

Alt Valley Community Trust

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		10–12 March 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- too many apprentices make slow progress, resulting in them not completing their apprenticeship by the planned end date
- initial assessment is not used effectively for assessing each apprentice's learning potential and for setting challenging targets and realistic end dates
- GCSE and functional English and mathematics are started too late in apprenticeship programmes and apprentices lose valuable learning time to achieve these qualifications
- written feedback is not always helping apprentices to identify what they need to do to improve their work and make progress; the quality of their work is too variable
- spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not routinely corrected in apprentices' written work and they receive too little guidance to improving their written and spoken English
- too few apprentices receive comprehensive information, advice and guidance, and sufficient training in health and safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding
- the processes for self-assessment and observing teaching, learning and assessment have not been regularly and rigorously implemented for continuous improvement purposes
- tutors and advisory board members have not received sufficient training in health and safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding to enable them to extend learners' safety and understanding.

This provider has the following strengths:

- high overall success rates
- two recently appointed, enthusiastic and experienced senior managers have been quick to identify, and start to address key managerial weaknesses
- many apprentices develop good work-related knowledge and skills through effective work experience, and assessment of learning in early years and play work is good
- very good relationships have been established with a range of employers who offer relevant employment to apprentices and good opportunities to develop their personal and occupational competencies.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure every apprentice is initially assessed at the start of the programme and that the results are used to set challenging targets and realistic end dates so that every apprentice makes good progress and completes the programme on or before the planned end date.
- Start GCSE and functional English and mathematics tuition at the beginning of all apprenticeship programmes to give apprentices maximum opportunity to achieve their qualifications at the required level and, wherever possible, at a higher level. Provide each apprentice with an individual study programme for English and mathematics based on the results of thorough initial and diagnostic assessment. Integrate English and mathematics into all vocational training to develop apprentices' knowledge and skills in an occupational context.
- Improve the written feedback that is given to apprentices and ensure it comprehensively and accurately identifies the strengths in their work and what they need to do to improve it, to enable them to produce work of the highest possible quality.
- Systematically correct all spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in apprentices' written work and ensure they receive expert guidance about improving their written and oral English.
- Make sure that all apprentices receive comprehensive and high-quality information, advice and guidance so they are fully informed about career options, and sufficient training in health and safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding.
- Implement a rigorous self-assessment process which leads to the production of an annual self-assessment report and quality improvement plan. Regularly observe teaching, learning and assessment, and ensure observations result in lessons of the highest possible standard.
- Implement health and safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding training for tutors and advisory board members to extend their knowledge and understanding and, in the case of tutors, to provide them with the confidence to develop and extend apprentices' knowledge and understanding of health and safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently, apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 are offered in early years' education, hairdressing, and play work. An apprenticeship at level 2 is also offered in general construction operations. At the time of inspection, ten early years and playwork apprentices, three hairdressing apprentices and seven general construction operations apprentices are on these programmes. ▪ In 2011/12, only five apprentices were on the programmes. They made good progress and all of them successfully completed their apprenticeship framework on, or before, their planned end date. In 2013/14, overall success rates were high but only a minority of apprentices completed before their planned end date. The apprenticeship programme did not run in 2012/13. ▪ Apprentices aged 19 to 23 are more successful in completing their apprenticeship than 16- to 18-year-olds. However, completions within the predicted time period are low for both groups of apprentices. Less than a quarter of 16- to 18-year-olds and approximately half of the 19- to 23-year-olds complete by the planned end date. Too little attention is given to ensuring that all learners complete within the predicted time period. ▪ Many apprentices develop good work-related knowledge and skills through effective work experience. For example, childcare apprentices become skilled at communicating with, and managing, children's play in the nurseries. They become more personally and socially effective. An apprentice who lacked confidence, worried unnecessarily and had difficulty in communicating with adults has shown amazing development. Her self-confidence, self-esteem and oral 	

communication skills have improved considerably and she is easily able to make telephone calls whereas previously she would not do so.

