

Rocket Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		24-28 November 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-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:

- the progress made by too many apprentices towards completing their qualification is not good enough and too many do not achieve within the planned time
- trainers do not plan and deliver training and individual coaching sessions well enough to ensure that all apprentices, especially the more able, are stretched sufficiently beyond what is required by their qualifications
- Rocket Training Limited (RTL)'s systems which collect and use information about apprentices' pace of progress towards completing their qualifications do not effectively identify and address any slow progress being made by apprentices
- managers have not implemented a quality improvement system which identifies and rectifies effectively all weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment
- managers do not evaluate the impact of their actions on apprentices' learning and progress accurately and, as a result, the self-assessment is inaccurate.

This provider has the following strengths:

- a good rate of improvement is increasing the proportion of apprentices who complete their framework successfully
- most learners on employability training study programmes progress to employment or further training
- apprentices and learners develop good personal and vocational skills which are valued by employers
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for learners on employability training study programmes is good
- well-designed, good study programmes meet learners' needs well
- Rocket Training Limited has very effective relationships with local and regional partners. RTL is very successful in engaging and meeting the needs of learners who are at a high risk of social and economic exclusion.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of improvement in apprentices achieving their framework within the planned time by ensuring that:
 - trainers set clear, detailed targets which link on- and off-the-job training, monitor apprentices' progress well against these targets and record them well to ensure that apprentices make good or better progress towards completing their qualifications
 - employers are involved fully in the planning and monitoring of apprentices' training, learning and assessment to speed up the pace of progress.
- Improve the quality of training, coaching, learning and assessment for apprentices by ensuring that:
 - trainers plan the sessions well to ensure that apprentices can consolidate and extend their learning, so increasing their motivation about their off-the-job training
 - trainers use a good range of learning resources and provide clear information about how to access relevant information productively from sources such as the internet, so that apprentices develop good independent learning skills.
- Ensure that managers implement a quality improvement system which quickly identifies issues, and rectifies them so that the quality of all aspects of the provision is improved to good or better.
- Ensure that staff and managers take all information on apprentices' and learners' performance, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment into account, to arrive at an accurate self-assessment report.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Rocket Training Limited offers apprenticeship training in administration, customer services and health and social care. Administration is the largest area and now the majority of training for these apprentices is offered directly by RTL. The company also offers employability training study programmes for unemployed learners aged 16 to 19. Since the last inspection, RTL has reduced significantly the number of apprentices trained with subcontractors. Currently, 52 apprentices are training with the sole subcontractor in administration and health and social care.
- Apprentices' success rates have improved, but these are not yet good. Based on provisional data for 2013/14, the proportion of apprentices who completed successfully improved significantly to around national averages from the low rates of 2012/13. The proportion of apprentices who complete successfully within the planned time improved marginally, but it is still too small. Despite some improvement, most apprentices with the subcontractor are making slow progress towards completing their qualifications successfully. Overall, current apprentices' progress towards completing their qualifications is not good, although the apprentices who are trained directly by RTL make sufficient progress to complete their qualifications within the planned time.
- Learners on study programmes achieve their learning objectives well. Considering their low starting points, which reflect previous educational attainments, they make good progress through different elements of their study programmes, which include vocational courses, such as retailing and wholesaling, at foundation levels. Apprentices' and learners' standard of work is good.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of apprentices who achieve functional skills qualifications successfully has improved but is not yet good. Only a minority work towards an intermediate-level qualification in English and mathematics, one level higher than the framework requirements. Success rates of employability training learners on foundation-level qualifications

in English, considering the starting points, are good, but require improvement in mathematics. Following the recent recruitment of a specialist mathematics tutor, learners' development of mathematics skills has much improved.

