

Reed in Partnership

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		5–8 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
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:

- Reed in Partnership has a very good and strong commitment to working with community organisations to purposefully involve disaffected and disengaged young people to get them into training and employment.
- Managers demonstrate ambitious and decisive leadership with a clear strategic focus on continuous improvement that has contributed to improving the quality of the learner experience.
- Reed in Partnership operates a rigorous programme of performance monitoring and quality improvement with all its subcontractors to ensure learners are successful and programmes are operated and managed to a high standard.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, with highly motivating staff who set high standards for learners, and plan activities that are motivating, stimulating and challenging for learners.
- Trainers and tutors have a good focus on encouraging learners to develop confidence and self-esteem to enable them to promote themselves to employers.
- Managers listen carefully to employers and use this information well to develop programmes that are successful and highly valued by learners and employers.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Too few learners on health and social care National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)-only programmes complete their learning within the expected timeframes.
- The learning experience for some 16- to 19-year-old employability learners does not swiftly engage or sufficiently stimulate and motivate them to take responsibility for their actions in preparing for employment or further training.
- Too few learners experience outstanding teaching, learning and assessment. Trainers and assessors do not consistently correct errors in spelling and grammar.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate the training element of the employability provision to ensure learners complete their training or work placement over a shorter period of time and move quickly into sustained employment or training.
- Ensure more learners experience outstanding training by continuing to monitor the performance of all aspects of the provision to improve the quality and consistency of training, learning and assessment. Support all staff to become reflective practitioners so that they know what to do to improve.
- Provide appropriate training for staff to enable them to:
 - establish and set targets for learner achievement that are more specific and time constrained
 - record the detail of all interventions with learners, including personal and pastoral support
 - encourage learners to identify and take more responsibility for their individual actions, activities and targets
 - better support and raise learners' awareness of the importance of English and mathematics in everyday work
 - identify opportunities to encourage learners to discuss and explore difference and diversity throughout their learning.
- Identify and build upon the pockets of good practice with a combination of consistent performance management and continuous staff development.
- Increase the number of employability learners who can sustain employment for 26 weeks or more.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Over the year Reed in Partnership has been running the current programmes, the vast majority of learners in the workplace successfully complete their National Vocational Qualifications, with some pockets of outstanding provision. All learners in engineering and manufacturing technologies, business administration and in retail and commercial enterprise successfully complete qualifications on time. However, too many learners on health and social care programmes fail to complete their training within planned end dates.
- The progress learners make is broadly in line with expectations. The vast majority of the 16- to 19-year-old learners on employability programmes benefit from the employment training, work placements and guidance given to them. Most develop an improved appreciation and awareness of the work environment and are better prepared to find work. Nearly 40% of learners complete their training and successfully move into employment or training, which many sustain for 26 weeks or more.
- Most employability learners significantly improve their personal, social and employability skills; many really benefit from the positive experiences whilst on work placements. Learners become more confident as they appreciate the skills they gain through the carefully selected work placements, which are effectively tailored and managed to meet individual career aspirations and individual starting points. However, managers recognise that some learners find it very difficult to engage in training and have significant barriers before they can gain employment.
- The small number of 16- to 19-year-old learners on apprenticeship programmes makes appropriate progress. All took some time to settle into employment, but all are now on track and progressing well.

