

Reynolds Training Academy

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		15-18 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
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, learning and assessment enable learners to make rapid progress in developing high-level skills and knowledge, alongside very positive attitudes to learning and work; this enables a very high proportion to progress in to higher-level courses and to employment.
- Reynolds Training Academy (RTA) leaders and managers ensure that their whole team is learner focused, setting the highest expectations for learners. As a result, learners benefit from highly experienced, highly motivated teaching staff who provide excellent role models and inspire them to succeed.
- Strong senior RTA leadership also ensured that this excellent learner focus was maintained during a recent period of significant turbulence and change to courses. As a result, learner achievement continued to be outstanding for performing arts and good for more recently introduced courses and programmes.
- High quality learning accommodation is used. This includes good dance and music practice rooms, luxury spas, state-of-the-art gymnasiums, and salon learning environments for beauty therapy learners.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough of the teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- Although quality assurance arrangements are well developed, managers need to be able to use performance data even more effectively to enable better monitoring of learner progress.
- English and mathematics are not yet fully integrated into learning and some opportunities are missed to reinforce and extend learning in these essential functional skills within vocational sessions.
- The promotion of equality and diversity during progress reviews and in some learning sessions needs further improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of teaching and learning sessions that are outstanding through ever better use of the observation of teaching, learning and assessment process and sharing outstanding practice. Although most teaching supports good learning, and tutors and assessors are highly experienced and appropriately qualified, more opportunities to share outstanding practice would further improve learning.
- Ensure programme managers can access data more easily to monitor individual learner progress. Plans to train programme managers to use the management information system more effectively, rather than relying on reports created by another manager, will further improve progress monitoring. This will be particularly important in the light of plans to gradually expand the provision.
- Fully implement the existing plans to further promote and reinforce equality and diversity and embed functional skills development within subject sessions. Ensure that all tutors and assessors take every opportunity to refresh and reinforce the equality and diversity learning which is well covered during learner induction. Existing plans to integrate the development of English and mathematics skills within the vocational sessions will enhance learning by allowing learners to appreciate the value of these skills in their day-to-day learning and future employment. During the transition to this improved delivery model it will be important to ensure subject tutors are qualified to at least one level above the functional skill they are teaching. Some learners will also need the continued support of the specialist functional skills tutors.
- Ensure that grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes in all learners' work are corrected to assist learners in improving their functional skills. This can be rapidly achieved through a higher priority being placed on this element of feedback following observations.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. Learners gain high-level skills and most make good progress into further education, training or employment. A significant proportion of performing arts learners secure regular high quality employment which includes high profile West End and national productions. Fitness and beauty therapy learners also develop high-level skills, which are highly regarded by employers.
- RTA leaders and managers have successfully adapted and expanded the range of courses to meet local and national needs. During these very well managed changes, learners have been extremely well supported by the RTA team at all levels. Achievement levels for the courses introduced in 2012/13 are already good.
- There are few differences in the achievement of learners of minority ethnic heritage. Managers are also working effectively to identify and minimise the small differences in performance of male and female learners. Efforts to increase the proportion of male learners in some subjects are also having some success. The small number of learners with additional needs receive excellent support and their achievement levels are similar to those of other learners.
- Learners really enjoy their studies at RTA and demonstrate clear improvements in personal confidence, motivation and professional skills as they progress through each course. Learners also develop their skills in English and mathematics through separate lessons that use examples which are very relevant to the subject area. The development of these essential skills will be improved through their already-planned integration within the main learning sessions. Learners receive some helpful feedback on grammar, punctuation and spelling but, in too many cases, errors are not corrected which slows learning.

