

Matrix Training and Development Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		14 – 16 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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:

- learners on administration programmes make good progress and develop and demonstrate good work skills
- learners gaining sustained employment or promotion at work bring considerable benefits to their employers
- very timely support raises the standard of learners' English and mathematics well
- well-supported learners gain good independent study skills and very thorough assessments by staff ensure they are assessed particularly well
- good working relationships with employers secure jobs and meet local needs
- very effective use of management information improves provision for learners and helps monitor staff performance closely
- managers and staff are good at looking after learners' safety.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- a small minority of manufacturing learners make slow progress
- business and strategic plans do not contain sufficient detail and measures to record progress
- managers do not share the quality improvement plan (QIP) widely enough with staff or use it as a working document
- assessors do not plan learners' progress reviews well to ensure confidentiality and they do not record equality and diversity and safeguarding aspects well.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the recently introduced programme for functional skills support in manufacturing learning programmes is effective by monitoring them more closely.
- Make sure support starts early in individual learner's programmes by providing more frequent assessor visits when learners' progress is slow.
- Confirm with new employers that they are fully aware of requirements of the learning programme to ensure learners can achieve the necessary units.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment further to outstanding by using existing good practice on frequency of assessor observations to ensure observations of learners' progress reviews and coaching sessions take place regularly and they confirm staff are performing at a consistently high level.
- Use recording technology as part of the assessment process to capture detail of learners' skills more efficiently during observation and discussion.
- Introduce fully all aspects of successful piloted electronic portfolios in order to improve learners' progress.
- Improve the use of the QIP by ensuring staff become more accountable for aspects of the plan relevant to them and devolve accountability and responsibility for key QIP performance indicators to individuals or groups of staff so that they can regularly review them at team meetings.
- Make sure progress reviews have opportunities for confidentiality so learners can discuss their own experiences, particularly concerning safeguarding and equality and diversity. Ensure assessors fully check learners' understanding of these areas and they record this clearly. Arrange formal update training for all staff on equality and diversity related issues.
- Record formally team and management meetings to identify clearly the actions individuals or groups need to take to resolve issues and improve provision. Ensure business planning and strategic planning documents include performance indicators in order to measure progress against planning targets.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- All 22 learners are 16-18 apprentices with the two main subject areas being administration and manufacturing. Inspectors selected administration as the provider's key subject area with and they sample aspects of manufacturing.
- The large majority of learners are set to achieve their qualifications for the apprenticeship framework within the planned time for their learning programme. Learners work through their learning programmes with enthusiasm and develop good vocational skills that help them carry out their jobs well and they are highly valued by employers. Due to their well-developed job skills, most learners are set to continue in their employment following the completion of their qualification with some going on to higher qualifications and progression within their job role. Matrix staff support learners well as they take their next steps in their careers.
- Matrix is a new contract holder and so no published data are available on the success of learners with their qualifications. Administration and customer service learners are making very good

progress with their training. However, engineering and manufacturing learners, who have lower qualifications on entry, do not make as good progress towards their planned end date.

