

MPower Training Solutions Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		16–19 June 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:

- senior managers do not use data well enough to monitor the quality of provision and to plan improvements
- quality assurance arrangements do not ensure that apprentices benefit from the consistent implementation of policies and procedures
- self-assessment does not result in a sufficiently detailed plan to ensure that identified improvements are implemented
- too many business management and administration apprentices make slow progress
- staff do not always promote the good use of English at work and do not adequately prepare apprentices for their functional skills tests
- progress reviews and target setting are not good enough to promote rapid progress and achievement among apprentices and to ensure that every apprentice completes on time.

This provider has the following strengths:

- apprentices on building services programmes are taught well, gain good knowledge and skills and make good progress
- a large majority of building service apprentices successfully complete their programme and progress to permanent, full-time employment: the needs of local employers are met well
- thorough and effective observation of teaching and learning and relevant training for tutors ensures that the large majority of teaching is at least good
- equality and diversity are promoted well and apprentices demonstrate their good understanding of these through the work they do.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that managers have the information they need to evaluate performance and that they take prompt and effective action to make improvements.
- Gather more detailed and precise information about the progress of each apprentice to enable managers and staff to monitor and plan apprentices' progress.
- Ensure that all apprentices make the progress they are capable of by agreeing clear and challenging short- and long-term targets, regularly reviewing their progress against these targets, and helping those who fall behind to catch up.
- Improve quality assurance arrangements to ensure that policies and procedures are followed consistently and records are complete and accurate.
- Produce a detailed and comprehensive action plan to respond to the improvements identified through self-assessment and inspection, and ensure that managers monitor progress against this plan routinely.
- Ensure that records of staff training for safeguarding are complete and accurate.
- Improve the teaching of functional skills so that apprentices are well prepared for their tests and are able to use the skills and knowledge they gain to improve the standard of their English, mathematics and computing skills at work.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- MPower Training Solutions Limited (MPower) provides intermediate and advanced apprenticeships, mostly in building services and business management and administration. A very small number of apprentices undertake training in recycling. All of the building services apprentices study for an advanced apprenticeship in gas-fired central heating. Almost all apprentices are adults.
- Most building services apprentices complete their apprenticeship programme and most of these do so within the planned timeframe. However, a significant number of administration apprentices failed to complete in 2013/14 owing to their employer ceasing trading. Managers found alternative employment for a few of these apprentices and these continue to work towards their apprenticeship. Most of the current cohort of business management and administration apprentices has been retained.
- Most building services apprentices are making at least the progress expected of them. However, too many business management and administration apprentices are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Most apprentices improve their English and mathematics ensuring they have the skills needed for their job. However, a minority of business management and administration apprentices do not develop the professional and technical language skills required in the workplace.
- Too few apprentices pass their English, mathematics or information communication technology (ICT) qualifications at the first attempt. Less than half of building services apprentices pass their mathematics or ICT qualification at the first attempt and a minority take up to four attempts. The majority of business management and administration apprentices pass their functional skills tests at the first attempt.

- Almost all apprentices who complete their apprenticeship in building services remain with their employer. Many become advocates of the programme. For example, one employer, an ex-apprentice, now employs his own apprentice.
- Most apprentices develop good vocational skills. Building services apprentices demonstrate the precise and safety-related critical skills to maintain gas appliances and have good subject knowledge. Apprentices who study recycling of computers and digital systems work to demanding targets and contribute well to their employer's business. The majority of business management and administration apprentices demonstrate appropriate skills in the workplace.
- Apprentices' attendance and punctuality at learning sessions are good.
- There is little difference between the performance of different groups of apprentices.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and consequently not enough apprentices are making the progress of which they are capable. The experience of apprentices varies across different subjects. For example, teaching, learning and assessment on apprenticeships in building services are good, but on apprenticeships in business management and administration they require improvement.
- Teaching in building services is good. Tutors manage classroom and workshop sessions well; apprentices participate well and tutors challenge them to think critically about their work. Tutors plan activities that assess apprentices' understanding effectively and so help tutors plan future sessions. However, tutors' planning of learning pays insufficient attention to ensuring that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable. Too many tutors limit their planning to whole-group activities. As a result, more able apprentices do not always make the progress expected of them, while others do not have sufficient time to deepen their understanding before moving to the next topic.
- Target setting in business management and administration requires improvement. Apprentices are well aware of their short-term goals but do not have an overview of deadlines for different aspects of their apprenticeship to help them to take responsibility for their own learning. Too few apprentices develop effective independent learning skills.
- Apprentices, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, benefit from good advice and guidance that motivates them to achieve. Staff provide excellent personal support to ensure that apprentices make the best use of the opportunities available to them and are able to be successful. For example, apprentices who move to a different employer during their apprenticeship are supported well to adapt to new challenges and maintain the momentum of their learning. Staff work hard to find alternative employment for those who lose their job, or find alternative ways to help them to complete their qualification.
- Assessors and trainers provide clear and accurate feedback to apprentices on the quality of their work. Apprentices on building services programmes receive honest and constructive written and verbal guidance on what they need to do to comply with legislation in a safety-critical industry. Assessors provide business management and administration apprentices with clear and informative verbal feedback. However, this is rarely recorded and inhibits apprentices from making better progress by being able to refer back to previous feedback and comments.
- Tutors do not adequately prepare apprentices for their functional skills tests and consequently too few pass at the first attempt. Tutors provide apprentices with insufficient structured learning prior to assessment and focus too much on helping apprentices to pass the test rather than improving their skills and knowledge.
- Tutors integrate the development of mathematics routinely into lessons for building service apprentices. Apprentices are comfortable working with numbers to order materials, calculate heating system capacity and ensure gas appliances are working safely. Business management

