

Economic Solutions Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		24-28 November 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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 apprentices do not complete their qualifications and for the majority that do complete their qualifications, progress is too slow
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies significantly and too much requires improvement
- written feedback to learners does not always provide them with the information they need to improve their work
- observations of teaching, learning and assessment do not accurately evaluate learning, and tutors' development plans do not support them to improve their practice sufficiently
- managers have not fully developed current strategies to ensure all learners improve their skills and qualifications in English and mathematics
- the recording of business reviews of subcontractors' performance does not enable senior leaders to take actions to improve performance quickly enough.

This provider has the following strengths:

- effective partnerships with employers ensure that learners are prepared well for careers in industries that meet local and regional needs
- the range and levels of programmes provide learners with good employment opportunities
- the quality of information, advice and guidance provided for learners is good, and as a result, a large majority of learners on study programmes, apprenticeships and traineeships progress to further education, training or work
- study programme learners benefit from very good support and highly individualised programmes
- managers use data well to manage staff and set targets for improvement
- safeguarding is good
- learners and apprentices develop positive attitudes to work and training; their attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve retention on apprenticeship programmes through rigorous and informative initial assessments that inform individual targets for learning and achievement.
- Improve the frequency and regularity of assessments alongside the tracking and monitoring of the progress that learners make so that apprentices complete their programmes on time.
- Ensure that learners receive detailed written feedback that provides them with what they need to do to improve their work and enhance their occupational skills.
- Develop the process for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment so that it identifies more clearly the impact that teaching and assessment activities have on the progress that learners make. Ensure that the resulting development plans enable tutors and assessors to develop a range of effective strategies which improve learning.
- Improve the rate at which learners develop their skills in English and mathematics by using data from initial assessments to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are at the right level and challenging enough for each learner.
- Apply the effective models of business performance review across all programme areas, including the monitoring and evaluation of subcontractors' performance.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes for learners require improvement to continue the rising trend seen over the last three years. Success rates for the significant minority of learners and apprentices are at or below those of similar groups nationally. Although success rates have improved in many subject areas at advanced level, too many apprentices, especially at intermediate level, in 2013/14 did not complete their qualifications on time. Apprenticeships make up over three-quarters of provision mainly in health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, building and construction, direct learning support and accounting, finance and administration. Economic Solutions provides study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 at entry level and levels 1 and 2, which include both classroom learning and work placements. ▪ Apprentices work in a wide variety of high quality workplace settings and benefit from supportive and committed employers. Apprentices make a valuable contribution in their workplaces, behave appropriately, are respectful to each other and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They develop positive attitudes to work, grow in confidence and as a result, most now develop good personal and vocational skills. Current apprentices make good progress throughout their courses because of the improved quality in the advice and guidance given at the start of their apprenticeships, and because managers interrogate data more effectively and set clear targets. However, there remains a legacy of apprentices whose progress has been too slow and stay on programme long after their agreed end date. ▪ For young people, particularly those from challenging backgrounds, a focus on work experience through the study programme, has been successful in helping them to begin traineeships, apprenticeships or get a job. These young people gain confidence and valuable work skills very quickly, and make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. This means, however, that they often move into employment or further training before they have completed their qualifications. ▪ Through the care, concern and challenges from staff, adult learners seeking employment grow in confidence, take more risks in their learning, turn up on time and take those important first steps towards getting a job. 	

