

Mainstream Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		1–5 December 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:

- a very high proportion of apprentices and learners on employability skills training programmes achieve their qualifications by the planned end date
- all learners develop good occupational and employability skills and the large majority of apprentices who have completed their programmes gain employment
- teaching, learning and assessment are good, and in two areas outstanding
- very good support from employers and the provider ensures that the large majority of apprentices stay on their programmes and achieve their apprenticeship frameworks
- all learning programmes are very well managed and meet the needs of learners and employers extremely well.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- trainers and assessors give insufficient attention to setting challenging targets to develop further the English of a small number of learners who already have a good standard of English
- self-assessment and quality improvement plans lack clarity and leaders do not accurately identify areas for development, resulting in managers not being able to measure or evaluate precisely the impact of progress made.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all learners receive good support to improve further their English, particularly the more able learners and those who have achieved qualifications prior to starting their programmes.
- Increase the rigour of self-assessment to identify clearly the key strengths and further developments needed to improve the provision in each of the learning programmes.
- Ensure that the quality improvement plan links clearly to self-assessment and contains specific and measurable targets to allow managers to monitor fully the progress of improvement activities.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Mainstream Training Limited (MTL) provides short employability programmes for unemployed adults, and these make up the large majority of its government-funded provision. Apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced levels account for approximately one tenth of provision. Apprenticeships are offered in transport operations, business administration, and warehousing and distribution. The employability programmes provide accredited qualifications in driving goods vehicles, warehousing and distribution, and construction crafts.
- Success rates for learners on the employability programmes are outstanding. The vast majority remain on the programmes and achieve a range of units of vocational qualifications. Learners on apprenticeship programmes achieve very well. Success rates have improved significantly in the past two years and are above national rates. A large majority of learners are successful and make good progress, completing their programmes within planned timescales. The provider collects data systematically on learners' destinations, and most apprentices progress into full-time permanent employment. Approximately a quarter of the learners who complete employability programmes gain employment.
- There are no significant differences between the achievements of male and female learners, and there are too few learners from different minority ethnic groups to identify patterns in achievement.
- All learners develop good technical and employability skills through particularly effective individual and group activities, during training in the training centre and in the workplace. They show a clear and good understanding of the skills and experience they need to gain and sustain employment. Learners on apprenticeship programmes benefit greatly from the excellent quality of training and particularly effective support from assessors and employers, which is reflected in their high achievement rates.
- The majority of learners across all programmes benefit from good individualised support based on the outcomes of detailed initial assessment. Many increase their self-confidence and skills in English and mathematics and all learners on apprenticeship programmes achieve functional skills well as part of their qualifications. Many more learners progress to achieve a higher-level qualification than is required by the programme. However, learners who are more able do not always have the opportunity to improve their English skills and qualifications further.
- All learners follow training programmes that meet their needs and aspirations and prepare them well for employment and progression to higher levels of learning. They develop very good personal and social skills. Most learners progress well and achieve qualifications that are additional to their main learning aim. For example, several learners on intermediate apprenticeships in warehousing and distribution progress on to advanced apprenticeships in