- Apprentices enhance their skills to work effectively in different work settings. They improve their skills in teamwork, problem solving, market research and prioritising work. They are very motivated and become more competent and confident in using their gained vocational skills and knowledge, for example in applying the 'Sales of Goods Act' when dealing with customers' concerns. Many make good progress at work and take on more responsibilities, for example, in editing magazine articles.
- Learners on employability training study programmes improve significantly their personal and work skills, due to very supportive staff and workplace employers. They become more articulate, self-disciplined and motivated; a combination which helps them to overcome the barriers and the low self-esteem many experience at the start of their study programmes. Considering their starting points and their personal circumstance, such as an unsettled home life, their punctuality and attendance are good.
- All apprentices gain full-time employment, often with the same employer with whom they started their training. A significant number of learners on study programmes progress to further training, education or paid employment.
- The company has been successful in narrowing the achievement gap between different groups of apprentices and learners. Apprentices and learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They apply a good understanding of individuals' dignity and rights in their life and work, for example they discuss competently the barriers which gay people may face.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require further improvement, despite developments since the last inspection. Training, individual coaching and assessment practices are not good enough to increase the number of apprentices who complete within the planned time. Trainers focus too much on assessment of competencies rather than training. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment for learners on employability training study programmes is good.
- The quality of training, learning and assessment in the subcontractor is still not good enough, resulting in a significant number of apprentices who have made very slow progress. The company stopped contracting with this subcontractor seven months ago, although some apprentices remain with the subcontractor to finish their programmes with the support of RTL staff.
- Trainers and tutors do not use sufficiently the information from the assessment of learners' and apprentices' skills at the start of their programmes. As a result, they do not set learners and apprentices clear and detailed learning and personal development targets, or monitor their progress against these targets systematically and accurately. For apprentices, learning targets are not detailed and the link to the electronic portfolio system is too vague and not specific to individual learners. The targets do not make it clear enough what apprentices and learners need to do to complete tasks and make the progress required to complete their qualifications.
- Tutors on the study programmes use a good variety of learning tasks for the individual and group work that engage learners and sustain well their levels of concentration and motivation. They have high expectations of learners, for example about their conduct and behaviour during the sessions; as a result, standards of behaviour among learners are high.
- Tutors review the progress of learners on employability study programmes frequently, often through good questioning techniques. However, trainers do not review apprentices' progress in sufficient detail. Employers are not sufficiently involved in the reviews to enable apprentices to understand the impact of their training on their work roles.
- Staff match work placements and employers particularly well to the developmental needs and career aspirations of learners and apprentices. The good choice of supportive work placement

and employers provides learners and apprentices with good insights into the world of work and prepares them well for their careers. Learners who require more developmental needs are placed with very supportive employers that provide particularly sensitive training and support.

- Assessment practices are effective for most apprentices and learners, although weak in the subcontractor, which has resulted in slow progress of a significant number of apprentices. Trainers use a wide range of evidence to check the skill levels of apprentices. In most cases, tutors and trainers provide thorough and constructive oral feedback so that learners are clear about what they do well and what they need to do to improve. However, in a small minority of cases, trainers and tutors do not provide sufficiently detailed written feedback to which learners and apprentices can refer.
- Tutors use resources and their own knowledge well to make learning interesting for learners on study programmes. Effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) helps to develop learners' knowledge and understanding, for example by researching the internet for information on the efficiency of different car engines.
- Trainers do not provide enough variety of teaching resources in the workplace coaching sessions. Too often they direct apprentices to research the internet without enough guidance to ensure that their research skills are effective.
- Tutors on study programmes evaluate carefully the skill levels of learners in English and mathematics and plan well to improve these skills. They demonstrate the relevance of good English and mathematics to learners, for example by asking them to calculate and measure out triangles and circles on a garden design.
- Trainers do not always explore the importance of good English and mathematics skills with apprentices. The recent employment of a specialist tutor has improved support to develop apprentices' mathematical skills, for example they are now more confident in calculating percentages and discount rates.
- All learners receive good information and advice about their learning programmes and work-related issues. Tutors, trainers and workplace supervisors engage in regular discussions with them about how they can progress in their work roles.
- Apprentices and learners have a very clear understanding of fair treatment and respect, and valuing people's differences. Tutors and trainers integrate equality and diversity issues successfully into sessions; for example they discuss cultural traditions in customer service lessons or garden design for visually impaired customers.

Employability training

Good

16-19 study programmes

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, reflecting the good progress made by learners during their study programmes. Good teaching and effective support ensure that a large majority of learners with low starting points progress successfully to employment or further training.
- Personal development and learning targets are set for learners but they are not detailed enough or formally agreed, which means that tutors are unable to accurately monitor learners' progress against these critical targets. However, tutors have a detailed knowledge of what each learner needs to develop. Learners are aware of their medium- and long-term goals, but as the short-term targets are not always clear, they rely extensively on their tutors to guide them and hence do not develop independent learning skills well enough.
- Tutors provide encouraging clear and helpful verbal feedback that enhances learners' confidence and helps them to understand what they need to do to improve. However, the quality and details of written feedback is not always good enough to ensure that learners can remember and apply the improvements which they need to make.

