

Avanta Enterprise Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		2–6 February 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
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 pre-employment learners, on programmes for unemployed adults, successfully complete their qualifications
- almost all successful apprentices and a high proportion of pre-employment learners secure permanent employment
- apprentices and learners receive excellent care and support that enable them to gain their qualifications; many receive very good support to overcome significant barriers to learning
- pre-employment learners develop a good range of skills required for employment, such as problem solving, teamwork and mathematics; they grow rapidly in confidence as a result
- apprentices and learners receive good practical advice and guidance that help them make good progress and move successfully into employment
- leaders and managers review the performance of assessor-tutors very effectively and so raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment
- managers use their links with employers and other organisations very effectively to develop programmes that provide learners with clear and successful progression routes to future employment; relationships with national retailers, manufacturers and supply-chain firms result in a large number of pre-employment learners securing employment every month.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- the senior management team as a whole does not scrutinise sufficiently key aspects of the provision, such as the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and, as a result, does not bring about improvements quickly enough
- a few assessor-tutors do not pay enough attention to developing learners' English skills; a small minority of learners do not make sufficient progress in developing these skills
- assessor-tutors do not set sufficiently specific targets for their learners; this slows the rate of progress for a few learners
- too many apprentices take longer than planned to complete their programme.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the senior management team collectively exercises a more rigorous oversight of learners' experiences in order to bring about improvements more quickly.
- Make sure that all assessor-tutors help apprentices and learners improve their English skills throughout their programmes, by marking and assessing learners' use of spelling and grammar more thoroughly and frequently and providing learners and apprentices with strategies for improving their writing.
- Ensure that apprentices and learners receive clear, specific targets that reflect what they hope to achieve from their programme to help them to assess their own progress more accurately and learn to do things for themselves.
- Increase the proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programme within planned timescales through closer monitoring and timely intervention.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Around two thirds of Avanta Enterprise's (Avanta's) provision consists of pre-employment training for unemployed adults. Apprenticeship programmes make up the remaining third, with most apprentices following programmes in business management and administration, health and social care, and warehousing and distribution.
- A very large majority of learners undertaking pre-employment training programmes successfully complete their qualifications. A high proportion secures employment and, in the majority of cases, this employment is sustained.
- Almost all apprentices gain permanent employment upon successful completion of their framework. However, too few intermediate-level apprentices progress to advanced-level programmes.
- The proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their framework is similar to that of other providers nationally. Apprentices enjoy their learning, but a small minority do not work quickly enough to keep up with the demands of their programme. As a result, they do not complete on time.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and knowledge through effective on- and off-the-job training. A majority produce work to a higher standard than required by their programme.
- The vast majority of pre-employment learners enjoy their programmes and quickly learn skills that help prepare them for employment. These include problem solving, and the ability to work well as a member of a team.
- Pre-employment learners develop good attitudes to learning and show empathy and understanding towards those from different social or cultural backgrounds. They grow in confidence and this prepares them well for the challenge of securing work. However, programmes are not demanding enough for a few of the most able learners to help them to develop new skills rapidly.
- Apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills well. A high proportion of apprentices gain functional skills qualifications in these subjects at a level higher than required by their apprenticeship framework. In most cases, assessor-tutors provide good support that helps learners who have gained intermediate-level qualifications in English and mathematics to develop their skills even further.
- In a few cases, assessor-tutors do not make sufficient use of written feedback to help apprentices develop their writing skills. Assessor-tutors of pre-employment programmes do not

make best use of the time available to help their learners improve their English and mathematics skills.