- The quality and extent of apprentices' work is too variable. Apprentices in early years produce work of a good standard and take pride in the presentation of their portfolios. A minority of portfolios contain insufficient evidence, such as those for the two hairdressing apprentices who joined the programme six months ago. One apprentice has only completed a quarter of the work while the other apprentice has done less than that whereas by now they should have completed at least half.
- Employers in early years are very positive about the progress apprentices are making and the skills they are developing. For example, in a children's centre the manager described how an apprentice is now able to assess the individual needs of children using the childcare provision and to complete daily reports accurately. However, too many apprentices are not challenged enough and their progress, when judged against their prior attainments and potential, is insufficient.
- Early years' apprentices successfully progress to higher level training. A group of advanced-level apprentices who started in foundation learning progressed to an intermediate-level apprenticeship and are now making good progress on the advanced-level programme. One apprentice in the group has ambitions to progress to a higher level and seek work in specialist areas, including paediatrics.
- The two-year construction programme for apprentices is too long. Insufficient emphasis is put on them completing their framework within the planned time and the large majority are making slow progress. Hairdressing apprentices, due to complete in September 2015, have not made sufficient progress to ensure that they do so.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. This is reflected in the low percentage of apprentices completing their programmes by the planned end date although overall success rates are high.
- Tutors make insufficient use of initial assessment to plan individual learning programmes to meet each apprentice's needs. Not enough consideration is given to apprentices' prior learning and experience with the result that too many of them are insufficiently stretched and challenged and their progress is too slow.
- Initial and diagnostic assessments are not used effectively for identifying apprentices' strengths and weaknesses in English and mathematics. Initial assessment is unnecessarily delayed and valuable learning time is lost. Apprentices currently on programme have only recently completed an initial assessment despite many of them being in learning for up to 18 months. A new tutor has recently been appointed and, although tutorial support is now being given, too many apprentices have made insufficient progress. Apprentices appreciate the support they are now receiving.
- Assessment of learning in early years and play work is good. Tutors use skilful questioning techniques to check apprentices' understanding, often asking for examples related to the workplace. For example, play work apprentices demonstrated good knowledge of identifying hazards and reducing risks in a children's play area when planning a trip to a local park for the children with whom they work. However, construction apprentices have not had their learning assessed recently because the construction tutor left Alt Valley Community Trust (the Trust) and has not yet been replaced.
- Written feedback requires improvement because it is not sufficiently helpful in informing apprentices how they can improve and make progress. For example, comments in hairdressing apprentices' portfolios do not clearly indicate the standard of their work and how they can improve it. Oral feedback is generally good. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not systematically corrected and too little guidance is given to apprentices about improving their written and oral English.

- Resources for learning are good but are not being used effectively in all sessions to support learning and to help develop apprentices' vocational, personal and social skills. For example, in a session for childcare apprentices information and learning technology was used for a presentation but it did not enliven and reinforce learning sufficiently or enable apprentices to develop their self-study skills or research competencies.
- Information, advice and guidance (IAG) require improvement so that all apprentices receive high-quality and comprehensive IAG. Early years and play work apprentices are clear about their progression routes and many who started at the foundation level have continued in learning and progressed to the advanced apprenticeship. However, apprentices in construction and hairdressing, although given information about their programme of study at induction, receive little support thereafter in making decisions regarding their career options and related study programmes.
- Early years and play work apprentices develop good knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity as part of their job roles and these are extended in their off-the-job learning sessions. For example, in a childcare theory session apprentices demonstrated a good understanding about meeting the individual needs of children in their care and about valuing the children's differences. However, construction apprentices have little understanding of either equality or diversity and their impact on British society. Apprentices' knowledge of health and safety is not being checked in sufficient detail in progress reviews.
- Early years' and childcare apprentices also progressively develop good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and how it applies to their work roles. Construction and hairdressing apprentices have a poorer understanding and safeguarding is not being reinforced enough in their progress reviews. However, most apprentices have insufficient information about staying safe online and preventing radicalisation, extremism and terrorism.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The management team has recently been restructured as a result of significant managerial incompetence which became apparent some months ago and which, initially, received insufficient attention and action. It became increasingly clear that weaknesses in the management of the provision were having an adverse impact on apprentices, many of whom were making slow progress and not completing their programmes within the allotted time period in 2013/14.
- Two recently appointed enthusiastic and experienced senior managers have been quick to identify key managerial weaknesses and are making rapid changes to improve the quality of the apprenticeship programmes. For example, staff roles and responsibilities are now more clearly defined, staff are more involved in decision-making processes and team working is stronger. The new management team has high ambitions for all apprentices and a strong commitment to sustained improvement.
- Regular weekly staff meetings are particularly effective in providing managers with good opportunities to acquaint tutors with recent developments within the Trust and to obtain their views about proposed changes. Staff appreciate these meetings because they know their voices are now heard and their opinions are valued.
- Appropriate action has been taken to ensure that underperforming staff have either left the Trust or been dismissed. Managers are aware that members of staff have an annual personal development review but that targets are insufficiently challenging. They are now working hard to make sure that future targets challenge, stimulate and motivate staff to deliver high-quality provision.
- The self-assessment process was not systematically and regularly implemented as a major impetus for continuous improvement. A position paper has recently been produced which accurately highlights strengths and areas for improvement. The need for regular and rigorous self-assessment is fully acknowledged and an imminent deadline has been set for the production