- All administration learners pass English, mathematics and information communication technology functional skills tests at their first attempt or are exempt. A minority of engineering and manufacturing learners take longer to pass these tests, but they have the same planned duration so have to work harder to achieve their qualifications in time. The recent introduction of a specialist functional skills tutor has improved the performance of learners in these areas. Employers value the good communication, numerical and technology skills that the learners gain which are essential to their job role.
- The performance of different groups of learners shows no discernible difference with all groups making similar rates of progress.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good as reflected in the outcomes for learners. This particularly reflects the large majority of administration and customer service learners who make very good progress. Engineering and manufacturing learners progress less well.
- Employers' staff develop learners' practical skills at work to a high standard. One learner improved their information technology skills by using their employer's computer system to identify and supply customers with automotive parts. Learners develop good communication skills and gain confidence during training. Employers place a particularly high worth on learners' telephone skills.
- Learners develop good independent study skills by researching evidence to meet realistic short-term targets agreed with their assessors at monthly meetings. Learners receive constant support from their assessors whom they contact between meetings to resolve queries.
- Very-supportive employers suggest and provide useful learning opportunities at work. Matrix staff secure a range of supportive work places. For example, an employer is sponsoring one of their administration apprentices to gain an accountancy qualification at the local college. Another learner's initial assessment showed a need for development in spreadsheets so their employer provided them with electronic links to access remote learning resources.
- Learners understand their progress accurately. Matrix staff effectively monitors each learner's actual progress against their expected progress towards each component of their apprenticeship. Assessors review progress well with their learners, using this information effectively at each meeting. They give constructive feedback and plan appropriate, clear remedial action for learners who fall behind their expected rate of progress. Strong partnerships between assessors and employers enable learners to find information, and to practice and improve their skills and knowledge daily.
- Matrix managers provide inspiring training and development opportunities for staff which improves the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment of learners who benefit from their assessors' range of vocational experience during coaching sessions. Assessors are well qualified to teach and assess. To acquire good practice, assessors attended an external training master class which introduced a range of electronic learning resources and games to meet learners' different learning preferences and engage interest.
- Assessment practice is good. Assessors are extremely thorough using probing questions to check learners' understanding accurately. Learners have a good rapport with their assessors and confidently ask them for guidance. Administration learners respond well to explain and describe questions in the qualification standards by giving detailed answers. Assessors use incisive questions to prompt learners' to expand their answers during discussions and effectively stretch

and challenge learners. However, assessors make insufficient use of technology during assessment to capture detail efficiently. Their handwritten or typed observation and discussion records are too lengthy. Witness testimony lacks specific examples which assessors could request during a discussion between the witness and assessor.

- Learners receive specialist support for English and mathematics early in their learning programmes when initial assessment identifies a need. Initial assessment is particularly effective and correctly identifies learners' specific training or support requirements and provides appropriate learning resources to develop weak areas. Assessors routinely identify incorrect spelling and grammar. Learners appreciate the importance of effective communication and number skills when working in an office environment. They have a good understanding of their progress in these subjects and what to improve.
- The majority of learners receive valuable advice and guidance. Learners find employment locally that meets their career aims. For example, a learner with an interest in art is working in a greetings card organisation as a step towards her career aspiration to organise events. A very small minority of learners receive ineffective advice and guidance in gaining appropriate work places which results in too few credits to meet the qualification specification. Matrix staff take prompt action in such cases to ensure that all learners complete a programme successfully to improve their career prospects.
- At induction, assessors ensure learners understand well equality, diversity and discrimination and how it relates to the qualifications they are taking. However, the direct questions during review are less effective. Assessors plan insufficient confidential opportunities for learners to discuss their experiences of discrimination, harassment, inequality of opportunity and safeguarding. Records of learners' responses to these questions are inadequate and consist of ticks or references to the NVQ. Learners feel safe and complete employee rights and responsibilities workbooks in addition to their apprenticeships.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Matrix directors are very involved and particularly aware of meeting the needs of local and regional businesses, local networking groups, councils and agencies, including local enterprise partnerships and chambers of commerce to provide the training provision they need. Employers value highly the flexibility and support of the services that Matrix directors and staff provide them. Matrix staff work very closely with schools to promote the benefits of apprenticeships as a good alternative to full-time education.
- Leaders and managers monitor the performance of Matrix closely and make good use of management information systems to produce clear reports on learners, contracts and financial performance. Senior managers regularly check reports on performance and these are key agenda items at management and team meetings. Managers monitor the performance of staff closely to ensure they perform to the highest level. A range of incentives at all levels encourages staff to perform well.
- Reviews of assessors are frequent and particularly challenging and observations of both learners' progress reviews and teaching and learning sessions are part of the quality system. All performance reviews link to staff appraisal and have clear objectives to improve the performance of staff. Matrix leaders and managers support and provide a wide range of staff development. An expectation is in place that managers shall observe all teachers and assessors at work, but they have not observed several staff carrying out progress reviews or teaching in the current year.
- Communications are strong. Staff and directors meet regularly on a formal and informal basis to improve the business and the provision for learners. Staff value highly the regular formal team,

management and standardisation meetings which allow them to influence and put forward ideas and share good practice.

