

N.T.S. Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		11–13 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- A minority of learners do not achieve any qualifications.
- Learners do not receive sufficient teaching to improve their English and mathematics and hence the number of learners achieving appropriate qualifications in these subjects is low.
- The targets that teachers set for learners to improve are not specific enough to address learners' individual needs.
- Extended work experience is not available for all learners.
- Quality assurance processes are under developed and do not result in rapid enough improvement to the quality of provision.
- Managers do not routinely collect or use data to inform either their judgements of the quality of provision or their planning.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Learners develop their life skills very well, particularly in relation to teamwork, effective communication, taking responsibility for their own progress and independent living.
- The majority of learners who complete their qualifications progress into appropriate further education, training or employment.
- Teachers support learners with learning difficulties and complex personal issues very well and provide a safe environment for learners to develop their skills.
- Managers have developed good collaborative partnerships with external organisations that successfully identify young people at risk and re-engage them in education.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Use initial diagnostic assessment more effectively to identify the reasons that learners may be at risk of leaving, in order to put in place more comprehensive strategies for guiding learners towards completing their qualifications.
- Ensure that all teachers have the ability and confidence to improve the English and mathematics of learners and that they do so routinely in all their lessons.
- Plan more effectively for the needs of each learner by setting targets that focus on the requirements of that individual and regularly reviewing progress.
- Continue to develop partnerships with local businesses so that all learners have access to relevant work experience.
- Rapidly improve the self-assessment process so that it is more evaluative, incorporates specific and measurable targets acted upon by all staff members, and leads to sustained improvements.
- Ensure that the performance of staff is effectively monitored and developed through a more thorough and consistently applied appraisal system.
- Use data more effectively across the organisation to provide evidence for judgements about the quality of provision, to inform planning for improvement and to set specific, measurable targets.
- Develop and implement a risk assessment policy to cover the period between a new teacher being appointed and the appropriate criminal record clearance being received.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of learners achieving their qualifications rose sharply in the last year from a low base the previous year. However, the number is still slightly below the average for similar providers. The number of learners who achieved their music and preparation for employment qualifications is high, but the number achieving functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at an appropriately challenging level remains unacceptably low. The majority of learners who complete their vocational courses go on to pass the assessment, but too many learners leave before completing their courses. ▪ Learners with a variety of complex learning and personal difficulties benefit from the open enrolment policy; these learners often have no other option for either furthering their education or returning to education after being removed from their schooling. Learners enjoy their courses and make good progress, given that in many cases they have no previous qualifications. Most learners attend regularly, but managers and teachers have been unsuccessful in ensuring that all learners arrive on time at the beginning of the day, resulting in some disruption to learning. ▪ Learners participate fully during most lessons. Teachers are adept at ensuring learners develop positive attitudes toward their learning and progress; for example, they ensure that mobile phones are switched off during lessons and that learners listen when other learners are speaking. By setting high standards, teachers ensure that learners develop a good appreciation of the work ethic that they will need in any future employment; for instance, they fix break times and insist that return times are adhered to. ▪ The development of learners' English and mathematics is poor. During a period with no dedicated teacher, learners have not been able to gain appropriate skills rapidly enough. In many cases, learners are taking assessments having had little or no preparation. ▪ Learners develop other skills very well. Teachers use their own experiences very effectively to encourage learners to take more responsibility for their own progress and to participate fully in lessons. Learners gain in confidence and learn how to work well with others, to communicate 	

successfully and to have respect for the views and beliefs of others. Teachers pay due attention to the development of computer literacy skills, for instance by ensuring that learners know how to browse the internet effectively to search for jobs.