- Learners and apprentices benefit from the experience of their well-qualified tutors and assessors. In those subject areas where success rates have improved, teaching and support staff prepare learners well for work through well-planned and enjoyable activities and assessments that develop good problem-solving and communication skills and high levels of creativity.
- Retention is improving, but in classroom-based learning and apprenticeships in business administration and in education and training it has been low, primarily because learners were insufficiently aware of the job roles in the sector or of the demands of the programme. Initial assessments and the advice given to these learners were not fit for purpose. Through restructured recruitment and advice activity, learners recruited to programmes this year remain in their studies and show commitment to their learning. Absences from vocational training are infrequent and most learners turn up on time, aided in skills centres by free access to transport.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment do not lead consistently to good outcomes for learners. Tutors are well qualified and use their good levels of relevant vocational experience effectively to encourage and motivate learners, so that almost all learners demonstrate good behaviour and have positive attitudes to learning. However, too many apprentices do not make good enough progress on their courses.
- Managers and staff work particularly effectively with local and regional employers to prepare learners well for starting work in their vocational area. The range of courses available matches employers' needs very well. Learners develop good employability skills and prepare well for the world of work.
- The quality of teaching varies too widely across the whole provision. The provider has not developed effective strategies to help managers and tutors deliver consistently good courses. Consequently, managers and staff do not plan or monitor improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively to ensure learners become more successful. However, where strategies are in place, such as for the delivery of study programmes, learners make good progress. Learners and apprentices on motor vehicle and care courses achieve well and develop good levels of vocational skills that ensure they are more effective in their jobs.
- The quality and effectiveness of feedback to learners requires improvement. Tutors give written feedback that is not detailed enough to help the vast majority of learners to understand how they can improve their work. For example, learners on hairdressing courses are unclear of the advantages of using a wider range of resources, such as specialist websites and journals, when preparing written assignments. However, almost all tutors provide effective verbal feedback that encourages and motivates learners well.
- The arrangements to ensure all learners make good progress in developing their abilities in English and mathematics require further improvement. Too many tutors fail to ensure learners increase their knowledge and skills in English and mathematics. Many tutors do not plan sessions effectively enough to ensure learners make sufficient progress. A few tutors do not have the skills to support learners' development accurately and confidently in these subjects beyond the minimum levels specified for the award. Tutors often leave spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors uncorrected. Managers recognise that they need to do more to help all staff develop their skills effectively.
- Tutors do not use the results of initial assessment sufficiently well to plan learning. Most tutors accurately identify learners' vocational skills and knowledge because they assess them thoroughly at the beginning of each course. This provides a good understanding of the needs and interests of each learner. However, too often tutors do not use the results of these assessments well enough to identify what they need to do to ensure each learner is successful. Tutors provide effective additional support for learners who require it.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance provided for learners is good. This ensures that learners study at the right level, understand the expectations of the vocational area and know

about future training and careers options. This works particularly well for learners on study programmes who know how the different aspects of study programmes fit together to provide varied and interesting opportunities for progression, such as apprenticeships or further education.

- The vast majority of tutors make adequate use of consistently high quality teaching and learning resources. This ensures most learners are clearly motivated to learn and make progress toward their learning goals. However, most tutors do not do enough to check the learning that is taking place. Tutors do not always target their questions to individuals and so overlook quieter learners. Consequently, tutors do not know how well all learners are doing in their classes. Only a few tutors make good use of information and learning technology (ILT) to support learning, and so it is not always used effectively to encourage learners to study independently or develop better study skills.
- Most tutors ensure that learners recognise the importance of treating all people fairly and respecting each other’s differences. The majority of learners on most courses understand how employers and workers use employment laws and national guidance in their workplaces to protect all individuals and promote their individual rights. However, only a few tutors help learners to understand how current themes and topical issues relate to them as individuals.

<p>Health and social care</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Good teaching, learning and assessment reflect the good outcomes for learners. Through improved performance management and more consistent assessment practice, success rates have improved significantly since the last inspection, and are now above national rates. Learners make good progress into employment or further education or training. This is especially good for those learners entering employment from study programmes.
- Tutors motivate and prepare learners well to secure employment in the care sector. Learners already in employment improve their value to the employer significantly and secure quickly promotion to senior carer roles.
- Tutors have good vocational experience and are well qualified. In well-planned sessions, they use this expertise effectively to support all learners, particularly those learners on study programmes, sharing their work experiences to link theory to practice. All learners enjoy their lessons and gain new skills and knowledge which they take back to their workplace.
- Lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge or promote independent learning and thinking skills effectively. For many learners, activities are often insufficiently differentiated because lesson planning does not always take into consideration learners’ starting points. Sector managers have recognised this and have implemented plans to raise further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment within the department. At advanced level, tutors rely too much on learners’ completion of workbooks to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. This leads to these learners making insufficient links of theory to practice.
- Learners develop good practical and employability skills in their care settings. Employers recognise and value the skills and confidence learners gain. Thus, almost all learners on study programmes begin apprenticeships and employment on completion of their programme. Many intermediate apprentices progress to advanced programmes and gain promotion.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive frequent and flexible support in the workplace. During assessments and review sessions, assessors challenge learners effectively and, as a result, most learners develop good knowledge and understanding of topics relating to health and social care alongside the development of their practical skills. For example, learners access

additional training to improve their knowledge and practical skills in end of life care and infection control. Employers value the additional training and development opportunities that improve the quality of provision in their care homes and businesses.