- Learners make good progress and develop an increasingly strong work ethic, which prepares them well for their future employment. This is achieved through the high expectations of well-qualified and highly professional tutors and assessors who inspire learners to develop the right attitudes and skills to support on-going success. Many of the performing arts tutors have very current experience in high profile West End shows, some being former RTA learners. Learners also have the opportunity to gain valuable additional qualifications. For example, sports, leisure and recreation apprentices complete very useful level 4 exercise referral and indoor cycling certification.
- Attendance is generally good for learning sessions and assessments, although learners arriving late are not always asked to explain the reasons for their late arrival. During the inspection a teachers' strike increased the number of late arrivals and short notice absences due to adult learners with childcare issues. Nevertheless, tutors follow up absences and lateness, and take appropriate action to improve attendance.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of most teaching, learning and assessment is good and some is outstanding. Well-qualified and highly experienced tutors and assessors are able to inspire the vast majority of learners to make good progress in gaining valuable work skills and qualifications. Tutors and assessors have high expectations of their learners and support them well. Good pastoral support is provided through personal tutors who know their learners well. Learners clearly trust their tutors and really value the support they receive, which allows them to focus more effectively on their learning. The reputation of the college is particularly high for the performing arts and it attracts learners from a wide geographical area.
- Tutors plan well to ensure that their sessions meet the needs of all learners, making good use of initial assessment. Some tutors use very effective questioning to challenge the more able learners and enable their rapid development; however, some tutors need to improve their questioning technique.
- RTA training facilities and resources are good and some learning environments, in spas and gymnasiums for example, are outstanding. Where necessary, plans are in place to provide more space and further improve some facilities. For example, the expanding beauty therapy provision is being taught in an expanding range of locations and RTA managers are working to ensure these, mainly multi-purpose learning environments, are appropriately adapted.
- Tutors give good, comprehensive verbal and written feedback that enables learners to understand what they need to do to improve. For example, in an acting session the tutor divided the learners into groups to give feedback to pairs of learners performing short pieces from a set text. The quality of their feedback was specific, very helpful and her further astute commentary and use of praise created an exceptional, collaborative learning experience for the whole group.
- Tutors and assessors conduct regular formal reviews which are generally thorough. Some reviews are very good, but others need improvement through a better focus on learning and the provision of more detailed feedback. Although the standard of most written work is good, not all tutors correct grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Assessment methods are appropriately varied, accurate and fair; they assess current skills and ability, and provide guidance to support further improvement.
- English and mathematical skills are developed in separate lessons using learning material that is relevant to the course being studied. Transition plans to embed the development of these essential skills into the main subject learning sessions are being implemented. This will improve learning because learners will more clearly see the relevance of English and mathematics as essential employment and life skills.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners receive accurate information, which enables them to make informed choices about their programmes of study. This begins with a thorough induction programme and continues throughout the learner journey at RTA. Tutors and programme managers are knowledgeable about the future learning and employment

options open to their learners, and learners trust them to provide good advice. RTA is also increasing the number of staff with formal information, advice and guidance qualifications, which reflects their determination to improve continually.

- Many learners have a good awareness of equality and diversity which was gained through the induction programme and occasional refresher sessions. This awareness, however, needs to be improved through bringing equality and diversity to life within learning sessions, where opportunities to reinforce and develop understanding are missed.

Beauty therapy

16-19 study programmes

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessments is good. This correlates well with the good achievement levels for classroom-based learners. A high proportion of learners complete within planned timescales. The majority of learners progress to higher-level courses and many progress into employment. Attendance is, on the whole, good.
- In the better lessons, learners work well and rapidly improve their skills and knowledge, for example by swiftly gaining confidence in using massage techniques and applying bridal makeup. Young learners develop critical and innovative thinking skills ideas when working on a Dragons' Den type activity, for example proposing ideas for a spray tan that lasts for four weeks or anaesthetic to apply before waxing. These learning activities also improve professional presentation and marketing skills in preparation for work in the beauty therapy industry.
- In the less effective lessons, planning does not take into account the evaluation of individuals' learning during each learning session. Tutors miss opportunities to embed vocationally-related English and mathematics into lessons. Although the curriculum is well designed, learners do not always have sufficient clients to work on. Tutors do not always appropriately challenge learners who arrive late for class.
- Staff are enthusiastic, well qualified, and have good industrial experience. They make good use of their extensive knowledge to inspire learners, making useful reference to good vocational examples. As a result, learners rapidly develop strong, practical work-related skills.
- The assessment and internal verification process is fair and rigorous. It meets the awarding body requirements. Assessment planning is good. Tutors brief learners well before each assessment to ensure that they fully understand the assessment criteria.
- Reviews are very effective and have a strong focus on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) unit achievement. Learner progress is reviewed, and appropriately challenging, time-bound targets are agreed. Tutors give accurate, detailed and encouraging feedback to learners. This lets them know what they need to do to make progress and motivates them to succeed.
- Learner portfolios are well organised and presented. They use information and learning technology effectively to support research and illustrate body shapes and essential oils. Tutors write constructive feedback on learners' theory assignments to improve performance and support swift progress.
- Learners feel safe, enjoy their studies and speak very highly of the RTA staff. They appreciate the support and encouragement given by their personal tutors.
- Learning resources at the training centres are, in the main, good. Some learners undertake work experience in very high quality spa and fitness centres. However, a minority of learners attend a learning centre which, although it meets minimum requirements, does not reflect a professional beauty therapy environment. Managers already have plans to relocate this provision in the near future.
- Advice and guidance effectively support learning and progression. Learners receive helpful careers advice, including advice from external, prestigious beauty companies.

- Learners have a basic understanding of equality and diversity, but there is little promotion or reinforcement in most vocational lessons. In progress reviews, equality and diversity questioning is not effective. As a result, opportunities to develop the broader aspects of equality and diversity are being missed by reviewers.