- Learners following vocational programmes in the workplace progress well and quickly take on additional responsibilities with assured confidence as they progress through their apprenticeship or NVQ. Many gain promotion or take on supervisory and management responsibilities.
- The standard of learners' work is mostly good. Almost all learners make considerable progress during training relative to their starting points. Learners on workplace programmes and apprenticeships work conscientiously to produce work that demonstrates they can apply their knowledge in the workplace. Employability learners progress through a work placement into full-time employment and, in some cases, are the first in their family to gain employment.
- There are no disparities in the achievement of different groups of learners. Learners identified as requiring extra support, both academic and pastoral, progress and achieve particularly well. Reed in Partnership has taken effective action to provide good support to all learners to enable them to achieve their qualifications.
- The development of learners' English and mathematical skills is not consistently good across all programmes. Learners in the workplace complete detailed work projects that enable them to further advance their written and mathematical skills. However, trainers on the employability programme frequently fail to capitalise on opportunities to extend learners' understanding of the importance of English and mathematics in the workplace.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and have made a significant contribution to the successful achievement for many learners. Learners benefit from good pastoral and academic support from committed and motivated trainers, assessors and managers. Learners are generally well motivated and enjoy their training.
- Much training and learning are of a high standard. Training is mostly delivered as individual coaching and skills sessions run in the workplace or training venue. Inspectors saw some excellent examples of very good coaching and support. In one employability session, learners participated enthusiastically in a wide range of well-conceived, creative activities that enabled them to usefully prepare for work and test their understanding of workplace expectations.
- In the most effective sessions, trainers and assessors motivate and involve all learners by asking inquisitive and probing questions. Trainers use examples from around the workplace to challenge learners' expectations. In a minority of sessions, training fails to challenge the more able and, on occasions, involve some learners.
- In the weaker sessions, expectations of what the learner should or could do are not clear and some learners do not take any responsibility for their actions, learning or to complete the work set. Managers recognise this and have begun action to help staff to manage these disengaged learners.
- Learning resources are good, and in some subcontractors they are very good. In workplace learning, learners routinely gain proficiency and perform tasks involving complex machinery. Some employability provision relies heavily on paper-based learning materials and some community venues do not always have access to private areas to conduct interviews and personal conversations.
- Assessment practice is good. Assessors use technology well to record learner progress and promote opportunities for learning, especially in the workplace. Assessors plan and manage assessments well, ensuring learners clearly understand what is expected of them. Assessors are well qualified and highly regarded by employers in the workplace, stimulating employers and learners with purposeful discussions.
- Assessors provide very useful feedback to learners that helps them to improve the quality of their work. Written feedback to vocational learners is detailed and copious; however, in a minority of cases, learners find some handwriting hard to read. Trainers' feedback to some employability learners is more variable. Oral feedback is good, but too much written feedback fails to engage the learner or provide sufficient detail for them to improve.

- Initial assessment is comprehensive and well devised. An appropriate range of measures determines learners' starting points and detailed information is gathered on each learner's career aims and aspirations. Staff use this information effectively to plan individual training, negotiate personal goals and prepare work placements to ensure learners make progress and acquire the skills required that employers value.
- Staff promptly and accurately identify learners who require extra help. The good additional support is purposeful and enables learners to make good progress. Specialist learning champions support trainers and provide additional resources to aid the development of alternative approaches to learning that they can use with their learners. Direct links with external agencies ensure specialist diagnostic help is quickly sought for learners who require it.
- Apprentices and workplace learners consistently enhance their English and mathematics in their daily work. Much of their work is employer led with well-conceived projects and real time exercises enabling learners to creatively apply financial calculations and produce written descriptions of procedures often using technical terminology with confidence. However, advisers on employability programmes do not sufficiently reinforce the importance of spelling, grammar or everyday mathematics to prepare learners for the workplace.
- The promotion of diversity across the programmes is satisfactory. Trainers frequently instigate discussions about equality during group sessions and test learners' understanding of cultural diversity during individual discussions. Good practice exists with apprentices and workplace learners, but is not shared, and opportunities to discuss equality or diversity are frequently not utilised with employability learners.

Employability Training

Employability

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Learners make good progress in developing their personal, social and employability skills, but too many do not progress into further education, training or employment. Most learners are well motivated, develop confidence and gain awareness of what employers expect of them in the workplace. However, some learners do not attend for appointments, consultations and reviews.
- In the better-organised sessions, expectations are set early, developing a strong work culture of attendance monitoring and timeliness to instil values and behaviours that employers expect. Many subcontractors have supportive local work placements where learners gain experience and a range of useful vocational skills while receiving frequent visits from trainers. Communication with employers is very good.
- Programmes are well structured and well managed. Assessors and advisers work effectively with learners to promptly update curriculum vitae, provide training and coaching on interview preparation and obtain interviews for work, placements or apprenticeships. Learners make fast progress in developing their skills and accessing placements.
- Trainers engage learners in stimulating training and coaching. In the better sessions, learners actively engage in group activities, giving presentations on preparing for interviews or playing health and safety games to consolidate knowledge. Trainers willingly contribute their ideas and personal experiences. However, trainers do not always sufficiently engage all learners and adapt sessions to meet learners' individual needs.
- Learners have good access to computers and printers to produce letters and application forms. Learners work well independently to update curriculum vitae, research job vacancies or investigate companies and employer information. However, where South London community venues are frequently used, there is a heavy reliance on paper-based resources and there is limited access to private areas to conduct interviews.