- For the learners who complete their qualifications, progression rates to further education, training or employment are improving and are now high. The majority of these learners have developed an appreciation of the importance of continuing to gain further qualifications. Many use the skills that they have developed to gain places at local colleges where they progress to higher-level courses. The large majority of learners have quite complex learning needs and simply by travelling to N.T.S. independently, attending regularly and participating in classes, they make very rapid progress towards becoming more independent citizens with greatly improved prospects.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Much of the teaching on the vocational and employability programmes is good and, consequently, outcomes for learners are improving in these areas. However, learning of English and mathematics is inadequate. There is currently no specialist teacher for English or mathematics and learners do not have the lessons in these subjects that they require to be fully prepared for their assessments.
- All learners develop their personal confidence well, particularly where they have significant barriers to learning and a poor previous experience of education or training. Teachers support learners in overcoming their difficulties with attendance. Learners have a positive attitude towards their learning and the standard of their work is at least satisfactory, and often good.
- Well-qualified teachers plan vocational lessons to include a good range of contextualised learning activities which interests and motivates learners. For example, learners in an employability lesson enjoyed the challenge of a team-working exercise and improved their planning skills; learners studying childcare made posters to illustrate play activities and developed their creative skills well.
- Teachers make good use of questioning to clarify learning points and ensure learners' understanding. All staff use praise very effectively to reinforce learners' positive behaviour and build their confidence in themselves. Learners' work is clearly displayed, giving learners pride in their achievements. However, a minority of lessons lack pace and challenge and, consequently, learners do not always participate fully in these lessons.
- All learners studying childcare benefit from high quality and relevant work experience at a local nursery. Learners' work experience in other vocational areas is underdeveloped. Teachers have failed to recognise, formalise and build upon in-house work experience opportunities for business administration learners.
- Learners have good access to learning resources, including computers. However, whiteboards are too small for teachers to illustrate their lessons effectively. Visual aids for making learning more interesting are not available in all teaching rooms, and therefore opportunities are lost to increase the motivation and interest of learners.
- Teachers assess learners' starting points accurately. Learners' individual learning plans contain a thorough record of their current position, qualification goals and ambitions for further education, training or employment. Teachers identify learners' current levels of English and mathematics at the beginning of courses, but they do not then use these assessments to set specific and measurable targets for further development.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive good one-to-one guidance and are confident that teachers will address any concerns that they have sensitively. All teachers are aware of the barriers to learning that these learners have and are skilled at advising learners where problems arise. When learners bring with them some of the problems that many of them face, and these issues manifest themselves in unacceptable standards of behaviour, teachers are skilled at

adapting their plans to defuse tensions and ensure that a calm learning environment is restored and maintained.

- Teachers monitor and track learners' progress in business administration, childcare and employability very well. Teachers' assessment practice is good and learners understand the progress that they are making. Learners receive good verbal and written feedback from teachers on the vocational content of their work and learners know what they need to do in order to succeed in these qualifications. However, teachers do not routinely record or review learners' personal targets for improving their confidence, time management or punctuality, and learners are often unaware of the progress that they are making in these areas.
- Vocational teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the development of English and mathematics. Teachers correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar when they are marking written work. However, when learners are working independently in lessons, teachers do not routinely correct fundamental errors, particularly in spelling and numeracy. As a result, learners do not understand fully how important it is to master these skills.
- Learners receive very good advice at the start of their courses that encourages them to re-engage with education. Teachers promote very effectively the value of gaining qualifications and the wider benefits of learning, and this motivates many learners to remain on their courses. Teachers raise learners' aspirations so that many progress into further education or training that the learners would previously never have considered.
- Teachers promote equality of opportunity well and learners have a good understanding of both the diverse nature of their peers' individual backgrounds and the need to respect each other. Teachers pay good attention to the dangers of cyber bullying and learners develop an understanding of the potential dangers of social media. Teachers create a calm, supportive and inclusive learning environment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, managers have successfully increased both the number of learners that achieve their qualifications and also the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the classroom, much of which is now good. There is a very strong focus upon increasing learner numbers and managers are implementing appropriate marketing strategies aimed at attracting more learners. They have acted upon some of the recommendations made at the time of the last inspection. For example, the learning environment is greatly improved with the move to new premises, effective partnerships with external organisations are developing and appropriate strategies for identifying learners' English and mathematics needs are in place.
- The pace of change, however, is slow. Quality assurance processes remain under developed, diagnostic assessments are not being used as effectively as they might be to plan for the individual needs of learners, and reliable data are not being used systematically enough within the organisation as a whole to inform policy and planning.
- Managers have a realistic picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The judgments made by inspectors were in close agreement with those made by managers in their own observations of teachers. The performance management of teachers has been robust enough to remove weak practice. Teachers have a general understanding of what they need to do to improve further, but lesson observation feedback is overly descriptive and not focused sufficiently upon precise actions needed to develop current practice. Managers do not routinely have appraisal meetings with staff to assess overall performance and training needs, although some good quality training is identified for teachers on an informal basis.
- Managers have not embedded quality assurance processes sufficiently into the day-to-day activity of the organisation, although they have now taken appropriate steps to rectify this by appointing a new quality manager. Inspectors were able to see some early signs of impact in the improved tracking of learners' progress and the development of good schemes of work and lesson plans