- Sector managers and employers have developed bespoke qualifications and training packages from which learners benefit greatly, gaining expertise, for example, in working with adults with epilepsy. Learners and employers get further support through a recruitment and vacancy service that matches learners to employers. This level of employer engagement has a very positive impact on both learners’ progression and their success rates.
- Assessors and employers work well in partnership to provide good support to learners throughout their training. Learners value this and identify that this has a positive impact on retention. Learners receive good verbal feedback from assessors. However, written feedback is not detailed enough to ensure that learners always understand what they have done well and what they need to do next to improve their work. Learners use an e-portfolio to access a wide range of resources and tools to complete workbooks and assignments. This system clearly records progress and learners enjoy seeing how far they have developed since beginning their studies.
- Learners have good access to a wide range of additional learning support. Apprentices make good progress in English and mathematics, and use what they learn to good effect in their work. However, insufficient identification and correction of spelling and grammatical errors are found in learners’ work.
- Learners benefit from clear guidance on career pathways in the care field at all stages of their learning. This helps learners to explore their career options and routes in a diverse range of settings, make appropriate choices and take additional qualifications that will enhance their employment prospects.
- Promotion of equality and diversity is adequate during assessment and reviews. Too few assessors challenge learners’ understanding of topics relating to aspects of care. Tutors do not always explore and expand on issues raised during lessons effectively. This means that while a majority of learners demonstrate a thorough knowledge and application of equality and diversity, others only have a superficial level of understanding.

<p>Motor vehicle</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Good</p>
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- Learners make good progress in developing their theoretical knowledge and applying this to working in the motor vehicle industry. Apprentices gain confidence in dealing with customers and improve their problem-solving skills. In previous years, too many learners left their apprenticeship before completing all aspects of the framework. However, retention is high for current learners, attendance at taught sessions is good and learners recognise the benefits of completing their course. Most learners on study programmes progress to an apprenticeship or employment.
- Learners make good progress; very effective targets are challenging and reviewed frequently. Tutors and assessors give detailed and well-documented feedback in taught sessions and in workplace reviews. Learners and employers value the time constrained targets and feedback about what learners need to know to proceed and progress. Effective use is made of computer recorded targets and progress so that all are aware of the current progress made and the next steps to take.
- Assessors and employers support apprentices well, and learners on study programmes receive high levels of group and individual support. Training staff work well to help and advise the

learners and effective measures are in place to support those with specific needs. Employers support the learners well while they are in the workplace by allowing time to complete portfolios and taking an active part in reviews. Apprentices gain valuable experience while working with experienced mentors.

- Apprentices and learners get detailed information prior to the start of the course and receive a thorough introduction to the programme supported by informative learning materials and meetings with employers. Apprentices and learners are therefore very clear about programme requirements and career opportunities. Learners are aware of the progression options from study programmes and traineeships. A large majority of learners progress to apprenticeships and employment in the motor vehicle industry.
- Through well-developed activities and teaching sessions, learners see and understand the relevance of mathematical principles within motor vehicle technology. For example, they learn to convert pressure ratings from bar to pounds per square inch for fuel injection systems in diesel engines, and calculate swept volumes in combustion cycles.
- Tutors and assessors promote the correct use of English in written work, taught sessions, and in the workplace. In better sessions, learners explain the meanings and the spelling of technical terms, such as compression and simultaneous, through good use of computers, smartphones and dictionaries.
- Staff are experienced and support learners’ needs well. They plan sessions well and indicate strategies for varying abilities within groups. Their checking for learning is thorough and they make good use of peer learning and recap to consolidate and reinforce key concepts. Staff are adept at developing learners’ skills in using industry-standard equipment well, and link theory to practice well through judicious use of ILT to access up-to-date data from manufacturers’ websites to improve engine performance. In a minority of theory sessions, noise levels in the workshops hamper learners’ progress.
- The training workshops contain good quality tooling which is safely stored and securely managed. Learners develop respect for expensive tools and equipment by booking them in and out for use. Older cars, including classic cars, give learners opportunities to develop automotive repair and maintenance skills. Learners maintain staff cars and benefit from working on engines with electronic management systems. This prepares learners well for a wide variety of workplaces.
- Employers, assessors and tutors prepare learners for working in a multicultural and multi-faith society. They ensure that learners feel safe in their workplace and in the training centre. Tutors lead daily discussions with learners about topical issues that influence learners’ lives. This includes discussion about gender in the workplace, internet grooming, extremism and money management. However, a small minority of assessors do not use this knowledge and experience enough when judging the impact of learners’ behaviours and attitudes on their work.