Sports, leisure and recreation

Apprenticeships

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Learners make good progress on their health and fitness courses and achieve their learning goals. They develop good personal, social and work-related skills as a result of participating fully on their courses. They are highly motivated, enjoy their learning, and develop good team working and collaborative skills. Learners make good progress on to higher-level courses and a high proportion gain employment on course completion.
- Learners benefit from the high standards and expectations demanded by the programme manager and the course tutors. RTA health and fitness tutors work well as a team and support the learners to achieve their learning goals. Learners value greatly the levels of care and individual guidance that they receive from their tutors, who always seem to be available when needed.
- Teaching and learning are good in lessons. Tutors lead well planned on- and off-the- job training that is interesting, interactive, participative and frequently very dynamic. They hold relevant coaching awards and carry out continued professional development regularly to enhance their skills. Practical sessions are effective in developing the learners' ability to put theory into practice and provide opportunities for them to learn new coaching techniques. Learners particularly value the flexibility of their tutors in the planning and carrying out of their assessments.
- The induction process is very effective and includes advice on appropriate health and safety practices. Thorough initial and diagnostic assessment results underpin individualised learning programmes. Learners engage in their programmes with enthusiasm and are encouraged to participate in exercise sessions at health clubs to gain valuable experience. Mentoring by tutors is particularly effective in helping learners to make good progress.
- Monitoring of learners' progress through regular and thorough progress reviews is very effective. Learners understand how to improve because of these regular reviews. Their work is assessed, written and verbal feedback is given, and appropriately challenging targets are set. Learners receive regular feedback, as they make progress toward their targets, that is accurate and always in accordance with current practices in the health and fitness industry.
- The development of English and mathematics skills is evident in some lessons, for example calculating the percentages of resistance and endurance levels from a client's maximum repetition scores to set suitable fitness programmes. However, most of the development of these essential skills is through separate functional skills lessons. Clear explanations of the different names used in anatomy and physiology lessons and reference made to industry terminology in theory sessions develop key underpinning knowledge.
- During the programme, tutors frequently lead good discussions on an individual's personal aspirations, providing useful information and advice on further learning and job opportunities. Learners report that they feel safe in their classes and demonstrate safe working practices in practical sessions. They are comfortable in their learning environment and appreciate the high levels of support that they receive. Tutors regularly focus on, and reinforce, the importance of health and safety in the workplace throughout the programmes, meeting all safety requirements. Learners develop a good understanding of, and attitude to, health, safety and welfare issues and gain a clear appreciation of the importance of healthy eating and maintaining healthy lifestyles.

- Promotion of key aspects of equality and diversity is effective in some lessons, for example the consideration of different types of possible clients on personal training programmes. Tutors ensure that their learners are aware of the needs of elderly clients and those who suffer problems with their mobility. However, there are some missed opportunities in other lessons. For example, when discussing nutrition in one class, there were no references made on different diets to ensure inclusivity for vegetarians and vegans.

Performing arts

16-19 study programmes 19+ Learning programmes

Outstanding

- Teaching and learning, together with well-designed projects and very strong assessment feedback, ensure outstanding learner achievement. Teachers with extensive and, in many cases, current, professional experience on the stage share their expertise extremely effectively. The excellent range of contacts RTA senior managers have developed ensures learners gain really detailed and high-quality feedback from a wide range of performance professionals.
- Teachers and staff very carefully plan and organise the curriculum to enable learners to develop their full potential in their chosen field of either musical or dance theatre.
- Celebrating learners' success is a strong component of this area, with a very well planned annual end-of-year 'peak' performance designed to showcase all learners' work. Final year learners benefit particularly well through the opportunity to perform solo pieces in a West End setting in front of agents and industry professionals gathered together by the college's own agent. As a result, progression into employment in related fields is high and the event is an excellent preparation for work.
- Teachers make sure learners get the basics right and consequently standards of performance achieved at the end of the year are outstanding. Learners' fitness levels are particularly impressive in dance lessons, with all staff paying good attention to extensive warm-up exercises at the start of practical lessons.
- All teachers are passionate and enthusiastic about their areas of performance, displaying extraordinarily high standards during demonstrations to learners. Teachers provide plenty of formative feedback to help learners make sense of complex dance routines or difficult singing techniques, and consequently progress in lessons is swift. In practical lessons the pace is energetic and the atmosphere dynamic and productive. Learners enjoy their lessons very much.
- Inspirational lessons are characterised by teachers combining their excellent subject expertise alongside very careful checking of every learners' progress, with a skilful use of astute questions to check learners' depth of understanding and to encourage thinking and discovery. These teachers notice the demeanour of every student and make sure each one receives appropriate feedback or comment. As a result, learners' own listening and watching skills are honed and confidence noticeably improves. Appraisal by other learners is often a key positive feature, enabling learners to develop reflection and self-evaluation skills. Learners also develop essential resilience through this extensive developmental feedback.
- Although the standard of teaching and learning is all good or better, in some good lessons teachers are not always effectively checking learning for every individual. Rehearsal studios in the centre are very good. However, teachers have not considered enough how displays or information could enhance learning, to aid recall and inspire learners.
- Staff use very effective methods at the beginning of courses that ensure learners are placed on the most appropriate level for their ability. Very effective induction activities include auditions that ascertain which specialist area a learner should develop. For example, learners can attend auditions to be considered for more advanced classes in singing or tap dancing.
- Learners' English and mathematics skills are developed further through good contextual and work-related written projects that give them a broad understanding of the many and varied

roles within the profession. However, teachers do not always correct spelling and grammatical errors.

