

Clarkson Evans

Employer

Inspection dates		19–22 November 2013
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		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Almost all apprentices complete their programmes, mostly in the allotted time.
- Apprentices quickly learn how to install and test wiring and equipment, safely and fast, to meet their teams' targets.
- Particularly good training resources, such as the mock house to fit and test installations at the main training centre, help apprentices practise safely.
- An innovative approach to functional skills development is being tested.
- Strong and passionate leadership drives improvements.
- Managers have produced a thorough and self-critical self-assessment report.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Training sessions are not yet consistently good. Too many theory sessions are boring.
- Managers have not yet developed a comprehensive performance management system to share the best practice and improve weaker teaching. Team leaders and workplace supervisors have not been trained to support apprentices in their skills development
- Trainers and assessors do not pay enough attention to improving learners' English.
- Managers have had little success so far in recruiting significant numbers of females or learners from ethnic minorities.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning by:
 - using a wider variety of activities in theory sessions
 - checking learners' understanding better in theory sessions
 - correcting learners' English more thoroughly
 - supporting learners doing their functional skills with *learnirect*.
- Develop a performance management system that will identify the best practice and improve weaker teaching and learning. Make sure that it covers everyone who helps learners develop through their apprenticeship.
- Promote and reinforce equality and diversity more effectively, so that all learners and potential learners feel welcome.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Three quarters of the learners complete their apprenticeship within the expected timescale. The provider's own data show that, in 2012/13, over 90% of the apprentices completed their programmes, which is considerably higher than the national average. However, performance was much lower in the previous year because of the impact of the recession on the industry. Learners enjoy their programmes and rarely miss sessions. They arrive in good time, even though much of the training and work involve early starts, and return promptly after their breaks.
- Apprentices quickly learn to work at a commercial pace and to the quality required. They work in teams supervised by a qualified electrician, and develop very good electrical installation and fault finding skills that employers value, such as installing isolator switches and other electrical accessories. They also develop mathematical skills, as well as gaining in personal confidence and the ability to work independently. Learners are punctual, polite and interact well with work colleagues and other trades on site. They enjoy working on site and the range of work they experience, including first and second fixing, lighting and power cables, preparing them very well for future employment.
- They also develop good customer awareness skills. Although Clarkson Evans (CE) learners normally work on new houses, there are occasions when they have to work in premises where customers are present. In the subcontracted provision, and when working with other employers, apprentices frequently have to work sensitively round customers. One group of apprentices had to rewire a house without disturbing three of the six tenants who worked night shifts, and were sleeping while the electricians were working. Throughout the provision, learners are taught to respect customers, to safeguard both themselves and members of the public, and to behave with courtesy and discretion.
- Learners progress in their careers after completing their apprenticeships. Over 80% of leavers have continued to work in the industry, either in employment or by setting up their own businesses. CE and the subcontractor look for applicants who are enthusiastic, responsible and show the potential to become managers, when they recruit apprentices. Most of the managers and trainers in both organisations have themselves been apprentices, providing credible role models for learners.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good practical teaching both on- and off-the-job significantly contributes to the high success rates. Training centres deliver particularly good practical electrical installation training. Highly skilled and experienced team leaders act as effective workplace supervisors, scheduling work to provide a wide range of installation experience. In the workplace, learners work safely, developing good practical standards in wiring properties and complete work to a high standard. As they work, learners quickly learn to identify potentially hazardous situations, minimising risks to themselves and others.
- In the better theory sessions, the pace of learning is brisk and learners benefit from well-illustrated and colourful handouts which provide useful reference material for future revision. However, some sessions are boring, lack variety and fail to sufficiently engage, inspire or challenge learners. Short video clips, for example on basic electricity, add interest to theory sessions, but trainers do not use them as a basis for meaningful discussion in the classroom or augment them with reference to newer understanding, for example on sub-atomic particles.
- Apprentices and assessors use the e-portfolio system well to monitor learners' progress. This helps apprentices to succeed within planned timescales, and to identify those at risk of not completing. Learners understand their progress and what they need to do to complete the occupational part of the apprenticeship, but they are more vague about the other components of their framework, such as functional skills and employment rights and responsibilities.
- Regular and frequent progress reviews support learners well. The managing director takes an active role and confirms apprentices' attainment by asking the apprentices detailed technical questions which they should be able to answer. Team leaders and workplace supervisors contribute to workplace reviews by commenting on the quality of each learner's skills development. However, they do not always contribute to the short term target setting. Some review targets are not specific or challenging enough. Health and safety issues are regularly discussed in reviews, but discussions sometimes centre on pre-prepared topics, such as work involving ladders rather than contextualising them to each apprentice's own workplace.
- Assessors plan workplace assessment thoroughly. Learners sometimes initiate the process themselves. Most learners and assessors are using the electronic portfolio well. Assessment is rigorous with skilful probing questioning to check learners' knowledge. For example, one apprentice was assessed installing isolator switches for kitchen appliances. He had to work in a confined space, protecting the kitchen units, and working round colleagues from other trades. His assessor asked him about circumstances in which he would use different terminations or different conductors to test his knowledge of contingencies.
- Assessors give comprehensive and constructive written feedback on learners' performance evidence to help learners improve. Although assessors make accurate decisions on apprentices' performance, their observation reports are sometimes too descriptive. In theory sessions, trainers do not pay enough attention to formative assessment through the use of questioning to check systematically on the learning that is taking place.
- Both CE and the subcontractor offer 'top-up' programmes for learners who have already studied the theory for their apprenticeship in college, and who have practical work experience, but have not completed their apprenticeship. The programmes include sessions on newer topics which are now required for the qualification, such as solar photovoltaic installations.
- Learners competently follow written instructions, use correct technical terminology and accurately interpret technical data and drawings in their work. Learners requiring functional skills for their apprenticeship work towards them through supported self-study with *learnirect*, although learning materials are not contextualised to increase their relevance to the construction setting. Trainers sometimes reinforce mathematical topics to help learners understand electrical principles, but neither lecturers nor assessors give enough attention to improving learners' written work by correcting their spelling and grammar.
- Both CE and the subcontractor use the school work experience period well to identify keen possible applicants for apprenticeships. Both managing directors encourage learners whom they

