

Joint Learning Partnership Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		29 July–2 August 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	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:

- The good quality teaching, learning and assessment ensure that the large majority of learners successfully complete their apprenticeships.
- Learners make good progress which is demonstrated by their good vocational skills that provide increased efficiency and productivity in the workplace.
- Foundation learners successfully achieve a good range of vocational qualifications.
- Employability programmes very quickly increase learners' motivation and self-confidence leading to good progression into employment.
- Staff set high expectations for learners and ensure programmes are challenging.
- The delivery of functional skills is very effective.
- Learners benefit from vocational coaches who are well qualified and experienced.
- Responsive and effective management actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment through good staff development and rigorous performance management have led to rapid improvement.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough training and assessment are outstanding.
- The provision for a very small minority of learners requires improvement.
- Progression rates for apprentices are low.
- Vocational coaches do not sufficiently check and develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the proportion of good or better teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making better use of technology to provide a wider range of evidence to support assessment decisions
 - ensuring that written feedback is as detailed and thorough as the oral feedback to aid learners' progress.
- Increase apprenticeship progression rates through providing extensive information, advice and guidance during the programme.
- Support vocational coaches to challenge and extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity consistently during progress reviews.
- Ensure that the quality improvement plan clearly identifies the responsibilities and contribution of all levels of staff.
- Increase the involvement of learners, employers and partners in decision making and the self-assessment process.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- The large majority of learners achieve their apprenticeships successfully with both overall success rates and the proportion of those completing within their planned timescales above national averages. These have much improved since the previous inspection. Data from the provider's management information system indicate that success rates for the current year will be further improved. Learners on manufacturing technologies apprenticeships succeed particularly well with success rates considerably above national averages.
- Success rates for the small minority of learners, who are apprentices on information and communication technology (ICT) or learning and development programmes, as recognised by the provider in its self-assessment report, require improvement. Joint Learning Partnership Ltd (JLP) has implemented a range of appropriate actions to bring about improvement on these apprenticeships but it is too early to judge the overall impact during the current year.
- Learners demonstrate high levels of self-confidence and motivation to do well and most current learners are making good or better progress towards achieving their apprenticeships within the planned timescales. Employers speak highly of the improved confidence, self-esteem, range of skills and commitment to work as a result of learners doing the apprenticeship.
- Learners are developing good levels of vocational skills. One learner now uses graphs as a normal part of her job which she had not been able to do before completing her customer service apprenticeship. Some management apprentices are using their new skills to develop their team's effectiveness as they now have a better understanding of how teams work.
- Warehouse operatives are able to pick and pack orders more efficiently while retail workers are delivering more reliable customer service, and using floor and shelf space efficiently to increase sales. Manufacturing apprentices have used their improved analytical and organisational skills to improve the efficiency of the production line leading to tangible benefits for both the learner and employer.
- Learners on the employability programmes for unemployed adults quickly improve their self-confidence and motivation to seek employment. The success rates for most of the vocational qualifications taken are high and progression into employment is good.
- Foundation learners benefit from a good range of vocational qualifications with high success rates. Progression into further education, training or employment is satisfactory.

- Functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT are delivered very effectively and the proportions of learners who achieve English and mathematics qualifications at their first attempt are particularly high.
- There are no significant achievement gaps between different groups of learners and almost all achieve better than national averages. Although both are above national averages JLP have rightly identified the remaining gap between overall success rates and the proportion of learners achieving within their planned timescales as targeted actions in the quality improvement plan.
- Progression rates on most apprenticeships are generally low although progression to the newly introduced higher apprenticeships is better. There are good examples of apprentices who have improved their employability skills by taking on extra responsibilities at work or achieved promotion. However, JLP does not sufficiently capture and record information about learners who gain promotion within their workplaces or progress to other provision outside of JLP.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and in business there are outstanding features which have supported the good and improving outcomes for learners. Staff set high standards for learners particularly when choosing programme levels and learning outcomes. This is ensuring that programmes challenge and extend the levels of knowledge and understanding of learners.
- Teaching and learning are well planned to meet individual needs. A wide range of teaching and learning methods are used flexibly to meet workplace demands, job requirements and learning styles. Learners have access to and are encouraged to use good quality learning materials which promote independent learning. Coaching sessions are used highly effectively to develop a wide range of workplace skills.
- Vocational coaches are sufficiently qualified and experienced to support teaching, learning and assessment in the workplace and through off-the-job teaching sessions. The provider has undertaken significant staff development and provided high levels of mentoring support for the coaches and their practice has improved considerably since the last inspection.
- Learning resources to support learning are good and have much improved since the last inspection. The resources are easily accessible to coaches in electronic formats across a wide range of subjects. The development of learning resources to support English and mathematics and functional skills has been considerable. Plans are at an advanced stage to ensure that learners have increased direct access to learning materials through a virtual learning environment.
- Initial assessment is good and learners' starting points are well understood. All learners undertake a comprehensive initial assessment of their levels of English and mathematics and this generally also includes a vocational skills assessment. Results of initial assessment and initial information, advice and guidance inform individual learning plans well.
- Assessment of vocational qualifications is good. Assessments are well planned and are timed to reflect the prior knowledge and acquisition of learning. The provider has developed a very good e-assessment tool and while recently introduced this is already having a beneficial impact on improving access to assessment and further strengthening the good internal quality assurance arrangements. However, the use of technology in recording and demonstrating assessment decisions is insufficient.
- Learners have a good understanding of the progress they are making and this is generally well recorded on their learning and assessment plans. Oral feedback from assessments is good and enables learners to improve further. Learners work is well marked and sufficient attention is given to correcting inaccuracies and spelling and grammatical errors. Outcomes from assessment directly inform future targets and activities. However, written feedback to learners is not sufficiently detailed to enable them to improve their work to reach a higher level.

- Teaching and learning to support English, mathematics and functional skills are very good and facilitate and support improvements in the learners' personal effectiveness at work enabling them to undertake additional responsibilities in their job roles. The provider has undertaken much development in functional skills delivery and the very good quality is enabling the vast majority of learners to pass their tests first time.
- Initial information, advice and guidance are good on most programmes. Prospective learners are well guided to the most appropriate learning programme which will motivate and support their development. However, as identified by the provider, advice and guidance during and at the end of a learner's programme requires improvement as progression to higher levels of learning is low.
- Equality and diversity are well promoted in induction phases and through learning materials in the learners' programmes which enable them to have a reasonable understanding of equality and diversity. However, equality and diversity are not promoted well enough during the review process to further develop or reinforce learning. Promotion is generally through questioning about current issues but this is not always sufficiently contextualised to the workplace setting.

Manufacturing technologies Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and the quality correlates well with the success of the very large majority of manufacturing technology learners who complete their apprenticeship framework.
- Learners on manufacturing apprenticeships benefit from knowledgeable vocational coaches who provide a good range of activities and this is reflected in the good development of apprentices' workplace skills.
- Learners on business improvement technique apprenticeships demonstrate cost-saving and other productivity benefits from their experience on the programme. In one case the learner developed new procedures and implemented revised systems to make the production line more efficient and effective.
- Vocational coaches have high expectations of learners. Taught sessions are relaxed but focused, promoting sound working relationships. Extra visits are arranged when required to provide learners with additional support to ensure they maintain a good rate of progress towards completing their apprenticeship.
- Vocational coaches have wide experience of manufacturing and use their expertise to develop relevant scenarios and tasks to support learning and extend the apprentices' knowledge in the workplace. In one example apprentices developed procedures to enhance the health and safety in their workplace resulting in changed working practices and creating more room to move safely around machinery.
- Training is planned with clear aims and objectives. Learning resources and materials are good and learners' progress is checked frequently. Employers' involvement in the development of training programmes is good. Vocational coaches match the requirements of the framework closely to the needs of both the learner and their employers.
- Health and safety are reinforced well in the workplace. Workplaces are safe and employers promote and monitor health and safety well. For example, one learner was able to demonstrate the control of substances hazardous to health within his working area with confidence.
- Initial assessment and skill scan are used effectively to determine learners' starting points and plan their learning. Learners on manufacturing apprenticeships receive good information, advice and guidance prior to starting their framework. However, JLP has only recently introduced internal progression routes to higher level qualifications and learners are not sufficiently advised about other external progression options available during their programme.
- Tracking and monitoring of progress is systematic and effective and almost all learners make good or better progress. Learners are able to reflect and speak confidently about the progress

they are making. Vocational coaches provide good oral feedback during progress reviews. However, written feedback is not sufficiently detailed.

- The development of English and mathematical skills is good. Personal learning and thinking skills are developed well. One learner was able to show how the mathematical knowledge developed during the apprenticeship had improved his understanding and ability to set up access to the internet and email more effectively.
- Equality and diversity are covered during progress reviews where vocational coaches use a bank of questions to raise learners' awareness. However, these questions are not contextualised to issues within the workplace and do not sufficiently stretch learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues.