driving goods vehicles. Learners enjoy their training, and employers speak highly of their apprentices and value the skills they develop through high quality training.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across the whole provision and has led to good outcomes for those who have already completed their learning programmes. Current learners are making good progress through their programmes, as a result of very good training, coaching and support from MTL staff and employers. Trainers and assessors on all programmes have high expectations of learners and model very high standards of behaviour, particularly in health and safety practices. This ensures that learners develop useful employability skills and understand what employers expect in the workplace.
- Trainers are well qualified and highly experienced. They deliver very high quality training in the training centre. Trainers use a very effective range of methods to ensure that learners are challenged and equipped with technical skills that greatly increase their readiness for employment in transportation and related occupations. Learners are enthusiastic and motivated by the excellent opportunities to use and train on modern and commercial-standard machines, such as a wide variety of forklift trucks and transport vehicles. Learners on the streetworks programme enjoy the challenge of finding underground cables and pipes using electronic detection equipment. Learners carry out group tasks, and quickly develop team-working skills, recognising that these skills are vitally important, particularly in the construction and transportation industries.
- Learners benefit from good coaching and assessment in their workplaces. Employers provide a good range of relevant job roles and, in consultation with assessors, are fully involved in arranging training and assessment opportunities. Learners on business administration apprenticeship programmes benefit greatly from opportunities to deal with customers, and are able to organise and book appointments after a short time on the programme. This ensures that learners develop self-confidence and social skills and quickly become a real asset to employers early in their apprenticeships.
- Trainers and assessors use information and learning technology well to support learning. For example, learners on vehicle driving courses benefit from digital video recording of feedback from assessors. In one instance, trainers used a video recording very effectively to reinforce the correct method of coupling and uncoupling service lines and hoses between tractor units and trailers. Assessors track learners' progress very well, but records of formal reviews and assessments, which are stored electronically, are not always easily accessible to learners or employers.
- Induction and initial assessment are used effectively to plan learning and ensure that training is matched well to learners' individual needs, interests, and aspirations. Trainers and assessors seize opportunities to reinforce frequently learners' English and mathematics skills. This ensures that learners have as much support as possible, particularly those on the short employability programmes, to achieve qualifications and be better placed to get jobs.
- The quality of the information, advice, and guidance for learners is good. Staff ensure that learners are recruited and placed on the right programmes to meet their longer-term aims and interests. Learners on employability programmes benefit greatly from a well resourced 'job club'. This helps and supports them to develop job-search skills and complete job applications. At least a quarter of learners get jobs after completing their programmes, mainly in warehousing and distribution and the construction industry.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity are good. Staff promote an inclusive ethos and make sure everyone is safe. At induction, staff ensure that apprentices and learners have a good understanding of the importance of valuing and respecting each other's views and are fully aware of current legislation. Staff treat learners fairly. Assessors check learners'

knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity frequently in the training centre and in the workplace. In a minority of instances, equality and diversity are reinforced insufficiently.

- Most learners have a good understanding of health and safety, and safeguarding and feel well supported by staff, both in the training centre and in the workplace. Safeguarding is discussed fully at induction and a learners' handbook reinforces matters relating to bullying and harassment. Learners understand the necessity for e-safety and assessors and employers in the workplace reinforce this.

Transportation operations and maintenance

Apprenticeships Employability

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Success rates for intermediate apprentices over the past three years have been consistently very high. Many learners continue successfully on to higher-level qualifications and move into supervisory and management positions within the logistics sector. Outcomes for learners on the employability programme are consistently outstanding. A high number of learners attend this programme and achieve the short Driving Goods Vehicles qualification at level 2. At the time of inspection, there were no learners on the driving goods vehicles employability programme and, consequently, inspectors were unable to make direct judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Training on apprenticeship programmes is excellent. Trainers and assessors are highly experienced and knowledgeable in transport sector skills, and prepare learners extremely well for assessment. Current learners are making very good progress through their training and towards achieving their qualifications. Learners develop their personal and employability skills very well and improve quickly their confidence and self-esteem. Many learners are moved periodically into different roles in the workplace, quickly see the wider range of employment opportunities and learn to appreciate the work of their colleagues. For example, one learner has completed his Certificate in Professional Competence (Domestic and International) and has now found permanent employment as a Traffic Office operator.
- Assessors provide high quality coaching in the workplace, using books, videos and specialised computer software to ensure learners understand what is required to become proficient at driving goods vehicles and pass their theory tests. Driving instruction is of a very high standard and most learners pass the practical assessment first time. Learner reviews are thorough and help learners to progress. One employer carefully monitors all training sessions and reviews and has obtained a copy of the qualification standards to understand better the requirements and provide support to his learners.
- Assessment of learners' skills in the workplace is exceptionally well planned. Assessors are highly regarded by employers, who value their expertise and professionalism. Assessors are well supported by employers, who are fully involved in the planning of training and the assessment of learners' work. This ensures that learners and employers are available and well prepared for assessment visits. Learners' written assignments are of a very high standard and are supported by good quality photographs, videos and electronic recordings.
- Induction is particularly thorough and learners are very clear about the qualification requirements and the need for significant personal commitment to complete the numerous assignments required by the qualifications. Initial assessment is very good and clearly identifies learners' English and mathematics levels and any additional learning support needs. Assessors plan and provide good additional support where needed. Functional skills are developed well and most learners complete them early in the programme. Many learners go on to complete a higher level of functional skills than that required by the framework. Learners exempt from functional

skills tests are given additional support, if needed, to develop further their English and mathematics.

