and diversity well. Apprentices are helped to learn through a very detailed equality and diversity handbook. They recognise and respect differences at work. For example, how to overcome language barriers, understanding the connections between low income, poor health and reduced quality of life or how ethnic heritage and diet can affect the health of their teeth and gums.

Administration and customer service

Apprenticeships

Other work based learning

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the overall outcomes which are also good. Since 2009/10 the overall success rates and the number of learners who complete within planned timescales has declined, while remaining at national rates. However, for current learners performance has improved. The majority are on target to complete within their agreed timescales, some have achieved early. Current advanced apprentices' success rates in business administration and customer service are outstanding.
- Training, learning and assessment are good, with effective coaching sessions. Well-planned assessment meets employers' and learners' needs. Effective targets and action plans provide a clear picture of progress. Learners know what they have to do to achieve. However, for learners who are producing an electronic portfolio the time between reviews is too long. The provider has recognised this and has decreased the time between visits.
- Learners receive good verbal feedback with helpful advice on how to improve. Between assessment visits learners complete additional tasks to enable them to continue developing their learning. However, training advisers do not question learners in sufficient depth about this work, to determine the level of knowledge and understanding gained. Training advisers are equipped with the appropriate technology to enable them to support further the assessment process. However, assessors do not always use technology effectively to support learners.
- Motivated and enthusiastic learners enjoy their training and learning. They develop good levels of self-confidence and employability skills in a wide range of administrative tasks which enable them to be much more proficient in their job role. Employers value their contribution to the team. Many apprentices take on additional responsibility at work and cope well with new and

more complex tasks. As a result apprentices are more able to deal with customer service requirements more precisely, for example, handling complaints about customers' orders.

- Initial and diagnostic assessments provide sufficient detail to identify learners' specific areas of need and to inform planning and support for their functional skills. Some learners attend workshops for functional skills and develop a broader understanding of topics, such as telephone techniques. Qualified staff provide extra support for learners, to help them achieve.
- Employer engagement is good. Start Training works very effectively with a range of employers, who value highly the support given by training advisers and the subsequent progress achieved by learners. In partnership with Start Training they provide on-the-job training to develop further the knowledge and skills of learners.
- English and mathematics skills are effectively developed and apprentices use these well in their working environments. Opportunities occur frequently to develop communication skills in the workplace. However, training advisers do not routinely correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in written work. Learners improve their mathematics skills by dealing with invoices, delivery notes and credit purchases.
- Learners receive good information, advice and guidance at induction and during progress reviews to enable them to make informed choices about further study and career progression. Learners also access good staff development opportunities in their employment.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. A useful induction workbook used during reviews helps ensure apprentices' understanding. However, insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity occurs during assessment sessions. Learners clearly understand who to approach if they have any safeguarding issues.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Managers have high expectations of staff and learners and have a clear and well-communicated ambition for sustaining high quality and the reputation of the company. A proposed and eventually unsuccessful takeover of Start Training by another provider during 2011/12 had a destabilising effect on some aspects of performance and morale. Managers dealt with this well, working hard to maintain staff focus and the quality of the delivery of the existing apprenticeships.
- During the period of the attempted takeover, the proportion of business administration apprentices who successfully completed their course declined. Many of these apprentices were placed in unsuitable employment situations, some of which did not conform to the minimum requirements. Managers took swift action to rectify concerns with the recruitment practices of the proposed buyer. These and other instances of poor practice contributed to the termination of the proposed purchase. Since the failure of the takeover, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of business administration apprentices successfully completing their courses.
- Managers have a good understanding of the performance of individual training advisers through regular review meetings. These take into account a wide range of performance and learner progress measures. Managers give high priority to the progress that learners are making against their planned completion dates. Summary progress reports are monitored thoroughly at regular management meetings. Managers set clear actions and targets with training advisers to ensure high completion rates.
- During the last year arrangements and procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have been improved. Regular monitoring of teaching and learning activities takes place. However, they have not recently covered processes such as induction or progress reviews. Training advisers do not always receive sufficient guidance about what they could do differently to make improvements in the way they train and assess.
- Through well-structured line management, all staff have a good understanding of the key processes they need to follow, how these contribute to learners' success and the progress of

their own learners. Managers use this information to evaluate the provision and to produce a detailed self-assessment report. Although containing much detail about operational performance and success targets, there is insufficient detailed evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Development plans do not identify sufficiently the priorities to improve training advisers' skills and confidence.

- Managers' use of data to inform improvements in provision is satisfactory. They regularly review performance data to track trends in learners' performance and to evaluate the effectiveness of previous initiatives. However, they do not use data to anticipate future trends in performance or to plan sufficiently in advance to identify and respond to areas of potential risk.
- Managers use learners' and employers' views well to evaluate and improve the organisation of the apprenticeship programmes and the quality of training. Feedback is analysed thoroughly at a number of key stages in the training process. Senior managers also use issues discussed at assessor and management meetings to identify improvements in processes and procedures.
- Although the experience of the proposed takeover was traumatic, leaders and managers have applied this experience well to the benefit of the company and current learners. Start Training is now implementing plans to develop and expand the provision by building on their existing expertise in a realistic and sustainable way. Local businesses and partners hold Start Training in high regard. Managers are proactive in local partnerships assisting in identifying and providing learning programmes that meet well the needs of learners, the local community and employers.
- Management and promotion of equality and diversity are good. Case studies in newsletters and publicity materials highlight the success of learners undertaking courses where their gender is traditionally under-represented. Routine reporting and analyses of the performance of different groups of learners has ensured there are no significant gaps in performance. However, the promotion of diversity in teaching and assessment has not yet resulted in all assessors having sufficient confidence to extend equality and diversity discussions beyond topics covered in the induction handbook.
- Start Training meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. All training advisers have received appropriate safeguarding training and are registered with the Criminal Records Bureau. Employers' premises are suitably risk-assessed. Learners feel safe and are aware of actions to take if they feel they are not. Accidents and near misses are recorded in a central file with follow-up action recorded. Incidents of bullying or harassment are rare and where there have been instances, these have been recorded and addressed promptly.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Start Training Limited

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

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|--|--------------|
| Health and social care | 2 |
| Nursing and dental health | 2 |
| Administration | 2 |
| Customer service | 2 |

Start Training Limited

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|--|-------------------------------|
| Type of provider | Independent learning provider |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | Full-time: N/A |
| | Part-time: 472 |
| CEO | Mrs Michelle Jenkinson |
| Date of previous inspection | June 2011 |
| Website address | www.starttraining.co.uk |

[illegible]

Additional socio-economic information

Start Training Limited is a private training provider, limited by guarantee. The proprietor delegates strategic leadership and management to a Managing Director. Start Training Limited's head office and main training centre is situated in Swinton, in the borough of Salford, greater Manchester. In the North West region in 2001, people from minority ethnic groups comprised 11% of the local population. The Indian community is the largest ethnic group. The proportion of young people achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including mathematics and English, was 52.9% in 2011, lower than the national average of 58.9%. The proportion of people with a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and above is 49.9%, which is below the national rate.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Ian Smith HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Director of Quality 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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