Retailing and wholesaling and warehousing and distribution Apprenticeships

Good

- Retail, warehousing and distribution success rates are good and above national averages because teaching, learning and assessment are good. Most learners make good progress towards achieving the goals in their individual learning plans. Learners receiving additional support make good progress, and achieve as well as learners without the extra support.
- Vocational coaches are experienced and well qualified. They have high expectations and set challenging training targets to ensure learners make good progress. A range of assessments are used that meet the learning needs of learners, such as professional discussions of work roles on how to store and distribute stock in the most efficient way, and photographic evidence of retail displays.
- Learners are keen to learn and enjoy training. Many have increased their confidence and improved their retail and warehouse skills during training. Warehouse operatives are able to pick and pack orders efficiently to be despatched on time. Retail workers deliver reliable customer service, and use floor and shelf space efficiently to increase sales. Most learners have improved their employability skills by taking on extra responsibilities at work.
- Vocational coaches use questioning effectively to check and develop learners' knowledge and understanding. During a workplace visit the vocational coach made particularly good use of questions to develop learners' thinking skills by extending the discussion about how stock is labelled and tracked through the warehouse.
- In the best training, learners are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, learners are encouraged to complete risk assessments of potential workplace hazards independently. Consequently, they have a good understanding and awareness of potential safety considerations in the warehouse and on the shop floor.
- Although vocational coaches use ICT in training they do not use it enough to support assessment. For example, they make limited use of digital recordings of learners' discussions and shop floor observations.
- Learners are given good advice and guidance before they start their training. Good use is made of occupational initial assessment to plan personalised learning. Learners particularly like the way in which they are able to choose optional units that fit into their work and in which they have a particular interest. Most learners have a good awareness of opportunities to develop their careers and are keen to progress to the next level of training.
- Where appropriate, learners are encouraged to complete additional units and functional skills above the qualification requirement. Learners appreciate the flexible training and assessment arrangements that are available at times to suit them. For example, a vocational coach visited a warehouse learner during the night shift to undertake an assessment of them loading a vehicle.

- Vocational coaches provide effective support for learners needing extra help, for example by helping a learner develop their reading skills. Learners appreciate the good quality support they receive. Good use is made of additional learning resources such as workbooks and exercises to help learners improve their functional mathematics and English skills. Generally portfolio writing is well structured and presented to a good standard, with correct use of grammar and spelling.
- All learners have an adequate understanding of equal opportunities and recognise diversity when dealing with customers and colleagues. Learners use constructive and non-stereotypical language in their writing and during discussions. During a workplace visit the vocational coach and learner engaged in a topical discussion about gay-pride week and how it related to the learner's interest in music. However, learners' understanding of equality and diversity is generally not sufficiently reinforced during progress reviews.

Business Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good with features of outstanding practice, as reflected in the good outcomes for learners. Learners are extremely clear about what is expected and are motivated to make good progress. Learners are on target to achieve within agreed timescales and the majority achieve early. The standard of learners' work is high.
- Coaching sessions are skilfully planned to meet learners' individual needs and to help them to develop a wide range of work-related knowledge and skills. Learners enjoy these sessions and are motivated by the role models the coaches provide. Learners apply these newly learnt skills in the workplace, for example training their team on advanced spreadsheet tools which helps them to develop confidence as new managers.
- Vocational coaches are well qualified and have an extensive understanding of the organisations in which learners are employed. They use this knowledge well to plan assessment activities to develop learners' professional skills. Learners are visited frequently in the workplace with many learners taking responsibility for the pace of their learning.
- Individual learning plans set challenging targets based on thorough initial assessment results. Learners are strongly encouraged to develop further their functional skills even when they have already achieved at the level required. Learners appreciate the good support provided by their coaches which helps motivate them to focus on their learning.
- Reviews and assessments focus well on learners' progress towards the completion of their qualification. Employers are fully involved in setting work-related targets that enable effective assessment. Coaches skilfully identify a good range of opportunities to discuss learners' personal, thinking and learning skills to support their reflective and professional practice.
- Coaching enables learners to demonstrate good practical skills in the workplace and display an increased knowledge and understanding of their job roles. Employers greatly value the increased confidence, the take-up of new responsibilities and improved management techniques of their staff.
- Effective oral feedback provides learners with detailed and clear guidance that assists them to make progress. However, some written feedback lacks sufficient detail for learners to improve their work enough to reach a higher level.
- Spelling and grammar are effectively corrected in the vast majority of learners' written work. Learners are challenged to develop their writing skills and to use correct terminology for their sector and level of job role.
- Advice, guidance and support are good. Vocational coaches work with learners and employers to identify appropriate on-the-job training opportunities and progression routes. Learners choose units that are appropriate to their job role but also challenging. There are examples of learners being promoted to more senior positions as a result of completing their programme.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Relevant topics are included in discussions at every assessment visit but in some instances only superficially. Where it is