and administration apprentices demonstrate an adequate level of competence with numbers but tutors do not set targets to improve apprentices' understanding and application of mathematics at work.

- Apprentices' development and application of English skills requires improvement. Although tutors introduce the meaning and spelling of technical terms in lessons many mistakes in apprentices' work remain uncorrected and tutors occasionally provide handouts with spelling mistakes. Tutors miss opportunities to develop apprentices' good note-taking, report-writing and business communication skills at work.
- Apprentices understand clearly their rights and responsibilities with respect to equality and safeguarding, which are promoted well. They have a good understanding of the diversity of the customers they may come across when visiting them in their houses. Similarly those working in call centres are sensitive about customers' circumstances and diligent in meeting the needs of a diverse group of customers including the elderly, those with restricted mobility or a hearing impairment, and customers who do not speak English fluently.

Building services	Good
Apprenticeships	

Teaching, learning and assessment in building services are good because:

- a large majority of apprentices complete their apprenticeship successfully; apprentices enjoy their work with good quality employers, produce work of a good standard and develop the essential skills and knowledge needed in a safety-critical industry
- managers have well-developed, strong links with employers; apprentices benefit from employment or placements where they are valued and where they develop their skills and knowledge well; employers' representatives visit the training centre frequently to monitor their apprentices' progress
- tutors motivate apprentices well; lessons are well planned and feature a wide range of interesting activities that encourage apprentices to explore topics and to work with their peers to solve problems; apprentices demonstrate their understanding well through presentations and recording their thoughts and responses to questions on mini white boards
- apprentices enjoy the practical sessions in the well-resourced workshops; they work on a range of modern gas appliances, researching their functions and controls; faults placed on appliances challenge apprentices well by accurately reflecting situations they will find in the workplace and this helps them to apply the theory they have learned
- tutors monitor apprentices' progress accurately; apprentices know how much they have achieved and their target completion date, which elements of the programme need to be assessed in the workplace, and what they need to do to meet legislative requirements for work in the gas industry
- tutors promote mathematics well in lessons; apprentices frequently use formulas to calculate ventilation rates and the sizing of installations; they learn mathematics in an interesting and relevant way, which motivates them to learn more; the promotion of English requires improvement
- tutors' spoken and written feedback on apprentices' practical and written work is detailed and accurate, and ensures that apprentice know what has been done well and what improvements could be made.

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

- not enough teaching and learning is outstanding because tutors do not provide enough stretch for more able apprentices so that most apprentices progress at the same pace when there is a clear difference in their experience and ability;
- tutors make insufficient use of information technology, diagrams or photographs to help explain concepts and situations apprentices may encounter at work
- tutors do not use the results of the assessment of apprentices' English and mathematics skills at the start of their programme effectively to plan learning that meets their individual needs
- a minority of apprentices are poorly prepared to undertake functional skills assessments; as a result too many fail their English, mathematics and ICT tests at the first attempt and a few apprentices take up to four attempts to pass these tests.

Business management and administration

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in business management and administration require improvement because:

- too many apprentices are not making the progress of which they are capable because apprentices are not always aware of the targets and deadlines for completion of each aspect of their apprenticeship, do not develop independent learning skills and are unable to monitor their own progress well enough
- assessors do not agree specific goals to help apprentices develop essential business skills such as time management, negotiation skills, punctuality and meeting deadlines; apprentices' action plans focus on the completion of tasks for assessment rather than the development of skills
- assessors do not provide apprentices with sufficient written feedback to help them identify what they have done well and how they can improve
- although apprentices achieve the minimum qualification in English and mathematics required for their apprenticeship, they do not apply these skills sufficiently well in the workplace to improve their business communications; assessors do not routinely check and correct spelling and grammar in apprentices' work.