<p>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</p> <p>16-19 study programmes</p> <p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>19+ Learning programmes</p>	<p>Requires improvement</p>
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement so that all apprentices, especially those at intermediate level, can achieve well and in the planned time. Too many learners have made slow progress over time.
- Learners, in subcontracted provision, benefit from small group sizes and good individual coaching sessions from highly motivated and experienced tutors. Learners who have progressed from a study programme to an apprenticeship confidently demonstrate commercial hairdressing and employability skills that are well above the required level for the short time in training. They

show professionalism with good personal appearance and excellent communication skills with a diverse range of clients.

- Learners benefit from working in very busy high quality salons, some recognised for their highly creative work within the industry. Most learners benefit from regular workplace training sessions and additional enrichment activities. Standards are high in these salons and employers are supportive. However, learners do not have records of workplace training to reflect on. Learners based in Economic Solutions' Hair Academy do not always have enough clients and work mainly on hairdressing training heads, known as blocks. These learners are slow to develop professional standards.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good across all provision. Learners in subcontracted provision benefit from high expectations with a strong focus on developing work skills and creativity. For example, learners use ILT well to research hair products, to establish their pH-scale and upload their photographic images onto their e-portfolio. Advanced learners' portfolios and mood-boards reflect a high standard of creative work.
- In Economic Solutions' Training Academy, tutors expectations of what learners can achieve are not always high enough and tasks are insufficiently challenging. Not all level 3 learners' work meets the high creative standards required. In a minority of theory sessions, there is a lack of inspiring and engaging activities and learners spend too much time listening to their tutor and are not able to show what they have learned. A small minority of tutors do not plan learning activities well and ways of checking learning and progress are not always effective. This means some tutors do not always know what learners understand after teaching and learning activities. For example, questioning skills are not always used well to encourage learners to develop their thinking skills and verbalise understanding.
- School leavers enrol on study programmes in hairdressing that prepare them well for working in the industry. They develop hairdressing skills and extend their English and mathematical capability. Most progress on to apprenticeships where they develop their occupational and functional skills to higher levels. Apprentices who find themselves out of work benefit from joining study programmes where they hone and develop their wider skills before accepting another apprenticeship.
- Most learners benefit from regular assessments and a clear understanding of the progress they make. However, too many learners have unduly long periods between skills assessments which often prevent them from completing their assessed work in good time. The quality of written feedback on learners' work is inconsistent. Too often, tutors and assessors do not give constructive feedback to help learners understand what it is they need to do to improve their work, and how to do it.
- Learners produce assignments that are mostly detailed and well written. Tutors check the work for spelling and grammatical errors. Learners write up their own evaluation after working in practical sessions; the quality of these varies widely but tutors do not always challenge learners whose evaluations are weak. Tutors explain the use of mathematics well in cutting sessions when using angles, and in colouring sessions when using ratio in mixing colour products. Learners benefit from good support to develop skills where required.
- Workplace progress reviews require improvement. Tutors do not capture all aspects of the learners' progress and development while at work. Professional discussion does not show that the apprentice, employer and trainer jointly discuss previous targets, new targets for outstanding units, functional skills and personal learning and thinking skills. A minority of learners get confused about what they need to do to complete their assessed work because unit numbers are not always used to identify targets.
- Learners benefit from good advice and support when they apply for courses in hairdressing and barbering. They receive clear guidance with supporting documentation that informs them well about what to expect from an apprenticeship, and what employers expect of their trainees. Intermediate apprentices receive information early on in their training about the career options available to them.