of a detailed and accurate self-assessment report. The process for observing teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement to ensure it evaluates the quality of apprentices' experiences and to highlight the strengths and areas for improvement in the programmes.

- Managers know that management information has not been used effectively to manage and monitor the provision. For example, it was not used for producing reports for curriculum leaders and tutors to enable them to identify and provide additional help to apprentices who were making slower than expected progress. As a result, additional funding has been used for supporting learners who were not completing their programmes within the planned time period. Managers are committed to ensuring that these weaknesses are quickly eradicated.
- Currently, the number of apprentices enrolled is very low. Consequently, government funding has recently been cut and the number of apprentices that can now be recruited has been reduced. Managers are very keen to promote the programmes more vigorously and are using social media, as well as other more traditional means, to do so. Apprenticeship programmes are seen as good progression routes for learners on study programmes and these learners are now being fully informed about the benefits of becoming apprentices within the Trust.
- The vocational specialisms have been selected to meet local and regional priorities for workforce development and to appeal to apprentices. Very good relationships have been established with a range of employers who offer relevant employment to apprentices and good opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and occupational competencies. Particularly good relationships have recently been developed with a local children's hospital and apprenticeships for health-care assistants in a paediatric setting are being planned. In hairdressing, early years' education, and play work, apprentices have good opportunities to progress from the intermediate to the advanced apprenticeship and many do so. However, progression opportunities for construction apprentices to the advanced apprenticeship are not yet available within the Trust.
- The provider has a detailed equality and diversity policy. Although there is reference to personal and professional development for staff, too little staff training has taken place and this is having an adverse impact on a minority of apprentices whose knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity are not being sufficiently extended by tutors. Apprentices aged 19 to 23 are more successful than those aged 16 to 18 but strategies have not, so far, been put in place to ensure the performance gap is closed and that the performance of the younger apprentices is equally good.
- Safeguarding arrangements for learners requires improvement. All managers and tutors are appropriately checked, a single central register is maintained and annual self-declarations are required. A high priority is given to ensuring that all apprentices work in healthy and safe environments. Good use is made of information received from the local safeguarding children board to keep staff updated on safeguarding developments. However staff, including advisory board members, have received insufficient formal training leading to accreditation. The 'safeguarding young people policy' has not been updated to include strategies for protecting apprentices from radicalisation, extremism and terrorism, and apprentices' knowledge of these aspects has not been adequately developed.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Alt Valley Community Trust

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Early years and playwork	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	30							
Principal/CEO	Mr Phillip Knibb							
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected							
Website address	www.altvalley.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+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	8	3	2	4	N/A		N/A	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
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"> ▪ None 							

Contextual information

The Trust was established in 1983 as an educational charity in the Croxteth area of Liverpool. It provides lifelong learning opportunities and access to vocational qualifications, recruits and trains volunteers, provides community facilities and activities, and endeavours to improve the health and well-being of local people. Additionally, it seeks to reduce social isolation, lessen the impact of poverty and create local employment opportunities. Much of its work is carried out in areas of high economic and social deprivation. The apprenticeship programmes are targeted particularly at young people who are not in education, employment or training or are in danger of being excluded from school. A team of community learning champions promotes apprenticeships and other learning opportunities in Croxteth and in neighbouring areas. The programme of adult learning includes basic information and communication technology, creative writing, and sports and leisure courses. Among its other activities, the Trust runs a day nursery, a café, the local community library and two urban farms.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Ken Fisher
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Two additional inspectors, assisted by the Principal 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 to gather the views of learners, tutors, employers, managers and board members; 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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