- All learners are employed by large, well-established companies and fully understand the importance of promoting and reinforcing equality and diversity and having strict and well-managed health and safety and safeguarding arrangements. However, in a minority of reviews, assessors do not always focus on the wider aspects of equality and diversity and place too much emphasis on legislation.

Construction crafts

Good

Employability

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, as reflected in the very high proportion of learners who successfully complete their programmes. Learners attend punctually and are keen to improve their chances of getting jobs. During the short, intensive streetworks skills training programme, they achieve a good range of accredited vocational qualifications and certification that allows them to apply for work on construction sites. A high proportion of learners progress into employment within the construction industry following completion of their programme.
- Training is well matched to learners' and employers' needs. Learners gain qualifications in manual handling and the use of power tools at the start of the programme. They progress successfully and achieve relevant units of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in construction operations and civil engineering at level 2. These include: location and avoidance of underground apparatus; signage; lighting and guarding; and excavating and backfilling.
- Resources in the training centre are excellent and include the latest industry and commercial standard equipment. Training areas are spacious, safe and very well set out. Walkways are clearly marked and close attention is paid to the use of personal protective equipment. The outside training areas are used well to support learning. For example, learners working together construct and implement a traffic light control system at the entrance to the training centre. Goods vehicle driving instructors and their learners use the entrance frequently and, consequently, all learners gain a good understanding of correct installation and safe working.
- Trainers prepare learning sessions well. They ensure that learning outcomes relate directly to the requirements of the qualifications and the construction industry and provide learners with the best chance of getting jobs. Trainers use a wide variety of teaching methods, including practical demonstrations, videos and a range of individual and group practical activities. Practical sessions often involve more than one member of staff and learners benefit from good individual coaching. This increases their confidence and helps them to progress through the programme. However, occasionally, the practical sessions are unstructured and fail to engage all learners fully. Opportunities are missed to allow learners to comment on, and discuss, their own experiences.
- Induction and the initial assessment of learners' prior levels English and mathematics are thorough and provide a clear picture of learners' support needs. Learners' attitudes are also discussed to ensure that the learners can meet the stringent safety and personal standards required by the programme. Those considered to be unsuitable are returned to the referral agency. This assiduous attention to learners' attitudes is reflected in the high attendance and achievement rates for the programme.
- Trainers support effectively learners' development of mathematics skills, with good practical exercises about calculating quantities and volumes of consumables for road repairs, for example calculating the amount of bitumen required to patch a road repair. However, in some instances, learners' incorrect spelling of construction-related words, such as pneumatics and bituminous, goes unchallenged.

- Promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Learners are provided with clear information at induction. Posters and information are displayed prominently around the walls in the training centre. However, trainers often overlook opportunities to promote equality and diversity during learning sessions.

Warehousing and distribution

Apprenticeships Employability

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, leading to a very large proportion of learners completing their apprenticeship programmes in good time. Overall success rates have improved over the past three years and all learners achieved in 2013/14. Learners' achievements on employability programmes have been consistently outstanding for the past three years. All learners achieve the high standards of the qualifications and make exceptional progress in theory sessions and in practical training.
- Learners' training experience is excellent. Training takes place at the training centre in a large purpose-built warehouse environment. The equipment for forklift truck training is modern and of industry standard. Links between theory and practical training are extremely good and ensure that learners develop a comprehensive understanding of the industry and of the requirements of the qualifications. Staff plan training exceptionally well and provide excellent coaching towards assessment. This ensures that learners develop high-quality skills and enhance their career and job prospects. For example, learners use the fork-lift truck driving assessment to extend their skills by removing and replacing pallets at height and moving them to different locations, avoiding obstacles. All learners enjoy the challenges posed by assessors.
- Most learners on apprenticeship programmes benefit from achieving a counterbalance forklift truck licence as an additional qualification. These learners also gain skills in receiving and preparing customers' orders, and processing them through to dispatch. Learners on the employability programme achieve a full qualification in warehousing and distribution at level 2. They also gain additional units from accredited warehousing qualifications.
- Assessors plan very thoroughly for their visits to workplaces. Employers participate fully in arranging assessments and support learners very well between visits. Assessors use electronic technology extremely effectively to record and store evidence in support of assessments. Learners fully understand the assessment process, and detailed discussion between learners and assessors ensures that learners have clear and measurable targets for improvement. As a result, learners make very good progress throughout their training. Learners' reviews are very effective and ensure that their progress is monitored fully, helping them to achieve.
- Initial assessment is very good. Trainers and assessors ensure that learning plans are detailed and informative and show clearly learners' English and mathematics development needs. Learners on apprenticeship programmes benefit from excellent and frequent support from assessors in the workplace and this is reflected in the high achievements of functional skills qualifications. Many achieve a higher level than that required by the frameworks. Learners on the employability programme are supported well during training and assessment to help develop their English and mathematics, for example by taking part in stock taking and checking the accuracy of customers' orders.
- Learners receive excellent advice and guidance on employment opportunities and progression to higher-level learning programmes. Consequently, they are able to make clear plans for their future. A significant number of learners progress to higher-level courses and/or into related employment. For example, many apprentices progress on to an advanced apprenticeship in driving goods vehicles.