- Pastoral support is very good. Learners take responsibility for helping to improve provision and the regular forum meetings, and the involvement of learner representatives ensure they feel their views matter. This approach is engendering an ethos of team working and a culture of mutual respect that pervades the academy. Despite a few good examples of effective promotion of equality and diversity within lessons, learners' understanding of the wider issues is underdeveloped.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. RTA is a very ambitious organisation that knows itself well and has a well-articulated vision that is strongly focused on excellence and support for learners and staff alike. These aspirations are clearly communicated through a 'purpose' statement and well formalised as targets in strategic and business plans.
- Senior leaders and managers provide strong, inspirational leadership. They successfully managed a recent period of significant turbulence and change. Critically, an admirable focus on learners and learning was maintained during the significant changes to programmes. Achievement levels are outstanding in performing arts, where RTA has a history and reputation for excellence; for recently-introduced subjects and programmes they are already good.
- The management of teaching and learning is good. Observation has strengthened, through ever better training for key staff in monitoring and supporting teaching staff, to improve teaching and learning. Observation informs performance management and professional development. All teaching staff are appropriately qualified and are being funded to achieve higher-level teaching qualifications. The observation profile produced by RTA observers closely matches the observations undertaken by inspectors, with a very high proportion of learning within lessons being good or better.
- The resources to support learning are generally good, and occasionally outstanding. Teaching accommodation within the training centre is good, providing highly-appropriate studio, salon and classroom spaces. Fitness and beauty learners also undertake work experience in prestigious luxury spas run by partner organisations within the group. All staff are passionate and enthusiastic about their disciplines, have very high levels of vocational skill and many are highly experienced current practitioners with impressive portfolios. Staff provide excellent role models and are inspirational for learners.
- RTA's assessment of its own provision is very thorough and takes into account views from all staff, learners, subcontractors and employers. Recent development days were very effectively used to engage staff in reviewing key practices and sharing experiences. These sessions were highly valued by all, and especially new staff. This evidence of a fundamental belief in continuous improvement provides a very high level of confidence in RTA's capacity for sustainable improvement. The self-assessment report is judgemental, closely reflecting the judgements made by inspectors.
- Managers monitor provision thoroughly and make good use of data to manage performance through the monthly senior management meetings. Programme managers are aware of occupancy and success rates. However, the wider use of data is less well developed and, currently, programme managers do not have direct access to data that would enable them to ask specific questions or carefully monitor the impact of changes to programmes.
- RTA has very strong partnerships. Communication with subcontractors is good and excellent mentoring and support are provided for existing partners. Strategic and business plans include coherent proposals to develop partnerships further, engaging with more employers and occupational areas.
- The high priority given to health and safety, learner well-being and safeguarding is very evident throughout RTA. As a result, the company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding

learners. Good information and contacts are available to learners, and this is very effective. Learners are very aware of whom they should contact if a problem arises. There is also a strong awareness of on-line safety issues, which is reinforced by well-designed and prominent notices.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. RTA has ensured that its own staff and subcontractors have up-to-date training in equality and diversity. It provides a welcoming environment with a culture of social inclusion and mutual respect. Assessors and trainers, however, need to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity more effectively.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Reynolds Training Academy

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
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
Beauty therapy	2
Sports, leisure and recreation	2
Performing arts	1

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	19+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 472								
	Part-time: Nil								
CEO	Mrs Emma Revie								
Date of previous inspection	April 2006								
Website address	www.reynoldsgroup.co.uk/training								
Provider information at the time of the inspection									
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
Full-time	3	-	20	127	-	48	-	9	
Part-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	-		-		-				
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	-	11	1	215	-	-			
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative Process Limited 								

Contextual information

The Reynolds Training Academy CEO works under the company owner, who knows RTA very well and provides appropriate challenge and scrutiny. Many learners have the opportunity for work experience and some for employment in the other Reynolds companies, which include spas and gymnasiums. Most learners currently live in the local area around Dartford (Kent and East London), but some performing arts learners are attracted nationally. The gradually expanding provision will also see the development of a number of regional centres for beauty therapy and sports, recreation and leisure apprentices and classroom-based learners.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Mark Shackleton HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the CEO 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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