

# Straight A Training Limited

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		3–6 February 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
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:

- learners do not develop their English and mathematics skills sufficiently well
- trainers do not plan and review learning to ensure that apprentices, especially those with additional learning needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress and achieve to their full potential
- performance management arrangements are not sufficiently robust and do not ensure that training, learning and assessment are of high quality
- self-assessment is insufficiently critical and does not focus enough on identifying areas for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment
- trainers do not provide sufficient written feedback to ensure that hospitality learners understand their progress and know what they need to do to improve
- arrangements for staff training in safeguarding require further development.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- learners work in high quality workplaces and develop good vocational and personal skills
- managers have strong links with employers that are used well to ensure learners develop specific specialist vocational skills in relevant work environments
- learners receive good personal support from trainers, who provide effective encouragement and motivation that helps learners progress
- thorough initial advice and guidance ensure that learners are on the right programme to meet their job aspirations and progression to sustainable employment is good
- the planning of learning in business administration, customer service and management provides learners with a clear understanding of their programme and progress.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Introduce the teaching of English and mathematics into vocational learning sessions more effectively and ensure all learners receive sufficient support in order to help them make further progress in developing these skills.
- Enhance the use of progress reviews and the results of diagnostic testing to plan learning to meet learners' individual needs, particularly those of learners with additional learning needs and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Enhance the overall standard of teaching, learning and assessment by developing a more robust observation process that effectively monitors and evaluates the quality of learning and progress and use the information to target improvement actions.
- Become more critical in self-assessment by having more focus on the impact of teaching, learning and assessment to enable improvement planning for this important aspect to be more effective.
- Ensure that all learners receive sufficiently detailed written feedback in order that they have a good understanding of their progress and what they need to do to improve.
- Develop more formal incident recording systems and organise additional specialist training for the designated child protection officer.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Straight A Training Limited (SAT) offers apprenticeships nationally in a variety of hospitality and catering subjects, including cookery, reception and supervisory management, as well as business administration, management, customer service and team leading. A small majority of learners are working towards other hospitality and catering qualifications.</li> <li>▪ Learners work in high quality workplaces where they take good advantage of the learning and development opportunities that exist. Learners' job roles help learners to broaden their skills, as well as their personal development. They become more confident, improve teamworking skills and learn more about the world of work and progression opportunities, as well as demonstrating a good standard of work in their job roles. Learners make good progress in developing relevant job skills such as customer care, telephone use, preparing business documents, or new catering skills including learning new recipes that they then prepare for menus.</li> <li>▪ Progression into employment is very good. Nearly all apprentices remain in employment at the end of their apprenticeships, with a minority gaining promotion. Learners take on more responsibility and develop supervisory skills well.</li> <li>▪ Learners make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of relevant subjects that they use well in their job roles. They learn more about job-specific aspects of health and safety, as well as the use of language and terminology relevant to their business.</li> <li>▪ Most learners make progress in their qualifications in line with their planned timescales. A small minority of learners make good progress, achieving some units of their qualification ahead of schedule. A small minority make slower than expected progress. Learners who speak English as an additional language make slower progress than their peers. A very small number of learners who speak English as an additional language struggle to understand the requirements of the qualification and lesson content. A small minority of learners have completed their programme to date, at success rates in line with other similar providers.</li> <li>▪ In business administration, the vast majority of learners make good progress in developing and applying their English and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, with good</li> </ul>	

opportunities to practise these skills in their job roles. Hospitality learners who speak English as an additional language value the improvement in their language skills. Good opportunities exist to develop mathematical skills in the workplace, but trainers miss opportunities in lessons to develop these skills and monitor learners' progress. The majority of learners make good use of online learning resources to improve their skills, but a minority do not do so. Where learners are exempt from working towards functional skills qualifications, most do not try and improve these skills further.

- Trainers now introduce functional skills learning and tests earlier in the programme, but some learners who started prior to September 2014 left it too late in their programme before focusing on these subjects. A few learners commenced their mathematical and English skills at too low a level. Effective action by the provider is now ensuring all learners start at the appropriate level and progress to level 2 qualifications where appropriate. Most learners pass their tests at the first attempt.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement; nevertheless, the large majority of learners make good progress in their job skills and towards sustainable employment. Most learners benefit from working in high quality workplaces with good employer support. A small number of learners do not develop English, mathematics and functional skills sufficiently well and makes slower progress in their qualifications.
- The planning of learning in hospitality is ineffective. Trainers do not sufficiently use the results of diagnostic testing to plan learning and support to meet individual needs. A few learners are not completing the electronic diagnostic testing, so additional support needs cannot be fully identified. Trainers do not refer to individual learning plans in reviews, and employers do not have sufficient involvement in reviewing progress. Most hospitality learners are not clear as to how or when they will complete the components of their qualifications or whether they are on target to achieve on time. The introduction of an e-portfolio is starting to improve this understanding, but it is not yet fully up to date and in use for all learners.
- In business administration, customer service and management, the planning of learning is good. For example, in a national media employer, trainers plan learning effectively and learners have a clear understanding of start and end dates for the individual components of the apprenticeship framework and their progress. A tracking document provides a clear overview of the timescale for achievement.
- Trainers are not always enabling learners to develop their English and mathematical skills well. They do not introduce numeracy to the majority of sessions. Hospitality trainers are not consistent in correcting spelling, grammar and inaccuracies in written work in order to promote workplace standards. Trainers who speak English as an additional language do not all have the confidence to make corrections, and make mistakes in their own written work to learners. A specialist support tutor has very recently begun providing more individual training and support for these trainers and learners, but it is too early to judge the impact of this.
- Trainers have very good vocational experience which they share well with learners. They use a wide variety of teaching and learning methods in most lessons, including professional discussion, quizzes, e-learning and the production of charts. In the better sessions, learners demonstrate their improving skills, including their ability to apply theory to practice. The use of an electronic 'app' is very effective in food production practical sessions, enabling learners to pay good attention to health and safety. In another example, a tutor communicated skilfully and made good use of e-learning activities, which enabled a business administration learner to make progress effectively and independently. However, the methods used in sessions for those with additional learning needs, or who speak English as an additional language, are not always effective.
- Learners are engaging well in learning and demonstrate good motivation to progress. Learners have good relationships with trainers and receive good personal support. Trainers have high

expectations for learners to progress well in their jobs. Learners who are able to work independently using e-resources have access to good quality materials to support their learning, including practice exercises and short video clips, which focus on specific matters such as punctuation.