- Trainers ensure that equality and diversity are discussed well during induction and reinforced during training sessions. Learners display a mature understanding of wider diversity matters, for example the impact of competing for jobs in the local and regional community, particularly in driving and warehousing. Assessors use assessments and reviews effectively in the workplace to check learners' and employers' understanding of equality and diversity.

Business administration

Good

Apprenticeships

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices on business administration programmes is good, as reflected in the very high success rates for intermediate apprentices. Success rates for advanced apprentices improved from around national rate in 2012/13, to well above national rates in 2013/14. Most learners complete their apprenticeships in good time.
- Most learners are employed in county council offices, logistics companies and manufacturing businesses. Good links with these employers ensure that job roles and responsibilities match learners' needs and the requirements of the apprenticeship programmes, for example office duties, marketing, customer service, and management.
- Training is good and this is reflected in the good progress made by learners towards their qualifications. The large majority of training takes place in the workplace. Employers work well with MTL staff and are fully involved in structuring training to ensure that learners' employment and assessment needs are met fully. Experienced and knowledgeable assessors coach learners very effectively, explaining concepts clearly and encouraging independent study. However, in a minority of cases, targets on learning plans are insufficiently specific to challenge the more able learners and help them to progress quicker.
- Learners develop their personal learning, research and thinking skills well through a range of stimulating learning activities. For example, a few learners research equality and diversity policies and procedures within their companies and compare them with legislation. Learners prepare and give a presentation on their findings to their employers; employers appreciate these.
- Assessment practices are good. During assessments, learners demonstrate a good grasp of business concepts, such as marketing and promotion and managing business meetings. Assessors frequently make effective use of learners' work during visits to carry out unplanned assessments. Learners receive detailed feedback from employers and assessors and help plan targets towards achieving their qualifications. The standard of learners' work in their portfolios is good. The introduction of electronic methods of submitting work has improved the recording of evidence and the provision of accurate and useful feedback on progress towards achieving the frameworks.
- Initial assessment of learners' English and mathematics is good and identifies clearly their starting points. Assessors plan and provide effective support for learners to achieve their functional skills qualifications. However, a minority of learners who are exempt from functional skills receive insufficient challenge to extend their English further and gain higher-level qualifications.
- Good initial advice and guidance enable learners to make the right choice for their job roles and guide them on their possible career opportunities. Learners benefit from effective advice and guidance throughout and at the end of their programme to ensure they are ready for permanent employment. Most learners gain permanent full-time jobs with their companies. A few learners progress successfully from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships.
- Assessors promote equality and diversity well at induction and always include these in learners' progress reviews. Assessors use current news items well on assessment and review visits to discuss and promote equality and diversity in the wider community. Learners engage in activities