- Directors have a clear strategic vision for Matrix, which staff thoroughly support and work with them to achieve. However, Matrix does not have formal overarching strategic or business planning documents which record key milestones and provide a measurement tool against progress. Recordings of meetings are not always formalised and the identification of action points from the meetings is not always clear.
- Self-assessment is a very inclusive process in which staff particularly appreciate their opportunity to contribute and improve the provision for learners. The current self-assessment report is accurate. Quality improvement planning is clear, relevant, well monitored and recognises most of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. However, managers do not widely share the quality improvement plan with all staff.
- Managers and staff gather feedback regularly and they analyse it well to make improvements to learning programmes. Both employers and learners influence how managers and staff improve provision. For example, their feedback helped bring forward the earlier introduction of functional skills and the recruitment of a functional skills specialist.
- Managers have implemented highly effective systems for internal verification. Internal verifiers are particularly thorough in critically evaluating assessors' performance, their reviewing skills and recording constructive criticism. The rigour of the internal verification ensures learners benefit from good assessment throughout their learning programme. Quality assurance of learners work is particularly thorough.
- Recruitment and induction of learners and staff particularly focuses on the promotion and understanding of equality and diversity. Representation of minority ethnic groups is well above than that locally and for males and females in non-traditional areas. The removal of barriers to learning is good. Managers use data well to identify areas of under-representation and the performance of different groups of learners. However, staff do not check or record learners' knowledge of equality and diversity at progress reviews. Staff have high levels of awareness about equality and diversity, but they have not received recent formal training on equality and diversity and they lack the confidence to discuss the latest developments of these areas with learners.
- Safeguarding is good. Managers and staff cover this are well at the induction of new staff and learners. Matrix has comprehensive documentation to support safeguarding and health and safety. Appropriate checks are in place on relevant staff through the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS). Regular formal training on safeguarding takes place through the local provider network and links are in place with the relevant local authorities. Managers and staff manage and monitor health and safety very well. Staff are particularly well trained and aware of health and safety. Matrix managers and staff regularly check and carefully monitor employers approach to health and safety. Learners are well aware of health and safety and their responsibilities. Good recording systems are in place to support both safeguarding and health and safety.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Matrix Training and Development Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2						2		
Outcomes for learners	2						2		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2						2		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2						2		

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

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16-18								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	45								
Director	Mr Phil Hutchinson								
Date of previous inspection	January 2008								
Website address	www.matrixtraining.org.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+	
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	22	0	0	0	0	0			
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A								
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	N/A								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	N/A								
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"> N/A. 								

Contextual information

The company started in July 2000. It has offices at Hortonwood, Telford. Matrix has provided government funded training programmes over a number of years. It has worked with a range of consortia, had direct contracts of its own and been a sub-contractor to various colleges. Matrix currently provide government funded programmes through a subcontract with Worcester College, a direct contract with the SFA and an ESF project led by Calderdale College. They provide training programmes which include business administration and law, retail and customer service and engineering and manufacturing. Provision is mainly in the West Midlands. Programmes that Matrix currently offer include apprenticeships in engineering, warehousing and storage, business improvement techniques, business administration and customer service. Three directors oversee the day-to-day running and are responsible for business development. As well as funded training, Matrix also offers employers privately funded training and consultancy.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Tim Hanson AI
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Two additional inspectors, assisted by the Matrix's Operations Director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, monitoring visit reports and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' progress over the last year 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 relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area 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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