

Meadowhall Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		29 June–3 July 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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:

- success rates and the time taken for apprentices to achieve their qualifications require improvement; there is too much variability across subjects and while improvements have been made in the current year, compared to three years ago, they have declined
- teaching, learning, and assessment are not yet good; tutors do not set high enough expectations for apprentices and, as a result, too many leave without completing their qualification or do not make sufficient progress
- the monitoring and tracking of learners' progress are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that all apprentices make good progress and successfully complete their programme within the agreed timescales
- the teaching of English and mathematical skills is inconsistent across subject areas and does not always develop the skills apprentices need for the workplace
- self-assessment and associated improvement planning arrangements are insufficiently rigorous resulting in success rates in some subject areas not improving quickly enough.

This provider has the following strengths:

- learners improve their skills, confidence and self-esteem and, as a result, are more competent at carrying out their work roles, often taking on more responsibility
- very good support for learners, including additional learning support that helps them succeed
- innovative projects in retailing help learners to engage with the local community and progress into full-time employment
- excellent working partnerships with the Local Enterprise Partnership, employers and the retail skills sector resulting in a curriculum that meets particularly well a wide range of local and regional needs
- good relationships with employers who provide high quality workplaces and progression opportunities for apprentices.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates for apprentices by:
 - quickly identifying any apprentices who may not complete their course so that effective action can help them succeed
 - improving the analysis of management information about learners' progress and outcomes
 - ensuring data are being used to take timely action when learners are at risk of falling behind target or not achieving.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - using the results of initial assessment to plan individual learning programmes accurately, including for English and mathematics
 - providing training and development for tutors so that they improve the impact of their assessment feedback by providing clear and developmental written feedback for learners that makes it clear what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the monitoring and tracking of learners' progress by:
 - ensuring that the electronic learner files are updated regularly and are audited by managers to ensure that the progress of apprentices is good; putting into place help and support when apprentices are at risk of leaving or not completing by their planned end date
 - improving the effectiveness of progress reviews by tutors setting and monitoring clear and challenging short- and medium-term targets.
- Improve the teaching and embedding of English and mathematics by:
 - providing training to staff so that they can ensure all apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills relevant to the workplace
 - monitoring and correcting learners' work and ensuring that all apprentices receive oral and written feedback on spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
- Improve the quality assurance arrangements by:
 - reviewing the self-assessment report and ensuring that all subject areas are included and that areas for improvement are accurately identified
 - setting clear, differentiated targets so that the variability across subject areas is quickly eliminated and progress can be regularly monitored

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meadowhall Training Limited (MTL) provides intermediate, advanced and higher-level apprenticeships for learners aged 16 to 18 years and those over 19 years old. More than three quarters of apprentices are 19 years old or above. These apprenticeships are provided in employers' premises across the country with around three quarters in Yorkshire where the company is based. Around half of the apprenticeships are in retail and administration. Apprentices account for the vast majority of the funding that MTL receives from the Skills Funding Agency. ▪ Following the previous inspection in 2010, overall success rates in apprenticeship programmes declined, falling below that of similar learning providers. They are very low for 19 to 23 year olds at intermediate level where fewer than six out of ten apprentices are successful. They are particularly low for administration, customer service, sport, hospitality and business management. Warehousing and distribution and retail and wholesaling rates are above the low 	

national rate. Pakistani and Caribbean apprentices have lower success rates than other apprentices.