- Learners' initial assessment is comprehensive and identifies their initial goals well. Subcontractors effectively encourage learners to set and review their own short-term targets and carry out frequent progress reviews. Reed in Partnership advisers do not always sufficiently regularly focus on previously agreed learner actions, probe learner responses or document learner achievements and progress in placements.
- Trainers give learners useful feedback on their performance, passing on employer feedback from volunteering placements to identify further areas for improvement. Learners evaluate their own learning and usefully identify what they need to do to improve, for example to speak more clearly over the telephone.
- All learners are assessed for English and mathematics and many recognise they need to improve. Advisers do not always sufficiently reinforce this nor do they correct spelling and grammatical errors. In training, trainers miss opportunities to explore words with different meanings, usage and values.
- Information, advice and guidance about career development are good. The majority of learners have a clear understanding of what they need to develop. Advisers encourage learners to independently research training, volunteering and apprenticeship opportunities and also discuss how realistic their goals are.
- All providers create a safe and welcoming learning environment valued by learners. They give good individual practical support for those learners with more significant barriers or personal difficulties. However, trainers and advisers miss too many opportunities to promote equality and diversity in all training sessions or reviews.

Business administration and law

19+ Learning programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment on team leading, customer service and business administration are good. This is reflected in the good success rates for all learners and the good progress many make to further training or promotion at work. Learners develop good workplace skills, including confidence and interpersonal skills. Learners are challenged with complex work-based projects that improve their understanding of the workplace. One learner analysed car park occupancy rates with pricing levels of competitors, which led to pricing changes in their organisation.
- In many individual training sessions, trainers challenge and extend learners' vocational knowledge and skills successfully. Trainers use probing questions to engage learners and to test that their understanding and knowledge are very good. Sessions with trainers inspire interested and motivated learners. One inspired learner took on a work project and delivered a successful marketing campaign, demonstrating additional skills in finance and accounting.
- Trainers plan their training well to ensure learners experience a range of activities. On-the-job training supports the individual through coaching and professional discussion. Projects in the workplace promote the learners' independent research skills. One learner reduced the number of customer complaints about car servicing by developing a chart to explain the stages of the service to the customer.
- Teaching resources are good and adapted to creatively cultivate learners' work-related skills. Portfolios are systematic and tidy, demonstrating the learners' understanding of what the learners have achieved. Assessors effectively use web cameras to record professional discussion over the internet.
- Learner progress and performance are well recorded and monitored. Assessments are timely and planned to meet learners' working patterns. Regular and frequent assessments provide good opportunities for productive discussions. Feedback on assessment is realistic and valuable; however, some targets are not sufficiently specific or time bound.

- Initial advice and guidance are good and delivered by trained advisers through a series of purposeful presentations and individual sessions. Joint briefings with employers' staff ensure a shared vision of the training benefits to the organisation. Trainers plan induction activities very well to meet individual learner needs and time is taken to select units with the employer to ensure they meet the learner's job role.
- Support is available to learners and identified early in their programme through effective initial assessments. This information is used well by assessors to individualise projects and focus on individual learning needs and to develop English and mathematics skills. Learners cultivate their language skills using specialist business, legal and customer service terminology correctly. Learners improve self-confidence at work, especially when dealing with challenging situations with internal and external customers.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well through reviews with learners. Assessors effectively plan opportunities to discuss themes on cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication in work environments. Learners speak fluently about how to deal with discrimination and conflicts in the workplace and how to remain calm with aggressive customers. Learners benefit from experience of working front of house with reception duties to develop strategies to support the diverse needs of a range of customers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers have a clear strategic vision to provide training for young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Many disengaged early with education and had few prospects for employment. Employability and vocational training programmes specifically respond to the needs of local communities and employers, providing much improved career prospects for many learners.
- The board of directors plays an effective and important role in providing oversight of all training activities in Reed in Partnership. The board monitors performance through a good range of detailed reports and provides appropriate challenge to managers. Performance concerns initiated a review of the performance management systems in the summer of 2013, which the board supported through decisive and effective action, particularly in instigating very effective actions to monitor provision run by subcontractors.
- Senior managers have a clear vision and provide an open management style which is valued by staff. They raise expectations for learning and achievement, instilling key values around learning and developing every learner's potential. Subcontractors who deliver training demonstrate similar ideals and recognise how the good support they have received has improved their quality systems and learning processes.
- Managers and staff know what actions to take to improve outcomes for learners. Although some systems are nascent, data are used well to monitor performance, track learners' progress and measure achievement towards organisational and individual targets. Monthly tutor and assessor performance reviews effectively hold staff to account for learner progress.
- Quality improvement is good. Many new systems have been introduced and have quickly impacted on improving the quality of the provision, especially with subcontractors. All programmes are subject to frequent and rigorous monitoring through monthly meetings with subcontractors and provider staff. Rigorous compliance checks ensure the quality of learner and subcontractor records. Discrepancies are fed into the performance management system and are quickly dealt with.
- Subcontractor management is very strong, with detailed monthly performance meetings and weekly telephone conversations. Managers implement stringent compliance checks and effectively monitor the quality of each subcontractor's performance. The organisation continually examines the effectiveness of its quality systems to meet changes in working with new subcontractors. Challenging quality targets are set for each programme and subcontractor, focusing on the quality of the provision to improve learner progression and success.