- There are few differences in the outcomes of groups of learners and apprentices of different ages, gender or ethnic origin. However, in 2013/14, the proportion of learners and apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities who successfully completed their programme was lower than that of their peers. Managers promptly tackled this by providing training for staff in such areas as dyslexia awareness and supporting learners with mental health problems. As a result, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now performing as well as their peers.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Good outcomes for learners and apprentices are the result of effective teaching, learning and assessment, and excellent support for learners.
- Learners and apprentices receive outstanding support to help them progress and achieve their qualifications. Assessor-tutors expertly plan their help for learners with a wide range of differing needs, for example those for whom English is not their first language and those with mental health needs. As a result, these learners progress as well as their peers.
- Assessor-tutors provide positive and down-to-earth encouragement that improves the motivation of apprentices and learners. Many learners participate in training after long breaks or unhappy previous experiences of education and this support helps them to take part in and enjoy their learning.
- In learning sessions assessor-tutors frequently help learners develop a good understanding of the diverse range of backgrounds and cultures of those they are likely to meet in the workplace. As a result, learners interact well with each other and speak with sympathy and understanding about others whose needs and experiences differ from their own.
- Assessor-tutors plan learning very well so that pre-employment learners participate enthusiastically and make good progress. Practical activities such as job searches and interview role plays capture learners' interest and improve their work readiness. Learners develop their speaking and listening skills and learn how to present themselves to prospective employers.
- Assessor-tutors give apprentices and learners constructive and encouraging feedback that helps them understand what they have done well and where they need to make improvements. As a result, the majority of apprentices and learners make progress in line with, or better than, expectations.
- Assessor-tutors are very good at integrating the learning of everyday mathematical skills into sessions and within individual progress reviews. This helps apprentices to gain functional skills qualifications, often at a higher level than their framework requires. It enables learners on pre-employment programmes to shed their apprehensions about mathematics and develop skills that will help them in the workplace.
- A small minority of learners do not make enough progress in developing their writing skills. A few assessor-tutors do not correct learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar when giving feedback or provide tips and strategies to help learners and apprentices improve their writing.
- The majority of learners make better than expected progress, given their starting points. However, assessor-tutors too often set targets that are insufficiently specific and a few learners make slow progress as a result. More able learners do not always receive work that stretches them to extend their learning or understanding. Assessor-tutors do not direct learners with good information and communication technology (ICT) learning skills to resources through which they can work and extend their learning on their own.
- Assessor-tutors and managers do not monitor sufficiently the amount of time apprentices spend completing off-the-job training activities and, as a result, are unable to judge whether their apprentices are capable of progressing more quickly or developing their skills beyond the requirements of their programme.

- Assessor-tutors carefully assess the knowledge and skills of apprentices and learners at the start of their programmes. As a result, assessor-tutors know the vocational skills of their learners and their starting points in English and mathematics. They develop plans to help their learners understand what they need to do to make progress, and review progress frequently. Apprentices and learners receive well-considered, practical advice and guidance before they start their programmes. For apprentices, this includes detailed discussions involving employers that help them select frameworks and study components that accurately reflect their day-to-day work. Assessor-tutors provide suitable guidance and direction on their next steps throughout and at the end of their programmes.

Health and social care	Good
Apprenticeships	

Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care are good because:

- a large majority of apprentices successfully complete their qualifications; apprentices enjoy their learning, produce work of a good standard and develop the skills required to work and progress in the health and social care sector
- assessor-tutors meet well the needs of individual apprentices and the demands of the care environments in which they work; apprentices benefit from assessor-tutors’ professional experience and the range of interesting activities they use
- assessor-tutors encourage apprentices to think hard, extend their learning and relate the theory to their individual workplaces and job roles; they use careful questions and real-life examples to stimulate deeper thinking and extend learning, using, for example, apprentices’ experience of working with vulnerable adults to discuss the principles of safeguarding
- assessor-tutors mark apprentices’ work frequently and provide timely and clear feedback, both orally and in writing, so that learners produce work of a good standard and know what to do to improve further
- assessor-tutors carefully include English and mathematics activities within all taught sessions and reviews and the majority of assessor-tutors relate practice tasks expertly to the apprentices’ employment activities; this enables apprentices to develop good English and mathematics skills
- in all their sessions, assessor-tutors promote safeguarding, equality and diversity and health and safety topics very well; this ensures that apprentices develop a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and their service users safe and how to meet their individual needs
- assessor-tutors provide thoughtful and challenging teaching that helps apprentices reflect on their own performance and improve their practice

Teaching, learning and assessment in health and social care are not yet outstanding because:

- a minority of apprentices do not have the necessary ICT skills or full access to the e-portfolio system and do not develop their independent learning skills fully; assessor tutors do not provide sufficient help for them to study using other media
- a minority of apprentices make slow progress; assessor-tutors do not provide enough assistance to help them meet their targets or sufficiently demanding activities for the more able apprentices so that they can further develop their thinking and reflective skills.