in the community with the support of employers. For example, two learners successfully organised a 'litter pick' in the local community. Members of the public and council staff took part. This provided learners with a greater appreciation of a diverse community and helped learners develop communication and team-working skills, as well as increasing their confidence and self-esteem.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Mainstream Training Limited (MTL) is widely recognised as a leading provider of driver training and related operations locally and in the national community. The managing director has an entrepreneurial approach to increasing the training provision and sets a clear direction of strategic growth with challenging targets for the organisation. These are focused on forging new links with transport companies and expanding existing high quality training. Staff, directors and managers are well informed about company targets and share an ambitious vision.
- Managers engage well with employers who are supportive and appreciative of the high standards of training. Most of the practical training takes place at the main company centre in Sittingbourne. Directors have invested significantly in training resources and the facilities and equipment are excellent. The range of programmes meets very well the needs of the transport, logistics and highways maintenance/streetworks sectors and meets the local, regional and national needs of employers. The managing director's close links with the lead bodies of the sectors have led to the identification of large skills shortages in driving goods vehicles and related occupations. Advanced plans exist to extend the training provided by MTL to large national transport and logistics companies.
- Operational management is highly effective. Staff are well managed and trainers and assessors have excellent industrial knowledge and skills which they use to good effect. This is reflected in the high achievement rates and learners' successful progression into employment. Staff work very effectively to ensure that all learners make good progress through their programmes. A few learners, following successful completion of their training, have been recruited by MTL as trainers and assessors.
- Staff and managers benefit from well-developed and clear performance management arrangements. Staff use the comprehensive appraisal and review documents with confidence to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Managers set challenging targets for staff, which are reviewed annually. A series of individual reviews throughout the year ensures that staff are focused on achieving their targets. Staff development is very good and well supported, and has a direct and measurable impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the provision for all learners. Staff benefit from a range of professional development opportunities, including gaining teaching and assessor qualifications and undertaking training to support the development of English and mathematics for apprentices and learners.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity in the training areas and the workplace are good. Staff and managers receive appropriate training and learners show a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The overall culture is one of tolerance and respect. The behaviour of learners in the training centre is excellent. Equality and diversity are promoted at induction and generally reinforced well by staff during training and on visits to the workplace. Large colourful posters celebrating and reinforcing equality and diversity are placed on walls around the training centre. A well-developed learners' handbook is detailed and contains much useful information about, for example, equality and diversity, safeguarding and grievance reporting.
- Self-assessment requires improvement. Managers have identified self-assessment and improvement planning as areas for development. The self-assessment report is descriptive, insufficiently analytical and does not identify clearly all key strengths or areas requiring improvement. Staff use data to measure performance, but the report does not distinguish

clearly enough between programmes. The quality improvement plan does not contain sufficient specific or measurable targets for improvement and, as a result, managers do not have a full understanding of progress made.

- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Because of the nature of the machines and vehicles used for training and in the workplace, managers, trainers and assessors place a high priority on health and safety. High levels of safety are paramount and requirements are rigorously enforced. Managers and staff take safeguarding seriously and ensure that all learners are safe and aware of arrangements to protect them from bullying and harassment. Directors and managers monitor and check staff appropriately and ensure that they receive good training in safeguarding. The single central register is up to date and contains all appropriate information. Learners feel safe.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Mainstream Training 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	2	-
Outcomes for learners	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Transportation operations and maintenance	1
Construction crafts	2
Warehousing and distribution	1
Administration	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1100							
Principal/CEO	Mr John Casey - Managing Director							
Date of previous inspection	December 2008							
Website address	www.recruitandtrain.com							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	74	-	5	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	17	11	5	2	-		-	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	79							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Contextual information

Mainstream Training Limited (MTL) was established in 1997 in Sittingbourne, Kent, as a commercial training provider, and is a family-owned business. When originally established, the company's primary role was to offer training programmes to meet skills shortages and training needs in the construction, logistics or transport industries. This continues to be a focus for the company. Mainstream Training has also delivered Train to Gain programmes, the provision of which was inspected in 2008. Since then, MTL has specialised in providing training for unemployed adults and apprentices, funded by the Skills Funding Agency. In September 2014, MTL started providing study programmes for students aged 16 to 18 under a contract with The Canterbury Academy.

Unemployment rates in the south-east have decreased significantly, and the current figure is considerably lower than the national average. There are currently around 70,000 job vacancies nationwide for goods vehicle driving and related occupations, as identified by the transportation and logistics sector. This figure is expected to double in the next few years unless more drivers are trained and employed.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Bob Cowdrey HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and six additional inspectors, assisted by the operations 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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