- On all programmes at intermediate and advanced levels the time taken for apprentices to achieve their qualification is too long, with fewer than half of apprentices completing their programmes in the planned time. It is particularly low at advanced level for apprentices aged more than 24 years where only a third achieves in the expected time. In business management, sport and hospitality around one third complete their programme in the expected time.
- In 2013/14, MTL success rates are high for a small number of learners in administration, business management, hospitality, and catering, marketing, retailing and warehousing.
- In the current year, predicted overall success rates have improved. In retail at intermediate and advanced levels they are likely to be above those of similar providers. Administration success rates have improved and they are now likely to be in line with national rates at intermediate level. The newly introduced apprenticeships in contact-centre operations and telesales have high-predicted success rates in the current year.
- Managers have secured improvements in retailing and administration. However, too much variability remains across subjects. While improvements have been made in the current year, compared to three years ago there is a declining trend.
- Success rates for completion within the planned timescale have improved overall compared to last year. They are now predicted to be above national rates, with six out of ten apprentices completing their qualifications in the planned timescales in the current period and up to three quarters predicted to achieve by the end of the year.
- The majority of apprentices are developing new skills which help them progress in their chosen vocational area. For example, they demonstrate good customer service skills in retail, administration, and hospitality settings. Apprentices develop appropriate personal and social skills in the workplace such as communicating with customers.
- Apprentices work in a variety of settings and the large majority benefit from supportive employers who are keen for them to succeed. However, not all workplace managers are routinely involved in planning learning or assessments, resulting in slow progress for around a third of apprentices.
- Apprentices gain the necessary English and mathematics skills to achieve the functional skills elements of their apprenticeship frameworks. However, they rarely follow higher-level qualifications to improve these skills further. The development of English and mathematical skills relevant to the workplace varies across subject areas and this requires improvement.
- A high proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programmes remain in employment in jobs that are well matched to local priorities. Around a third of apprentices who complete intermediate-level apprenticeships progress to advanced level. The newly-introduced traineeships have good progression rates with more than three quarters of learners progressing to employment or an apprenticeship at the end of their programme.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Three subject areas, comprising just over half of the learners, were inspected directly. Inspectors visited lessons and talked to apprentices in warehousing and distribution, hospitality, and marketing and sales. They also talked to learners on the traineeship programme and observed their lessons.
- Apprentices who remain on the programmes are enthusiastic about their learning and training, and appreciate how the qualifications they gain improve their future prospects. They are motivated to learn and work hard to be successful.
- Traineeship learners benefit from an appropriately designed programme that prepares them very effectively for progressing into apprenticeships or employment. They enjoy their lessons and understand how improving their English and mathematical skills helps them in their work. They develop and practise their skills in carefully selected, good quality work placements.

- Tutors work highly effectively with apprentices and learners. They provide very good and flexible support for learning to help them overcome barriers to learning and to succeed. Apprentices and learners who have additional learning needs are very effectively supported, for example by receiving more frequent visits from tutors in the workplace.
- Apprentices improve their confidence and self-esteem and are more competent at carrying out their work roles, often taking on more responsibility, for example producing performance reports, managing teams in a coffee shop and raising funds for a hospice. The majority of apprentices are in well-supported, quality workplaces where they develop a range of vocational skills. However, not all apprentices develop the English and mathematical skills that support their work roles as well as they could.
- Tutors are knowledgeable and experienced in their subjects and make good use of their expertise to provide employment-related explanations which help apprentices to develop a better understanding of their occupational sector. A minority of tutors set high expectations for apprentices and learners but in the majority of sessions tutors do not challenge all learners adequately to ensure they reach their full potential. Although initial assessments of English and mathematics are timely, tutors do not always use the results sufficiently when planning learning to ensure that apprentices make maximum progress.
- The majority of tutors make good use of video clips and learning resources, such as handouts, to stimulate discussion and enhance learning. Their skilful and targeted questioning checks apprentices' and learners' understanding effectively. However, in a few sessions apprentices lose interest because tutors spend too much time explaining. The vast majority of apprentices are using the electronic portfolio and recording system; however, not all tutors, and apprentices use the system effectively and to its full potential to record evidence and monitor progress. During the inspection a minority of apprentices' records were not up to date; as a result, these apprentices are making slow progress.
- Apprentices' written work is adequate and some is of a good standard. They receive good oral feedback to enable them to improve their performance. However, written feedback is insufficient. Tutors provide encouragement and apprentices know what they have done correctly, but areas of improvement are not identified sufficiently and as a result, a minority of apprentices are not reaching their full potential.
- Although employers are supportive, too few are sufficiently involved in the review of apprentices' progress. Targets are set for achievement of units in the vocational qualifications but they do not consistently identify personal development and learning needs or the workplace training. As a result, the actions set for apprentices are insufficiently precise. Short-term targets set in the vast majority of progress reviews lack detail of what apprentices need to do to improve and this is contributing to their slow progress.
- The planning, promotion and development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills are variable. For example, apprentices in retail develop and demonstrate good skills in English and mathematics, which are integrated skilfully into sessions. However, in warehousing, tutors do not fully integrate English and mathematics into their teaching and assessment practice and, consequently, apprentices' progress in improving their skills is slower than it is in other vocational areas.
- Information, advice, and guidance for both learners and employers have recently improved so that apprentices are enrolled onto the correct programmes. Employers are now fully informed about their commitment to the apprenticeships. Good pre-course materials enable apprentices to understand the requirements of their course.
- Apprentices and learners enjoy their courses, feel safe, and have a good understanding of safeguarding. They are aware of their rights and responsibilities and gain a better understanding of equality and diversity and how these apply to their workplaces. Questions to apprentices about health and safety, and equality and diversity in their reviews do not always test and extend their knowledge sufficiently.