- Assessment of practical learning is mostly good and some workplace learners benefit from additional assessment by their line managers. Where e-portfolios are in use, assessors make good use of photographs, particularly for catering skills where photos of dishes at different stages of preparation can instantly demonstrate competency.
- The quality of written feedback given to hospitality learners on their work is insufficiently detailed and developmental. A minority of trainers explain what learners need to do to address gaps in their knowledge or to make further progress, but many do not.
- Initial advice and guidance at induction are good; they are effective in ensuring that learners start at the right level on the correct programme. Progress reviews do not sufficiently focus on discussing and planning future progression and learning opportunities, although all learners receive an exit interview to discuss future plans.
- Trainers do not sufficiently explore learners' understanding of diversity. Care is taken to ensure learners feel happy on their programmes, and at work, and receive fair treatment. Learners have a basic understanding of diversity, and information given at induction and through basic questions at progress reviews helps to underpin this understanding. However, trainers miss opportunities in sessions to promote and further develop learners' broader awareness of diversity.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Requires improvement

- The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement. Although the large majority of learners make good progress in their jobs and skills development, a small minority of learners, particularly those who speak English as an additional language or those that have additional learning needs, are not making the progress expected of them, and teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- Performance management is insufficiently robust, in spite of the new systems that are in place. All trainers receive a performance review and an appraisal where targets are set. However, managers do not set challenging targets to trainers to bring about improvements in teaching, learning and assessment, and do not challenge trainers sufficiently to improve their own practices. Managers carry out observations, but these do not always identify weaknesses; in particular, they do not focus sufficiently on what learners learn. Managers do not analyse the observations and are unable to state the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Meetings for assessors take place to discuss operational and administration issues. However, these meetings do not sufficiently focus on teaching, learning and assessment, resulting in action points that are insufficiently clear about what is to be done, and do not impact sufficiently on the learners' experience.
- Quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently effective. The self-assessment process involves trainers who are able to put forward the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, as well as identifying opportunities for development and potential threats to the quality of provision. However, the judgements do not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the learners' experience. Trainers have insufficient understanding of directors' and managers' expectations and how to bring about improvements. Managers analyse feedback from learners and employers but do not use this sufficiently to inform self-assessment and the quality improvement plan.
- The directors and managers have a clear and ambitious vision for their organisation, which includes becoming an outstanding provider for bespoke training in the hospitality industry, as well as increasing the range and quality of their provision, amongst other themes. However,

although some improvements are being made, such as the introduction of the e-portfolio and the very recent increase in the resource of more specialist support staff, managers have been too slow to address all of the shortfalls in teaching, learning and assessment, many of which were identified in the previous inspection.

- Managers have developed good partnerships with several leading employers and other organisations. A director of SAT is a member of the local enterprise partnership and chamber of commerce, and works with a number of local communities to develop appropriate learning programmes. Managers and staff work very closely with employers to select units that develop the specialist skills that are required in each business. Learners make good progress towards a sustainable career because of these partnerships.
- Directors have acted promptly to meet other needs of employers by developing links with other providers who can supply accounting and electrical apprenticeship frameworks. Managers are working with a local provider on a re-engagement programme for learners not in education or employment. The provider is working to provide additional skills in catering for these learners and to improve their progression to apprenticeship programmes.
- The promotion of equality ensures all learners receive fair treatment and the opportunity to achieve, but the promotion of diversity requires improvement. Managers confidently analyse data relating to equality of opportunity and identify any differences in the achievement of particular groups. All trainers complete training in equality and diversity, but many lack confidence to promote diversity, including in lessons and at progress reviews. Employers have strong procedures to support equality in the workplace, and learners know what to do if they have any concerns.
- Safeguarding arrangements require improvement. Procedures to record the very few safeguarding incidents that have taken place do not effectively confirm appropriate action, and the designated safeguarding officer has not undertaken sufficient specialist training. Managers now recognise these shortcomings and have initiated action to tackle them. Learners all feel safe, and work in safe environments that have all relevant health and safety checks. Managers carry out and record appropriate vetting and barring checks on staff and appropriate safeguarding training has been completed. However, trainers do not promote issues such as online safety to learners sufficiently well.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)****Straight A Training Limited**

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

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Hospitality and catering</b>	<b>3</b>

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	160								
Principal/CEO	Jayne Raftery – Managing Director								
Date of previous inspection	December 2009								
Website address	<a href="http://www.straightta.co.uk">www.straightta.co.uk</a>								
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+		
	11	90	21	71	-		-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	-		-		193				
Number of learners aged 14-16									
Full-time	-								
Part-time	193								
Number of community learners	-								
Number of employability learners	-								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None								

## Contextual information

Straight A Training Limited is a private, limited training company and has been in operation since 1999. The provider works with a number of large hospitality and media organisations to deliver apprenticeships across locations in England and Wales. It provides qualifications in hospitality and catering, as well as business administration, customer service and management. The two directors are supported by an operations manager, with 11 full-time trainers, as well as other management support and administrative staff.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Gary Adkins

One lead inspector and two 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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