

NTS Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		16–18 June 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
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:

- it is very successful in enabling learners' participation and re-engagement in learning; most learners gain useful qualifications and progress to further education or employment
- learners develop good personal, social and employability skills; they gain significantly in self-esteem, their behaviour is good and they are courteous to staff and to one another
- tutors provide very effective coaching and mentoring to help learners make progress in their studies; learners attend regularly and work effectively with staff and their peers
- tutors make particularly effective use of their vocational knowledge to reinforce learning; they are careful to link learning to further study or employment
- recently appointed managers have made beneficial differences in a short time; they are ambitious for the organisation and the contribution it can make to young people's futures
- managers and staff have taken effective action to improve learners' attainment in English and mathematics; a high proportion of learners have recently achieved qualifications in these subjects
- managers make particularly effective use of their partnerships with local agencies to plan a curriculum that meets local, and learners' individual, needs.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- tutors do not always have sufficiently high expectations of learners' punctuality or preparation for learning at the start of lessons, and do not always plan lessons so that the more able learners might extend their learning further
- managers do not collect or make sufficient use of management information and data to monitor learners' and the organisation's progress and help set targets for improvement
- managers do not make sufficient use of formal quality monitoring processes, such as the observation of teaching and learning, to help form clear judgements for self-assessment
- learners from different groups do not all achieve equally well
- the range of opportunities for learners ready to benefit from work experience is too narrow.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that observations of teaching, learning and assessment and other quality monitoring processes are evaluative and provide clear information on strengths and areas for improvement in provision, for self-assessment and to prepare and implement plans for improvement.
- Make better use of information on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to guide the professional development of tutors and improve their practice, for example in planning lessons to meet individual learners' needs, improving learners' punctuality and ensuring learners take more responsibility for preparing for lessons.
- Develop management information systems to gather and analyse data, for example on learners' attendance and achievement, and use it to help monitor progress and set targets for improvement.
- Develop and use criteria to help monitor learners' progress, particularly in the development of their personal, social and employability skills in order to set targets, monitor progress and celebrate learners' achievement of these skills, thereby improving the performance of all learners and closing gaps between the achievement of different groups.
- Widen the range of work experience opportunities available to learners to secure these opportunities and give learners more choice of job role and employer for their work experience.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- NTS is a small independent learning provider offering study programmes at or below level 1 for learners between 16 and 19 years of age. Many have multiple barriers to participation in education and training, a history of low prior attainment and disaffection with education, or have been excluded from school. Learners' primary aim is preparation for further study, apprenticeships or employment. In addition to English, mathematics and preparation for employment, learners study vocational courses in childcare, business administration, music technology or media production. All of NTS's provision was included in the inspection.
- Most learners are successful in their study programmes and gain their planned qualifications. In 2013/14, this good overall achievement masked some low achievement of functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics and business administration. Managers and tutors now place greater emphasis on developing learners' functional skills and monitor learners more closely to ensure they take action more swiftly if they learners are at risk of not achieving. Most of the learners that have already completed their courses this year have achieved their qualifications. Current learners are making good progress towards the achievement of their vocational and English and mathematics qualifications.
- Learners make good progress in their studies and their attendance during the inspection was good. Tutors are very successful at helping learners overcome their reluctance to participate in education, changing these learners' behaviours and attitudes and encouraging them to learn. Learners gain significantly in their self-esteem and self-confidence at NTS. Their behaviour is good and they are respectful and polite to one another and to staff. They apply themselves carefully to their studies and take pride in their work. They develop useful skills that equip them well for future study or employment. For example, in their weekly student council meetings, learners show how they have acquired and can apply valuable team working and committee skills, and willingly take responsibility for implementing council decisions.
- Not all groups of learners do equally well. NTS's largest group of learners is of Bangladeshi heritage and these learners are particularly successful. However, learners of White British heritage, and men, do less well than those from other groups. Managers and tutors now monitor

the progress of these learners particularly closely and take action more rapidly and effectively in order to improve their achievement.

- Learners' progression to further education or employment improved significantly in 2013/14 and is now good. During the current year, over three quarters of the learners on NTS's programmes have progressed to further education or training and some have gone on to achieve qualifications at intermediate and advanced level. A further small proportion of learners have progressed to employment. Others have gained the English and mathematics qualifications to enable them to progress to higher education courses.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
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- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and lead to good progress and attainment by learners. Tutors are particularly adept at building productive working relationships with learners who have a history of poor engagement in education and helping them to participate. Tutors provide lessons that learners enjoy attending. They set high standards for learners' behaviour and give learners very effective encouragement and individual support to enable them to achieve these standards. Learners attend and participate well in lessons and are respectful to their tutors and peers.
- Tutors give learners very effective coaching and personal support to help them make progress in their studies. Tutors place particular emphasis on individual or small group tuition and monitor learners' progress closely to ensure learners succeed. They liaise closely with external agencies, such as social services or youth offending teams, to enable learners to remain in learning or complete their qualifications. Tutors are suitably qualified or experienced to provide this teaching and support.
- In lessons, tutors give good demonstrations or explanations to help learners progress. They make particularly effective use of their vocational knowledge to make learning relevant and enjoyable for learners. In a session on music technology, for example, the tutor made good use of his knowledge of studio rental costs to reinforce learners' understanding of effective time management. However, tutors do not always make sufficient use of questions to involve learners fully in discussion or to probe and extend learners' understanding. Tutors do not always provide more demanding activities for those learners who complete tasks quickly.
- Tutors make effective use of information technology to aid learning and develop learners' ability to learn independently. For example, in a childcare lesson, learners proficiently searched the internet for appropriate images to use in a poster they were designing to advertise jobs in a nursery. However, tutors do not always do enough to encourage learners to prepare well for independent learning; for example, too often they hand out paper, pens and dictionaries at the start of lessons, rather than expecting learners to collect these beforehand. A minority of learners are too casual about punctuality to lessons, despite tutors' challenges to this tardiness.
- When learners join the programme, tutors carry out a thorough assessment of their needs to ensure that they have a suitable programme of study. Tutors give good advice and guidance and are careful to link learning to further study or employment. Learners like the clarity and fairness with which they are treated and value the opportunity to learn vocational skills alongside their functional skills, saying that they gain more than they expected from attending NTS's centres. Following assessment of learners' work, tutors give constructive feedback that learners value; they know what they need to do in order to improve.
- NTS offers a well-managed programme of work experience to those learners who are ready to benefit from it. Learners gain valuable experience from such placements and tutors make good use of workplace practice in their assessments. However, the range of work experience opportunities is narrow and does not offer learners sufficient choice of employer or employment activity to extend their experience more widely.
- Learners have discrete lessons in English and mathematics that develop their skills effectively, and tutors are careful to reinforce these skills in other lessons. For example, in an employment skills lesson, learners reviewed job descriptions and used annual salaries and pay rates to