see as having the potential to take responsibility and make a career in the industry to apply for an apprenticeship. They see the work experience period as an extended interview. New apprentices receive a comprehensive induction, with very clear explanations of how their training programmes, site experience and assessment mesh together.

- Managers have not yet established a consistently good approach to equality and diversity in the training programme. Trainers cover the topics sensitively in induction, and are not afraid to tackle difficult topics such as sexual orientation and religion. The subcontractor in Yeovil uses discussion of the Tolpuddle Martyrs to stimulate discussion on workplace relations and employment rights.
- Some progress reviews present learners with interesting and relevant workplace scenarios that improve their confidence and their ability to deal with a variety of situations. However, in other cases, reviewers rely on a small bank of questions and ask all learners the same question rather than using an individualised approach. Learners are respectful of customers' property, particularly when working in their homes. Equality and diversity are less well promoted during teaching, and trainers do not grasp opportunities to discuss equalities issues when they occur.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The company's founder and managing director has a passionate and clear vision for the further development of the company, and of the importance of raising standards of performance and attitudes within the industry. Similar values are evident at the subcontractor, facilitating collaborative working to improve the learners' experience across the provision. Both leaders take a close and personal interest in the progress and welfare of their apprentices, and expect their trainers, managers and supervisors to encourage and motivate their learners to succeed. The company has now grown to a size where more formal arrangements for assuring and improving quality are needed. Managers are developing new policies and procedures, but these have not yet had time to be fully implemented.
- CE does not yet have a coherent performance management system to improve teaching and learning. A new appraisal system with key performance indicators is being introduced, as is a new system for observing teaching and learning. However, the observation system focuses almost exclusively on the teacher rather than on the learner, and the key role of workplace supervisors in developing learners' skills has not been considered.
- Managers have produced a timely, detailed, open and evaluative self-assessment report which demonstrates a high degree of self-knowledge. The self-assessment process is well designed to provide a sound basis for improvements. The quality improvement plan is similarly detailed and demanding, with a substantial agenda of tasks which need to be carried out to manage the quality of the provision reliably across all sites, including the subcontracted provision.
- The learning programme offered by the employer enables learners to move into well-paid, sustainable employment in a growing industry. Virtually all the apprentices remain in the industry, mostly staying with the same employer unless they start their own businesses.
- CE endeavours to promote equality and diversity, but has not yet succeeded in recruiting a critical mass of female apprentices or those from an ethnic minority. It promotes its programmes in schools, including girls' schools, and at careers fairs, but has not identified why young women who show an interest do not then apply for the programme or take up places which are offered. Its individual support for learners, including those who need adjustments made while they are recovering from non-work related accidents, is particularly good. Apprentices participate in imaginative training sessions on equality and diversity during their induction, but their further understanding of the issues is not well developed during the rest of their programme.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. CE uses appropriate risk assessment to reinforce the importance of health and safety in the workplace.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Clarkson Evans

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Building services	2

Type of provider	Employer							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 138							
	Part-time: 0							
Principal/CEO	Mr Steve Evans							
Date of previous inspection	December 2009							
Website address	http://www.clarksonevans.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+
Full-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	93	193	-	-		
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<div>■ P and R Hurt</div> <div>■ <i>learndirect</i></div>							

Contextual information

Clarkson Evans is an electrical contractor with a core business of installing domestic electrical systems in new-build houses. It was formed in 1981 and established its own training centre in 1998. It is located in Gloucester, with other training centres in Birmingham, Exeter and Bracknell. In 2008 it stopped recruiting apprentices because of the impact of the recession on the construction industry, but it is now expanding again. In 2011 it started working with a subcontractor, another electrical contractor, P and R Hurt, in Yeovil. Clarkson Evans contracts throughout the South West, West Midlands and South Wales.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jane Shaw HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of Training 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 of the 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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