In business management and administration, the provider has the following strengths:

- assessors use their industry experience well to gain the trust of apprentices and employers; they make very frequent visits to the workplace and they are reliable and flexible, ensuring that the apprentices remains motivated to complete their apprenticeship and that the employer remains closely involved
- assessors motivate apprentices well and provide excellent personal support to help them to complete their apprenticeship even when they face unanticipated challenges such as losing their employment
- tutors provide a thorough induction so that apprentices are well aware of the requirements and expectations of their apprenticeship; apprentices are guided well to choose the most appropriate course and modules that are most interesting and useful to them
- staff provide good, detailed and accurate verbal feedback to encourage apprentices to reflect on the quality of their performance in the organisation
- apprentices demonstrate an excellent awareness of how to promote equality and diversity in their workplace by avoiding discrimination and being sensitive to the needs of their customers

and clients; for example, when deliveries are being made to customers with children, apprentices give them appointments to avoid clashes with school runs, they leave notes for suppliers to ensure that they give enough time for elderly people to get to the door when they call, and apprentices ensure that visually impaired tenants receive information by telephone calls instead of letters.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have aspirational and ambitious expectations for the achievement of their apprentices. They have successfully maintained the good teaching, learning and outcomes for building services apprentices through the transition from being a subcontractor to having their own contract. However, managers underestimated the systems and procedures needed to maintain their own contract and as a result have been slow to implement some important administrative processes. For example, managers failed to update the national learner record with details of those apprentices who successfully completed their apprenticeship resulting in inaccurate reporting of performance.
- The oversight and governance provided by the senior management team requires improvement. Senior management meetings focus too much on operational issues, reacting to immediate needs rather than considering longer-term developments. Reports for senior managers do not provide enough data on the performance of programmes to help them to make informed decisions and plan ahead effectively.
- Quality assurance arrangements require improvement. The variation in the quality of provision in different subjects is too great. Systems and procedures to ensure that policies are fully and consistently followed lack rigor and as a result well-intended policies are not always implemented effectively.
- Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A thorough observation programme ensures that teachers and assessors have regular feedback on their performance and, where necessary, are supported well to improve. As a result teaching, learning and assessment on building services programmes is good. Tutors on business management and administration programmes have yet to fully benefit from this process. Managers monitor staff performance routinely and ensure that staff not performing to the required standard are supported to improve.
- Communication throughout this small organisation is effective but lacks the formal processes needed to ensure that this remains so as the organisation expands. Managers keep staff fully informed about key priorities and ensure that they have every opportunity to contribute to the decision-making processes. Staff morale is high and staff exhibit a strong commitment to the success of their apprentices.
- Managers' scrutiny of apprentices' progress requires improvement. Tutors track the progress of individual apprentices but managers do not have an accurate oversight of the rate of progress of groups of apprentices and senior managers do not routinely receive reports on progress and performance.
- Tutors and assessors receive a wide range of training that helps them improve the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment. This is improving the quality of the provision.
- Leaders and managers plan and manage high-quality building services apprenticeships successfully to meet the needs of the local and regional communities. They use close and effective partnership working with employers of all sizes to engage with many disadvantaged apprentices and promote the benefits of apprenticeships. For example, managers are working with a large national employer to further develop apprenticeships and support unemployed learners to enter the industry.
- The promotion of inclusivity, equality and diversity for apprentices and staff is good. Apprenticeship programmes provide opportunities for apprentices from a wide range of cultures

and backgrounds. Whilst inspectors identified little difference in the performance and experience of different groups of apprentices, managers do not routinely monitor this or collect sufficient data to identify trends or gaps in performance.

- Managers have improved the self-assessment process but this needs further development. They have identified that provision requires improvement accurately but have yet to develop a sufficiently detailed action plan to implement these improvements.
- Arrangements to support the development of apprentices' English, mathematics and functional skills require improvement. Too many apprentices are not sufficiently well prepared for their tests and the development of professional and technical language skills in the workplace for a minority of business management and administration apprentices requires improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements require improvement. MPower meets statutory requirements and staff have been trained in safeguarding. However, managers do not adequately record the training undertaken or its impact. Arrangements to control inappropriate use of the internet in the training centre are effective but apprentices are not given further guidance to help protect them from the dangers of the misuse of the internet and electronic communication devices away from the centre. Staff carry out checks on employers to ensure that apprentices are safe at work; however, these checks are not always recorded. Apprentices feel safe in the training centre and on employers' premises. Managers have begun to implement policies and procedures to protect apprentices from the dangers of terrorism, extremism and radicalisation.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

MPower Training Solutions Ltd

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						3		
Outcomes for learners	3						3		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3						3		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3						3		

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Building Services	2
Business Management	3
Administration	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	141							
Principal/CEO	Mr Michael Palmer							
Date of previous inspection	N/A							
Website address	www.mpowertraining.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+
	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+		
	0	31	4	114	0	0		
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

Mpower Training Solutions (Mpower) is based in Waltham Abbey, North London. It was founded in 2003 to provide training in building services engineering predominantly around the North London area. Previously operating as a subcontractor to local further education colleges, in 2013 MPower was awarded its own Skills Funding Agency contract to provide apprenticeships. It has recently expanded provision to include apprenticeships in business management and recycling.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Phil Romain HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Quality Director 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 apprentices' achievements over the previous three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices 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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