Retail and wholesaling**Apprenticeships**

Good

Teaching, learning, and assessment in retailing are good because:

- apprentices develop good workplace and employability skills; they grow in confidence and improve their skills in, for example, customer service, team working and keeping colleagues and customers safe, thus enabling them to be more effective in the workplace
- tutors have good retail-industrial experience; they set high expectations and develop positive relationships with apprentices that help them to improve their performance and meet their aspirations
- apprentices develop transferable skills they can use in the retail sector as a result of tutors working effectively with high-quality employers to plan learning that meets the needs of the apprentices and their job roles
- managers develop innovative and effective community projects; apprentices take part in local retail initiatives and the large majority who do so progress into full-time employment
- apprentices make good progress during tutors' workplace visits and demonstrate their learning successfully, for example, in describing how to meet the individual needs of customers when planning a visual display in their store; tutors use good oral assessment methods in the workplace, including effective and probing questioning
- apprentices' learning is often extended by tutors beyond the requirements of their programme to help them achieve their potential; apprentices develop effective communication and leadership skills that enable them to gain additional responsibilities within their job role, for example leading team briefings
- English and mathematics are integrated into learning activities very effectively by tutors; apprentices are then able to develop these skills and use them regularly within the workplace, for example using sales information and floor space to plan store layout and then present their findings to their colleagues in a report.

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

- the results of initial assessment are not used sufficiently by tutors to plan learning; targets are often too general, not individual to the apprentice and not sufficiently helpful in enabling apprentices to make swifter progress, for example, targets in apprentices' portfolios consist of a list of units to achieve within a qualification
- tutors' written feedback to apprentices requires improvement; feedback recognises achievements to date but is not sufficiently helpful in identifying how apprentices can improve their work and make better progress
- tutors do not sufficiently monitor the progress of all apprentices; they do not identify and put actions in place to support apprentices who are making slow progress or are at risk of leaving early, resulting in a minority of apprentices falling behind in their learning or not completing their course.

Administration**Apprenticeships**

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in administration require improvement because:

- overall success rates declined in the previous three years and, despite improvements this year to slightly above the national rate, they are still too low at advanced level

- apprentices’ learning is insufficiently monitored by tutors and this results in a minority of apprentices making slow progress , while those who are making better progress are insufficiently stimulated or challenged
- many apprentices do not know precisely what they have to do or complete because not all tutors set clear short-term targets; in a minority of cases short-term targets do not extend the more able apprentices who do not realise their full potential
- too many tutors are not sufficiently adept at using the electronic portfolio to accurately record evidence for technical certificates, assessments and functional skills, resulting in unreliable and incomplete tracking of apprentices’ progress
- apprentices’ English, mathematical, and information and communication technology skills are not fully developed; although a few tutors use appropriate work-related tasks, there is no consistent approach; as a result, not all apprentices reach their potential when developing these skills.