- Learners demonstrate good application of personal skills relating to the wide range and cultural diversity of clients. However, assessors often fail to acknowledge these good experiences during progress reviews by asking mundane and repetitive questions, such as 'what does equality and diversity mean?' Tutors do not always include client diversity in lesson planning.
- Learners say they feel safe in their employment. They know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of reporting and recording arrangements in their workplaces and in the hairdressing academy.

Foundation English and mathematics

16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning require improvement as reflected in low success rates for study programme learners at foundation level in mathematics and English. Although the large majority of these learners who start on these programmes move on to employment, apprenticeships and further education or training, they are unsuccessful in achieving their English and mathematics qualifications.
- Tutors use initial advice and guidance and the initial assessment to develop appropriate study programmes for each learner. Key workers ensure that learners are fully involved in the process. Through regular one-to-one reviews and case conferences, staff work with learners effectively to develop their study programmes and individual learning plans. As a result, the study programmes meet learners' needs and aspirations well although success rates on English and mathematics qualifications are low.
- Support for learners on study programmes is good. Tutors, key workers and work-placement consultants share high expectations with learners and consequently improve their work readiness. Links between Economic Solutions and employers are good and this results in effective placement opportunities for all study programme learners that develop skills that relate to their learning and career targets. Students feel well supported by staff, and by the employers in their work placements.
- Managers have ensured that staff understand the structure of study programmes and the need to develop learners' skills in English and mathematics. As a result, learners benefit from high levels of support and individually tailored programmes. However, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics and English classes requires improvement.
- Learners behave and participate well in lessons and learning, though attendance in English and mathematics classes is lower than that in other classes. In too many English and mathematics lessons, tutors set progress targets that are not challenging enough for learners. In many cases, the targets are simply to continue working on a topic with no timeframe for completion of tasks. Tutors do not set clear expectations about what they expect learners to achieve. Because of this, tutors waste learning time and do not push more able learners to reach their potential.
- Tutors use initial assessment and prior attainment effectively to identify the most appropriate level of study in mathematics and English for learners. However, they do not always use this knowledge effectively to prepare teaching and learning sessions or the use of resources to meet the specific learning needs of entry-level learners in mixed-ability classes. These learners do not then make the progress they should. Where tutors prepare appropriate learning activities, they motivate learners to succeed and ensure that all learners build on their learning and improve their skills by, for example, writing informal text, improving the correct use of punctuation and capital letters, or putting text into paragraphs to aid meaning.
- The standard of work produced by level 1 learners is good, and learners in discrete entry-level classes are proud of the work they produce which is of a high standard for their level. However, in most mixed-ability classes, the standard of work for level 2 learners is not always of a

sufficiently high standard and entry-level learners do not always produce a sufficient amount of written work. Consequently, their progress is limited.