- Tutors assess the starting points of learners well, including social and emotional barriers to learning, and use the information well to design the study programmes for individuals; for example they plan for learners who require a longer work experience. Learners can choose any combination of five vocational areas; motor vehicle repair, horticulture, retailing and wholesaling, administration, and customer services, to help them make better career choices. All learners undertake highly relevant work experience as part of their study programmes which enhances both their personal and employability skills.
- Strong support from employers for learners in the workplaces helps to develop their vocational skills in their chosen pathway, enhance their personal and communication skills and improve their confidence. The various elements of the study programmes for each learner are reviewed on a weekly basis and adjusted to ensure learners' benefit from the programmes is maximised.
- Staff support learners well, which contributes to learners' personal and learning development. Learners are aware of tutors' high expectations, behave well and are motivated and eager to learn. Learners who are at risk of leaving their study programmes early receive support from an additional tutor to help to address any personal problems that learners experience.
- Tutors use probing questions particularly well in sessions to enhance learning and check understanding. They extend learners' knowledge effectively through a good range of assessment methods, including good use of ILT. For example, in a motor vehicle engineering session related to braking distances, learners tested their reaction times using an online game. Tutors encourage learners to learn from mistakes, for example by learners checking each other's spelling, punctuation and grammar in their submitted work.
- Induction is very effective in preparing learners for their study programmes. They have a clear understanding of the structure of the programmes, including the improvements that they need to make to start work placements. They value highly the flexibility of the structure of study programmes to meet their individual needs.
- As part of the study programmes, tutors reinforce the importance of the development of English and mathematics, and plan well to develop these skills from the very low starting points of the learners. They check and correct spellings, punctuation and grammar systematically in learners' work and set mathematics tasks related to vocational areas well. For example, in working out the price of a car braking system for a customer by applying a percentage as the profit to the cost of items.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity well. Learners and tutors are very respectful and supportive of each other. Learners develop their understanding of different cultures and issues through regular activities related to current events, such as a discussion about the Ebola virus. Learners apply their understanding of diversity well within the workplace.
- Learners feel safe and understand what they need to do if they have a safety concern. Staff raise effectively learners' awareness of safety when using internet and communication equipment and reinforce the topic regularly.

Administration

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, reflecting the very low proportion of apprentices who complete within the planned timescale. Since the last inspection some aspects of teaching and learning have improved, but they are not yet good.
- Trainers do not plan workplace coaching and assessment well. Too often, individual coaching, assessment, reviews of apprentices' work and individual support are delivered in quick succession, which does not help apprentices to consolidate their learning. Trainers do not extend apprentices' knowledge beyond what is required by the framework, especially of the more able apprentices.

- Planning for individual learning is not good enough. Trainers do not assess the starting points of apprentices well, except for previous attainments in English and mathematics. They do not set them helpful targets which clearly link on- and off-the-job training. Although employers give feedback on apprentices’ progress in work, they rarely participate in apprentices’ reviews or setting targets for their learning.
- Trainers do not use a good enough range of well-structured learning resources to promote independent learning. Apprentices following signposting by trainers research the internet, with little effective training about reliable sources of information from trainers, to complete written assignments and prepare for assessments. Many apprentices, particularly the more able, are not inspired or challenged.
- Trainers encourage all apprentices to continue improving their English and mathematics skills by completing workbooks on functional skills. They identify apprentices’ functional skills development needs effectively and plan to meet them. Where learners need additional support to complete functional skills tests, trainers make good arrangements, including support from specialist tutors. Trainers and tutors mark written work carefully and encourage learners to identify for themselves any required corrections and improvements.
- Trainers’ assessment practices are effective. They use ILT well to gather evidence of apprentices’ skills, for example by digital recorders. Trainers are very responsive to learners’ needs for assessment; they meet apprentices frequently for assessment and provide them with prompt feedback on their assignments. However, assessment practices in the subcontractor require improvement because too many apprentices’ assessments have been delayed.
- Apprentices receive sufficient advice and guidance at induction; they have a good understanding of their programmes, the support available and how they will be assessed. Staff give good advice on progression to higher-level qualifications, but do not provide sufficient information about other career paths, such as work in the finance or legal sectors.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of fair treatment and acceptance and respect of people's different lifestyle choices. Although, trainers check and reinforce this regularly during reviews, they do not record this well. They encourage apprentices to apply their understanding of equality and diversity to their work and this is done well. For example, one apprentice carried out a survey of her company’s workforce to analyse the range of backgrounds represented by employees. Learners have a good knowledge of personal and internet safety.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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- Rocket Training Limited has improved a number of significant weaknesses identified at the last inspection, although some key areas still require improvement. Outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good. Senior staff have reviewed the provision and stopped offering provision in the weaker sector subject areas, such as apprenticeships in health and social care, engineering, and information and communication technology. Managers have improved the quality of the provision for foundation learners which is now good. Apprentices’ success rates have improved significantly to around national averages, although too many apprentices do not complete within the planned time.
- Managers and staff have not improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices quickly enough. The checks on the quality of individual learning plans and progress reviews have not resulted in improvements in the quality of these important aspects of learners’ experience. The process for observing teaching, learning and assessment does not focus on learning and learners’ progress sufficiently; as a result, the assessment of the quality of teaching and training sessions is not always accurate.
- Performance management and staff development have not been fully effective in improving the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The results of the observation of teaching and learning have not been accurate enough to help improve the quality of trainers’ teaching and coaching. Tutors and trainers have appropriate occupational qualifications and experience

and benefit from a wide range of development opportunities. However, trainers too often do not plan and deliver good quality training; for example they do not plan sufficiently their sessions to meet learners' individual needs.

