

Elmfield Training Ltd.

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Kathryn Townsley HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit 2
Cinnabar Court
Daresbury Park
Daresbury
Warrington
WA4 4GE

Telephone number: 01928 703970

Re-inspection Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Elmfield Training Ltd, established in 2002, provides apprenticeships, work-based learning and pre-employment training programmes. Operating across the UK, it has 320 staff and branches in the North West, West Midlands and Scotland. In addition, Elmfield utilises 4 training subcontractors to deliver its training programmes in the learning areas of engineering and health and care. The company's head office is in Daresbury, near Warrington. Elmfield is also a subcontractor to large employers providing training to their workforces. Programme managers, who report directly to the company's directors, support a large team of trainers and assessors.

At the request of the Minister for Skills, Ofsted inspectors conducted a monitoring visit in September 2013, three months after the last inspection rather than the usual six to eight months. The aim of the visit was to explore the progress being made towards the recommendations of the last inspection in June 2013. At that inspection overall effectiveness, the effectiveness of leadership and management, and outcomes for learners were judged to be inadequate. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was judged to require improvement. Five subjects were inspected; health and social care, transport operations and maintenance, and employability were judged to be good, with retail and wholesaling, and administration judged as requiring improvement.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit, which were the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made to ensure that the impact of action planning leads to sustained improvement?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection action planning was not fully effective in leading to improvements. There is now clear evidence of impact of the detailed strategy to improve all aspects of the delivery and management of training at Elmfield. The very effective post-inspection action plan details the comprehensive range of work being undertaken to address weaknesses found at the last inspection. Many of the actions, only recently introduced at the time of inspection, are now showing good evidence of impact, such as the comprehensive overhaul of support for English and mathematics. Elmfield has successfully addressed the significant issues impeding the progress of learners at Morrisons and has applied this learning to further improve the quality of provision.

Improved management of assessors includes a detailed review of workloads and effective use of information including that on the frequency of visits to and progress of individual learners. A score card system to measure the performance of learners

and all relevant staff against challenging monthly targets is designed to enhance the drive for improvement but has only been recently introduced.

Outcomes for learners

How much progress has been made to improve the rate at which learners achieve their qualifications?	Reasonable progress
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At the last inspection the vast majority of learners in retail did not complete their intended qualifications in the planned time. Improving success rates, especially the rate at which learners achieve their qualifications within the planned timescale, is now a key focus for all staff. The entire experience of a learner with Elmfield Training is now under scrutiny and effective action is taken to address anything that may delay their progress. Clear targets are set for all learners and staff and monitored through use of a detailed management information system. As a result, significant numbers of the remaining learners from Morrison's have successfully completed their programmes since the last inspection and learners on other programmes are making good progress. Managers monitor assessors closely to ensure an appropriate frequency of assessment and review visits to learners. Support for learners to complete key and functional skills is much improved. Improvements to initial assessment, learning plans and reviews and a more forensic analysis of management information all contribute to identify learners who need intervention to progress at an appropriate pace.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

What progress has been made to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?	Reasonable progress
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A revised policy for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment has clear criteria to focus on half of Elmfield staff in October 2013 with the remainder to be observed in spring 2014. Observations are clearly focused on ensuring that staff aspire to deliver outstanding teaching and learning in all aspects of their work. A number of external consultants will carry out the observations but there are no clear plans in place to ensure consistency between observers and to ensure a strong emphasis on learning across the whole of the country.

Good progress is evident in the professional development for delivery staff, with a number achieving teaching-related qualifications and plans to extend this requirement to all who deliver training. However, the plans lack clarity about the current qualifications held by staff and specific targets to judge if the development is appropriate.

Use of the internet, especially Elmfield's own training site and a range of other learning technologies to deliver training and support, is increasing. Materials are

being developed with the intention of learners accessing them through handheld devices. Paper versions are also available if needed.

Functional skills

What progress has been made to improve the development of learners' key and functional skills?

Reasonable progress

The clear and detailed functional skills policy and implementation plan are already showing a positive impact. All new learners are now fully assessed within four weeks of starting their programme and have support plans in place to help them achieve functional skills qualifications within six months. However, a number of learners who are near the end of their programme have not yet undertaken functional skills tests or do not know their results. All staff are covered by development plans to improve their own functional skill levels and to provide them with the skills to support learners in a vocational context.

A new dedicated team of functional skills tutors provide high quality support in a variety of ways including using innovative online materials and tutorials. Large numbers of learners are already benefitting from the online support and successfully completing their English and mathematics qualifications.

Equality and diversity

What progress has been made to extend learners' understanding of equality and diversity by ensuring assessors further develop the learners' knowledge of these topics during assessments and progress reviews?

Reasonable progress

A range of measures to improve assessors' and learners' understanding of equality and diversity through assessments, progress reviews and delivery of training is starting to have impact. Improved support materials for learners include good examples of e-learning videos, quizzes and short cartoon clips on a range of issues. A thorough review of the curriculum has resulted in the introduction of additional modules on equality and diversity, particularly for foundation learning programmes. Planned staff development is focusing on the capability and confidence of staff to explore and reinforce equality and diversity with learners.

A newly implemented online tool for measuring differences in the achievements of different groups is being used by all levels of management and required actions are being taken.

Employer engagement

What progress has been made to improve work with employers to ensure the delivery of a good quality learning experience?

Significant progress

At the last inspection leadership and management had been ineffective in ensuring that learners completed their apprenticeship framework qualifications in the retail and business administration areas within their planned time. In the time since then senior managers have been very effective in implementing a clear and detailed strategy and carefully considered actions to improve and ensure good partnerships and collaboration with employers.

Specific attention to address the significant problems in the relationship with Morrison's includes good use of data from management information systems to identify potential issues at an early stage. Frequent and regular meetings between Morrison and Elmfield at different levels from chief executive to account managers, along with a clear service level agreement have contributed to the rapidly improved rate of achievement by the remaining learners.

Lessons learned have been intelligently applied to review relationships with other employers to avoid any future recurrences. All contracts now have clear accountabilities on all sides to ensure a good experience and rate of progress for learners. Employers have a direct line to make immediate contact with Elmfield where issues arise. Additional resources are in place in some employers; one example being the very effective talent coaches to identify learners from employability programmes who show potential for development.

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