effective the vocational coaches challenge the learner to explain their understanding as both a manager and a learner.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- JLP provides good leadership and management. Senior management has a good understanding of the changing local and national priorities within the sector. A clear and well-defined mission identifies how JLP will address these priorities. The high expectations for learners are articulated through strategic and business plans that have a strong focus on improving learners' experiences through better teaching, learning and assessment and further improved outcomes.
- Performance management is strong with regular and productive monthly one-to-one meetings between vocational coaches and their managers to assess and discuss the progress of their learners. Appropriate actions and support arrangements are identified at these meetings to ensure that the reasons for any slow progress are addressed. Most learners are making good or better progress.
- Following the introduction of the most recent common inspection framework in September 2012, JLP quickly revised their approach to improving teaching, learning and assessment to meet the increased focus and expectations on them. The rigour and frequency of the observation of teaching and learning has increased and vocational coaches' practice is now also measured against a wider range of performance indicators as part of this process. This more rigorous approach has led to a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Staff development is strongly focused on improving the delivery of functional skills and improving teaching, learning and assessment. Staff training is closely linked to, and informed by, the outcomes from the observation of teaching and learning. The practice and effectiveness of vocational coaches has clearly improved since the previous inspection with very effective delivery of functional skills, generally good teaching and learning with some outstanding features, and increased success rates.
- Quality improvement activities are effective and the management of subcontracted provision is good. Most of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed and resolved. However, while progress has been made, the use of technology within teaching, learning and assessment remains an area for further improvement as recognised by JLP in the current quality improvement plan.
- The overall self-assessment report makes good use of data to support judgements that inspectors found to be broadly accurate. The resulting action plan is detailed and frequently discussed and reviewed during staff meetings. However, the plan is too focused on identifying managers against the action points and does not sufficiently identify the contributions that staff at all levels can make in achieving the plan.
- The views of staff are routinely collected during frequent one-to-one meetings and used well to inform the self-assessment process. Employers have good involvement in the planning of provision and some larger national employers have frequent meetings to review the effectiveness of their provision. Learners' views are systematically collected at various points during the programme to inform quality improvement. However, employers and learners have little direct involvement in the self-assessment process or representation on other decision-making groups within the provider.
- Senior managers have good representation on local and national bodies and use a range of labour market intelligence and other information well to ensure that provision meets the local needs as well as national priorities. The range of provision includes apprenticeships and programmes aimed at young people not in education, employment or training and unemployed adults seeking employment.
- Managers and vocational coaches actively promote equality and diversity to learners through monthly themed topics. Learners' induction effectively promotes equality and diversity and learners show a satisfactory understanding. The checking of understanding during progress

reviews is less effective and too often questions are not contextualised to the learners' employment or are not sufficiently probing. This is recognised by JLP in their most recent self-assessment and further staff training has already been arranged.

- Managers and staff successfully promote health and safety and safeguarding to learners. JLP meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The health and safety vetting and risk assessment of employers is thorough to ensure the safety of learners. Staff deal promptly and effectively with the small number of incidents relating to safeguarding or equality and diversity.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Joint Learning Partnership Limited**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships	Employability	Foundation Learning
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	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
Manufacturing technologies	2
Retailing and wholesaling	2
Warehousing and distribution	2
Business	2

At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:

- Annette Barnes Consultancy
- Beacon Learning
- Chapman Bennett Associates
- Cornerstones
- Praxis
- Right Track Training
- Training Strategies

Additional socio-economic information

JLP is a privately owned work-based learning provider. Its head office is based in Southport, in the North West of England. JLP delivers both Foundation Learning and employability programmes for unemployed adults in Liverpool. Apprenticeships are delivered across the country with regions including the North West, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, East Midlands, South East, East of England and London.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Mike White HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the chief executive officer 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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