- Arrangements to gather robust, reliable and timely information about learners' and apprentices' progress towards completing their qualifications successfully require improvement. Since the last inspection, managers have improved significantly the management information system and how it is used; for example, they monitor closely the successful completion of apprentices each week.
- Managers have not evaluated the quality of the provision accurately and consequently the self-assessment report is not fully accurate. The report has recognised the weaknesses in the provision but has not considered sufficiently the impact of weaknesses on all learners. For example, RTL has overestimated the quality of the apprentices' provision. Tutors and trainers are involved well with reviewing the quality of provision. Managers make sufficient use of learners' and employers' feedback to inform self-assessment and improvement strategies.
- Managers have adapted and developed the previous foundation learning programme successfully to meet well the needs of learners on employability training study programmes. The study programmes include a good range of vocational options, and particularly good work placements, from which all learners benefit. The provision to develop learners' English and mathematics skills is well considered. As a result, they can progress towards GCSE grade C or above in these subjects from their very low starting points.
- Rocket Training Limited's management and monitoring of the sole subcontractor has improved significantly. Since the last inspection, the company has reduced considerably the number of its subcontractors, which offered mostly low-quality provision. RTL stopped the formal subcontract in March 2014 but manages the subcontractor well to increase the chances of successful completion of those remaining apprentices in the subcontractor.
- Since the last inspection, managers have improved the quality of provision for English and mathematics, for example by recruiting specialist English and mathematics tutors. All tutors and trainers have received effective training and support, enabling them to integrate the development of learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills into their teaching, training and assessment practices. However, the impact of these measures is not yet good enough.
- Senior managers have a good knowledge of the training needs of employers and learners in Liverpool and the surrounding areas. As the result of good partnership working within local and regional forums, which includes representatives from Liverpool and Wirral local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, local enterprise partnerships and employers, RTL has increased the range of work placements and apprenticeship opportunities with employers. The chief executive and managers use the information well to plan the provision.
- Rocket Training Limited is very successful in engaging learners who have a high risk of social and economic exclusion, especially on employability study programmes. The company meets the needs of these learners well, and many achieve well and progress. However, RTL does not meet the needs of apprentices well enough; the training fails to ensure that all apprentices make sufficient progress and complete in a timely manner.
- Managers and staff promote equality and diversity well. RTL has a strong culture of inclusivity and respect which has contributed significantly to learners' attendance and punctuality, despite significant personal barriers to successful participation in learning. Staff promote fair treatment of individuals and respect for differences well.
- The company has prioritised well the inclusion of equality and diversity in all aspects of teaching and learning. For example, one member of staff is responsible for producing a wide range of good resources which tutors and trainers use to promote equality and diversity. The action plans to close performance gaps between different groups of learners and apprentices have been broadly effective.
- Rocket Training Limited's safeguarding of all learners is good; for learners on employability study programmes it is particularly strong. Staff monitor sensitively learners who are at high risk

of safeguarding incidents. Safeguarding training for staff, learners and apprentices is effective; they have a good knowledge of safeguarding and are confident in reporting safeguarding issues.

- All appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and RTL has close working relationship with the Wirral safeguarding board. Staff assess any risks in work placements or at employers' premises. They maintain a good record of health and safety and the safeguarding policies followed by different work placements and employers. RTL meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Provider name

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	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	2
Administration	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	336							
Principal/CEO	Mr Vahid Lavasani							
Date of previous inspection	June 13							
Website address	www.rockettraining.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+
	26	N/A	18	2	1	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+		
	29	37	10	39	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
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"> ▪ Decorus UK Limited 							

Contextual information

Rocket Training Limited, a long established provider since 1994, offers training and education mostly across Merseyside with two centres; one in Liverpool and one on the Wirral. In Merseyside, unemployment is higher than the national rate and a lower proportion of those of working age have an advanced-level qualification. The proportion of the population without qualifications or with qualifications below foundation level is higher than that found nationally.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Shahram Safavi HMI
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One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Operations and Quality 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 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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