- Learners receive good quality written and verbal feedback about the progress they make in English and mathematics during their one-to-one reviews with key workers. However, in the majority of mathematics and English lessons, tutors do not use ongoing assessment and feedback effectively enough to help learners know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Learners, staff and employers work together respectfully and supportively. They recognise and value the contributions they make to society and to their learning and work placements. Learners feel safe, and know how to keep themselves safe when working online. They talk confidently about what they should do if they have any issues or concerns.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and improve outcomes for all learners. The organisation is undergoing significant change and leaders are managing this change effectively. Clear performance targets, based on the Greater Manchester strategy, are used well at all levels to develop the provision to meet regional needs, improve learners' outcomes and provide opportunities for learners to gain employment. The recently restructured advisory board enhances Economic Solutions' strategic approach to skills development across the region. The parent company board provides effective oversight of Economic Solutions' vision and performance against relevant targets.
- The senior management team has strengthened performance management at all levels within the organisation through individual staff supervision, good use of data, and monthly reviews of each programme area. In some instances where staff do not meet their targets, managers carry out a thorough analysis of the data and review the outcome with programme managers. However, some targets on the subsequent plan are too broad and not sufficiently broken down into small steps to enable managers to know when issues are resolved. Appraisal leads to detailed action plans with challenging targets. These revised arrangements are beginning to have an impact and more learners are achieving their qualifications, gaining good vocational skills and progressing into jobs. However, the impact on learners' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistent across the organisation. Regular meetings to manage the performance of subcontracted provision, do not record sufficient information to enable senior leaders to review systematically the actions taken to improve performance where success rates are low or where learning is out of time. More recently, a new director been appointed and has established clear plans to improve oversight of this area.
- The process of observations of teaching and learning requires improvement. Observations are insufficiently evaluative, and do not sufficiently identify the learning and progress taking place. The resulting staff development plans have too narrow a focus to enable managers to improve the quality of teaching and learning systematically.
- The strategy for the development of English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Managers have appointed appropriately qualified lead tutors for English and mathematics. Most teaching staff hold appropriate qualifications in English and mathematics, but a minority of staff lack the confidence they need to ensure that effective modelling in vocational learning supports and extends what learners gain from discrete teaching.
- Vocational teaching staff and assessors have appropriate occupational qualifications and experience. They benefit from an appropriate range of staff development opportunities which improve and enhance their professional competence. A clear strategy is in place to develop the skills of new staff who need a teaching or assessment qualification.
- Resources are good; however, their use in teaching and learning is not consistently effective. Managers provide minibuses to transport learners living in outlying districts which enable access to the training centres. Leaders and managers are aware of the need to develop the strategy for better use of ILT and have clear plans to implement this in the near future.

- Board members, leaders and managers use local management information very well to develop the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the local, regional and national priorities and fill gaps in provision. The range and levels of programmes meet the needs and interests of learners well in terms of vocational opportunities. However, courses where success rates are too low or progress is too slow do not meet learners' needs.
- Self-assessment is evaluative and arrangements are inclusive. The key areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report have led to improvements for learners. Managers and teams make effective use of feedback from learners and employers to inform self-assessment and improvement strategies.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is effective, but implementation is inconsistent. Staff receive regular equality and diversity training and development. Learners receive information at induction to raise their awareness of equality and diversity issues.
- Safeguarding of all learners is good and is supported well by good links with external agencies. The provider meets its statutory requirements. Policies and processes for safeguarding learners are in place and implemented effectively. Records of staff checks contain the necessary detail. Review of safeguarding incidents indicates numerous successful interventions by managers and staff to protect learners. Reporting procedures are highly effective. Training for staff and information for learners are good. Staff promote safe working practices effectively and learners report that they feel safe. Managers and staff take clear and quick action where bullying or incidents that affect other learners occur. However, the recording and analysis of bullying is not sufficiently systematic.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Economic Solutions Limited

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	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	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	3	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	3	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	3	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	3	3	3	3	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	2
Motor vehicle	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3
Foundation English and mathematics	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	11060							
Principal/CEO	Mrs Fiona Mellett							
Date of previous inspection	June 2012							
Website address	www.skills-solutions.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+
	299	176	232	200	7	32	N/A	1
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	887	1016	480	1176	9	96		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	42		1		43			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	534							
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"> ■ Active Synergy Development Services Limited ■ Blue Apple Training ■ Dutton Fisher and Associates Limited ■ GTG Services Limited ■ Maximel Training Providers Limited ■ Partnership Training Limited ■ The Link Training Academy Limited ■ Utility and Construction Training Limited ■ W People Limited ■ Terence Paul Enterprises Limited 							

Contextual information

Economic Solutions Limited is an independent learning provider based in Manchester which also provides employment and business programmes. The group employs around 1200 staff of whom around 170 are trainers, assessors, specialist learning support staff, and managers working directly to support the delivery of apprenticeships, traineeships, workplace learning, employability and study programmes. This inspection focused on apprenticeships, traineeships and the foundation learning study programmes. Subcontractors deliver some of the off-the-job training for the apprenticeship and adult skills programmes.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Christopher Jones HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the quality improvement advisor 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 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 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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