for meeting the requirements of the study programmes. However, the pace of change is not yet rapid enough.

- Leaders do not have a good enough understanding of the purpose of self-assessment and therefore they are not using it effectively to improve the quality of learning. Some statements within the self-assessment report are simply narrative rather than being sufficiently evaluative or focused upon the impact on learning. Leaders do not use robust evidence to back up some of their judgements. The improvement plan that managers develop following self-assessment has some appropriate actions, but many of them are not specific enough to ensure rapid improvement. Managers do not routinely discuss or share the key targets and actions with all staff to ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals. Progress towards meeting targets is not reviewed frequently enough. There is insufficient focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the self-assessment process.
- Managers ensure that N.T.S. continues to play its part in successfully re-engaging young people not currently in education, employment or training. They have developed very productive partnerships with external organisations that have responsibility for the welfare of young people. Learners are referred to N.T.S. via, for example, the local authority, the careers advice service or a specialist housing unit for young people. Learners referred in this way benefit from the stability that attending N.T.S. provides, and managers work collaboratively with these organisations to ensure that learners are tracked effectively and that intervention is swift to resolve issues relating to poor behaviour and attendance.
- Managers have started to respond to the requirements of the study programme, but progress in some areas is slow. They have been successful in giving learners access to good vocational programmes and in developing learners' life skills. Some learners have access to appropriate work experience, but links that managers are trying to make with local businesses have not yet resulted in this entitlement being available to all learners. Learners are not receiving the training that they need to improve their English and mathematics.
- Managers are adept at ensuring an inclusive environment for their learners. All learners work well together and demonstrate a mutual respect for both their peers and their teachers. All managers and teachers are quick to deal effectively with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying or the use of unacceptable language. Mechanisms for reporting and recording these incidents are good. Managers work very well with parents, guardians and organisations, such as the local authority or specialist housing unit, to resolve problems. Displays around the organisation reinforce to learners the importance of acceptable levels of conduct.
- Managers provide a safe and tranquil learning environment for their learners. The organisation meets the statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners and appropriate criminal record checks are carried out. However, leaders do not have in place a suitable risk assessment to cover the period between the appointment of new teachers and the appropriate clearance being received.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

N.T.S. Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Foundation English and Mathematics	3

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	14+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 117								
	Part-time: 9								
Principal/CEO	Mr Ben O'Connor								
Date of previous inspection	February 2011								
Website address	www.nts-group.com								
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	117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
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+			
	-	-	-	-	-	-			
Number of learners aged 14-16	9								
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	9								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A								

Contextual information

N.T.S. Limited is a small independent provider of learning in Hounslow in West London, offering foundation-level courses to young people who otherwise would not be in education or training. The number of young people in Hounslow achieving at least five A* to C grades in GCSE, including English and mathematics, is very slightly below the London average. The unemployment rate in Hounslow amongst young people is somewhat higher than in London more generally. Fewer people in Hounslow work in professional occupations, whereas the number employed in the service and caring industries is higher than in the rest of London. The overall picture within Hounslow masks some wards where levels of deprivation are significantly higher than in the rest of the borough.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Stewart Jackson HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the Teaching Manager 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.

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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