Employability	Good
19+ learning programmes	

Teaching, learning and assessment in employability programmes are good because:

- learners develop good essential skills and attitudes required for employment; large numbers gain sustainable employment and relevant qualifications,
- assessor-tutors use their personal experiences of employment and, where relevant, their periods of unemployment, to motivate learners through energetically delivered and well-planned sessions; they encourage learners to have high expectations of what they can achieve
- assessor-tutors provide highly effective support for learners that ensures that they attend regularly, communicate effectively, and present themselves well at interview; as a result, learners have increased confidence in their personal appearance and their ability to respond to employers' expectations
- Avanta and its subcontractors provide a very high standard of resources for practical training; for example, the retail training area at one of the subcontractors simulates a typical supermarket and this helps learners to prepare well for work in similar retail environments
- the majority of assessor-tutors use relevant activities to develop learners' mathematical skills; learners enthusiastically attempt problems such as personal budgeting, analysing pay slips and working out distances and times from their home to places of work by car, public transport or on foot
- assessor-tutors cover a range of topics about social and cultural diversity well and learners develop very good attitudes to each other and to the wider public; learners can discuss with confidence, for example, non-traditional gender roles such as midwifery and childcare for males, and opportunities for women in the construction industry.

Teaching, learning and assessment in employability programmes are not yet outstanding because:

- a few assessor-tutors do not assess, correct or provide feedback on learners' written work routinely; as a result, a very small minority of learners cannot see the progress they are making, or how to improve their written English
- a few assessor-tutors do not identify or record learners' individual barriers to gaining and sustaining employment; as a result, they fail to address specific difficulties, such as a lack of confidence, and a very small minority of learners do not make enough progress in overcoming these
- a minority of learning activities are too easy for a few more able learners; this results in these learners doing work in sessions which neither challenges nor builds on their knowledge and previous experience.

Business management and administration

Good

Apprenticeships

Teaching, learning and assessment in business are good because:

- the large majority of apprentices successfully complete their qualifications; they make good progress and develop strong work-related and personal and social skills
- assessor-tutors use their extensive experience and sound occupational knowledge very well to help apprentices develop the skills to work effectively in administration and business management
- assessor-tutors pay close attention to health and safety during learning sessions and progress reviews; apprentices develop a high level of health and safety awareness and follow good working practices, for example when using display-screen equipment
- assessor-tutors provide highly effective guidance that helps apprentices develop good occupational skills; for example, business administration learners develop well a range of good paper-based and electronic administrative skills and management apprentices supervise their teams very effectively

- assessor-tutors plan well a range of vocationally relevant activities that successfully develop apprentices' mathematical skills; apprentices use these skills well in their work to, for example, work out the correct value of goods, weights, sizes and delivery schedules
- the very effective help and tuition provided by assessor-tutors help apprentices develop very well their technical vocabulary
- assessor-tutors use technology effectively to support assessment and this helps to increase the pace of progress for most apprentices; apprentices respond well, for example, to the use of recorded professional discussions to collect evidence of competence in skills such as coordinating events, or leading and managing meetings effectively
- apprentices contribute well to thought-provoking discussions that help them develop their understanding of the diverse range of backgrounds and experiences they are likely to encounter amongst their colleagues and customers; as a result they are able to deal sensitively with the needs of those they encounter at work.

Teaching, learning and assessment in business are not yet outstanding because:

- assessor-tutors do not correct spelling, punctuation and grammar errors frequently enough in apprentices' written work or provide them with detailed feedback or clear strategies to improve their writing; as a result, apprentices do not improve their writing skills as much as they might
- in a few cases, assessor-tutors do not involve employers sufficiently in apprentices' progress reviews and this limits the extent to which assessor-tutors can tailor their teaching to the specific demands of their apprentices' workplaces
- in progress reviews, assessor-tutors do not challenge learners to consider topics relating to the diversity of those living and working in society as a whole; as a result, apprentices are not equipped to participate fully in the life of modern Britain.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Directors and managers have a clear and successful strategy to provide a complete training and recruitment service to meet the needs of both learners and employers. Managers' ambitious targets for development reflect their high expectations for both the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and for learners' success.
- Managers have developed very good partnership arrangements with employers. They use these partnerships very well to provide learners with wide-ranging opportunities to progress into sustainable employment. Managers use links with Local Enterprise Partnerships and well-established relationships with local authorities very effectively to develop courses that meet local employment needs. Particularly successful arrangements are in place with national retail businesses, resulting in bespoke courses that provide learners with very good progression to employment.
- Directors make use of timely and relevant information to monitor their own responsibilities very well; this leads to good operational management. However, the senior management team does not systematically monitor the quality of provision. Individual members are thorough and effective in their quality improvement activities but the team as a whole does not do enough to oversee this work. Its scrutiny of certain aspects, for example the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, is limited to consideration of issues for presentation annually in the self-assessment report.
- Directors and managers make good use of arrangements to challenge underperformance and raise standards amongst staff. Managers use comprehensive monthly reviews with all assessor-tutors to measure performance against well-considered key indicators based on the targets within detailed regional improvement plans. Managers use these and observations of teaching, learning and assessment to inform annual appraisals that lead to supportive and effective personal development plans for staff.

- Quality assurance arrangements are good. Managers make self-assessment judgements that are broadly accurate and have led to quality improvement planning which sets relevant and challenging improvement targets. A director frequently monitors progress towards these targets and these are routinely met.
- Directors and managers make good use of quarterly regional reviews to monitor overall performance. A comprehensive observation process for teaching, learning and assessment includes frequent observations by both internal and external staff and leads to effective action where standards are less than good. Managers provide high-quality training for all assessor-tutors to address areas for improvement.
- The management of subcontracted provision is highly effective. Managers use extensive pre-contract checks to emphasise safeguarding and health and safety, and thorough monthly performance reviews to evaluate all aspects of each subcontractor's work. Avanta staff use planned observations to quality assure subcontractors' teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers' strategic approach to developing apprentices' and learners' English and mathematics skills, including training for all assessor-tutors, has led to the successful development of learners' mathematics skills. However, progress in the development of learners' English skills has been slower. Not enough teachers routinely correct written work or provide feedback and guidance that helps apprentices and learners improve. The recently introduced English and mathematics strategy does not include specific targets that enable managers to monitor progress sufficiently.
- Managers and staff promote equality and diversity well and, following compulsory training, assessor-tutors have been successful in developing learners' understanding of the positive nature of differences. Managers and staff create an environment of inclusivity and respect for learners. Most assessor-tutors identify accurately individual barriers to learning and arrange relevant support. Managers have correctly identified achievement gaps between different groups and taken appropriate action to close them.
- Other than for learners' achievement, managers do not make enough use of data relating to equality and diversity to monitor performance or set targets for improvement. For example, they do not review recruitment to see if there are variations in the progress of applicants from different groups, such as those with disabilities.
- Safeguarding of all learners is good. Managers have ensured that staff have a good understanding of safeguarding matters. Safeguarding champions provide informed points of contact for apprentices and learners in all regions in which Avanta operates. Managers use safer recruitment practices and monitor carefully the well-maintained single central register of staff to minimise risks to apprentices and learners. Managers and assessor tutors provide staff and learners with an effective induction that raises the awareness of safeguarding. Managers provide mandatory annual staff updating to maintain good levels of understanding. Although managers keep very careful records of all safeguarding incidents, and the designated safeguarding officer thoroughly reviews each incident, there is insufficient reporting of safeguarding matters to the directors.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Avanta Enterprise 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
Health and social care	2
Employability training	2
Administration	2
Business management	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	7,639							
Principal/CEO	Mr Rod Jackson							
Date of previous inspection	N/A							
Website address	http://avanta.uk.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+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	144	802	20	533	-	8		
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	3,461							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Express Training Limited ■ Logistica ■ Sporting Futures Training ■ Construction Skills People ■ Aylesbury College 							

Contextual information

Avanta is a recently acquired company of the Staffline group. It provides pre-employment training and a range of support services to customers of the Department for Work and Pensions' Work Programme at more than 50 locations nationwide. In addition, it provides apprenticeship training for employers across the whole of England. A large majority of apprentices follow programmes in administration and business management. Other subject areas include health and social care, warehousing and distribution, retailing and wholesaling, and hospitality and catering.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Russell Henry HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of Quality and Curriculum as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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