practise their mathematics. Tutors pay good attention to developing learners' use of correct terminology, grammar and spelling in their written work, for example when learners write letters of application for work experience or compile their curriculum vitae.

- Learners are recruited from a wide range of diverse groups and this diversity is celebrated and used well by staff to provide a harmonious and respectful working environment for learners. Staff place much emphasis on ensuring that learners understand the cultures of different groups within their community. If extremist opinions are discovered, or expressed, staff take suitable action and monitor these learners' behaviour closely.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers are ambitious for the provision and the contribution it can make to learners' lives. They are keen to see the quality of provision improve and are prepared to invest resources in its development. Recently appointed managers have been successful in making significant improvements to provision in a short space of time. Staff share leaders' commitment to improving learners' education and employment prospects and give learners particularly good care and support in order to achieve these aims. However, managers still have work to do to make procedures coherent to ensure there is no slippage in improvement, and to make better use of data to shape NTS's strategy for development.
- Managers have taken effective action to improve teaching, learning and assessment and learners' attainment. They recognise and encourage tutors' strengths in their individual work with learners. In lessons and coaching sessions, tutors now pay greater attention to learners' completion of qualifications, and to the development and achievement of learners' functional skills. They have increased the proportion of learners that benefit from work experience. Managers understand tutors' different qualities and where improvements are needed. Their formal observations of teaching and learning are, however, insufficiently evaluative; they do not identify clearly enough the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning to guide the development of individual or organisational practice.
- Managers monitor attendance at sessions and take action when learners fail to attend regularly. Attendance at sessions during the inspection was good. However, managers do not systematically analyse data on attendance or use it to set targets for attendance across the organisation or for individuals. Managers do not yet make sufficient use of other data, for example on punctuality or preparedness for learning, to measure learners' progress in gaining personal, social and employability skills or to set targets for their development and improvement.
- NTS is a small organisation where managers know the provision and its strengths and areas for improvement well. They have a suitable range of quality assurance procedures and make particularly good use of feedback from learners to make improvements. However, managers' sound knowledge of provision has not translated well into their written self-assessment report. For example, it contains many strengths, but does not include the areas for improvement addressed in the quality improvement plan. The plan does not show how strengths will be maintained or improved further and does not make sufficient use of data or targets for managers to measure success in its implementation. This means that the self-assessment report and quality improvement plan do not help managers drive improvement as effectively as they might.
- NTS's curriculum is well planned to meet local needs and to encourage learners to re-engage in learning. Managers have productive working links with a range of external agencies, such as those working with excluded pupils, those providing information and advice services for young people, the local authority and its social services. Managers' understanding of the local economy and its skills needs is good. Managers make particularly good use of these links and information to plan programmes that meet the needs of these agencies and the local community in enabling disaffected and disadvantaged young people to participate.

- Managers and staff promote equality and diversity well. They are highly successful in creating a harmonious and productive working environment for a diverse group of learners. Staff make good use of the diverse backgrounds and cultures of learners to promote tolerance and respect for one another. They adapt provision effectively to accommodate learners' cultural or religious needs. Managers and staff are particularly effective in meeting the needs of a client group at high risk of social and educational exclusion. However, they have not been sufficiently successful in ensuring that all groups of learners achieve equally well.
- Managers' arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. Their safeguarding policy provides useful guidance for staff. Managers adopt sound safer recruitment practices, including relevant vetting checks when appointing staff, and staff are trained in safeguarding learners. Safeguarding arrangements are well publicised to learners and learners feel safe in attending NTS centres. Managers and staff deal with safeguarding concerns well, and sensitively, taking prompt and appropriate action when these situations arise. They liaise closely with relevant agencies at the local authority and contribute, when necessary, to case conferences on learners to help secure their safety. Promotion of the 'Prevent' strategy to counter radicalisation is well established at NTS's Luton sites, and action is currently under way to progress the strategy in Hounslow.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

NTS 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	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
Outcomes for learners	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16-18							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	128							
Principal/CEO	Mr Taqdeer Pall							
Date of previous inspection	November 2013							
Website address	www.nts-group.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+
	117	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16	9							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	9							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Contextual information

NTS Ltd is a small independent learning provider based in Hounslow, West London. It offers courses at foundation level to young people who would otherwise not be in education or training at its Hounslow centre and at two centres in Luton. Many of these learners have a history of poor educational attainment, disengagement from education or exclusion from school. Levels of deprivation are high in some of the wards from which NTS recruits its learners. At the end of 2014, NTS was sold by its previous owner and its new CEO has since recruited new senior managers to oversee provision.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Penelope Horner HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the Director of Operations 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 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 area 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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