- Systems to improve teaching and learning have been revised and incorporate all aspects of work with learners, including close working with subcontractors. Joint observations are completed with the subcontractors, and trainers are observed at least twice each year. Observations are thorough, address learning in sufficient depth and lead to appropriate actions which are then pursued through individual development plans. Standardisation is frequent and very effective. Staff development is well managed and provides a good focus on developing skills to improve learning for all trainers and assessors. Performance management of staff working with learners has a strong focus on learner progress.
- The self-assessment process provides a valuable platform for quality improvement and is supported by an effective quality improvement plan that is frequently updated and used well to improve the provision. However, managers recognise that the annual report is not sufficiently evaluative or concise. Valuable feedback is collected from employers and learners and it is used effectively to focus improvement.
- The management of resources is good, although too many trainers rely too heavily on paper-based materials. Staff development and performance management are good, leading to well-qualified and capable staff with a clear focus on improving learning.
- Training is targeted at specific learners, employers and the local community. Staff across the partnership work well with external agencies to support learners and recruit hard-to-reach young people, for example by working closely with the job centres in specific boroughs to enlist, in local training, individuals with significant barriers to engagement. Relations with employers are good and focus on providing work placements to enhance learners' experience and identify permanent employment opportunities. Trainers carefully match learners to training and work and, where appropriate, direct learners to more suitable provision.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Learners and staff benefit from regular training. Staff promote and reinforce e-safety to learners and encourage healthy living and personal well-being. Incidents and safeguarding concerns are well recorded and receive prompt and effective action. However, subcontractor records are not always sufficiently detailed to clearly demonstrate the support they have provided to learners.
- Arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. Equality is a well understood core value driven by the directors, and is evident throughout the organisation and the subcontractors. Equality and diversity are promoted well to both staff and learners. Schemes of work and training in workplace learning incorporate aspects of equality and diversity. However, on the employability programme, opportunities to promote inclusion are missed. Learners with specific needs and backgrounds receive timely and appropriate support to ensure they succeed.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Reed in Partnership

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	3
Administration	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 0								
	Part-time: 1752								
CEO	James Reed								
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected								
Website address	www.reedinpartnership.co.uk								
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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Part-time	145	77	-	201	-	-	-	-	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+		
	3	-	-	-	-		-		
Number of employability learners	212								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ QTraining ■ Straight A ■ TBG ■ Catch-22 ■ Action Acton ■ Groundwork ■ HT Skills ■ New Deal of the Mind ■ Twin Training ■ Urban Futures 								

Contextual information

Reed in Partnership is an independent learning provider in its second year of funding from the Skills Funding Agency. The head office is in Southwark, London. Training is delivered by an in-house team and by 12 subcontractors covering the London, the north west and east of England. Programmes include apprenticeships for 16- to 18-year-old learners; an employability programme for 16- to 19-year-old learners not in employment, education or training (NEET); and workplace learning for learners over 19 years. Workplace and apprenticeship learners receive training in health and social care, engineering and manufacturing, construction, hospitality, education and training, and business administration and law. Reed in Partnership has a board of four directors and a managing director who are supported by 21 training staff.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Martin Hughes HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the continuous improvement manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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