In administration the provider has the following strengths:

- apprentices acquire a good range of administrative skills, including customer service, sales and costing, receptionist duties and travel and events management
- many apprentices gain self-confidence and good workplace experience which effectively prepares them for the world of work; tutors develop good links with high-quality employers who provide very good support for apprentices
- many apprentices are engaged in learning sessions very effectively especially where tutors use a variety of resources, including information and learning technology
- the majority of tutors contextualise learning successfully; they cover a variety of topics specific to apprentices’ programmes, for example in performance management, recycling and sustainability, equality and diversity, and risk assessment
- tutors foster strong relationships with apprentices; they provide good support for apprentices who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adapting sessions with the help of specialist learning advisers when necessary and making more frequent visits to workplaces.

Business management	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	

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

- in the previous year success rates have declined, with too few apprentices completing their programme by the planned end date; however, in the current year this has improved
- planning for learning requires improvement; not all tutors adequately plan and structure lessons in order to meet individual learning needs; as a result, a minority of apprentices make slow progress
- target-setting requires improvement because targets are too vague and variable; too many targets relate to the completion of units and they are insufficiently focused on the development of individual apprentices’ personal and professional development needs
- written feedback to apprentices, including for English, requires improvement; tutors mark work and give apprentices feedback on their achievements but they do not give sufficient developmental feedback that helps them to improve the quality and accuracy of their work

In business management the provider has the following strengths:

- apprentices develop good working relationships with their tutors; most apprentices are enthusiastic, stay focused and make progress in learning during lessons

- tutors develop good working relationships with employers; many employers provide good on-the-job learning opportunities and ensure that apprentices become proficient in their job roles and take on more responsibility when they are ready to do so
- apprentices develop a good range of skills that are relevant to the world of work, for example leadership skills, action planning, and handling of conflict
- tutors use a good variety of resources very effectively and these promote and enhance learning; tutors use video clips and well-presented workbooks that help to engage apprentices and enliven their learning
- in the current year achievement rates are high and progression to higher levels of study or into permanent or promoted posts is good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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- Senior managers are ambitious for the organisation and are committed to enhancing its reputation as a leading provider of work-based learning. They aim to deliver training programmes that engage, inspire, and enable all learners to achieve their full potential. However, managers and trustees recognise the need to improve the provision.
- Significant company restructuring and organisational changes have been made over the past two years to help senior managers realise their ambitions. Senior managers are now collectively focusing on reversing the decline in success rates, improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and increasing the retention of apprentices. Trustees endorse senior managers' aspirations to be a highly regarded work-based learning provider. They have a wealth of experience in complementary roles at senior-executive level. They use this experience very professionally to support and challenge senior managers and to hold them to account for continuously improving organisational effectiveness and learners' experiences. The Trustees are aware of the need to improve success rates more quickly.
- Staff underperformance is now more quickly identified and action is taken to eliminate it. Staff who were unable or unwilling to accept the new ways of working have left the organisation. Team leaders have clearly defined responsibilities for managing a team of work-based learning tutors. The head of operations, through weekly meetings with team leaders, evaluates their effectiveness and efficiency. Communication within the organisation is very good and is facilitated by a wide range of weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings.
- More use is now made of management information to produce reports that enable managers to have oversight of the provision. Data are not always accurate or used effectively to monitor the progress of learners. The progress of individual learners cannot be accurately tracked at subject level. As a result managers are not able to quickly identify apprentices at risk of making slow progress.
- The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous. Some subject areas, for example, warehousing and distribution, and hospitality are not included. Self-assessment also failed to recognise the low success rates in previous years. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management are graded too highly. The targets in the accompanying quality improvement plan do not focus sharply enough on improving poorly performing subjects more rapidly.
- Managers introduced a systematic process for observing teaching, learning and assessment 18 months ago. A productive partnership has been developed with another work-based learning provider; joint observations are offering good opportunities for each provider to validate the accuracy of their reports and the grades awarded. Key strengths and areas for improvement do not always place enough emphasis on learners, their learning and their progress.
- Good relationships have been developed with employers, many of whom provide high-quality workplaces for apprentices. Excellent working partnerships have been developed with a wide range of local, regional, and national organisations, such as Sheffield City Region Local

Enterprise Partnership, and the National Retail Skills Academy. Innovative projects in retailing help learners to engage with the local community and progress into full-time employment.

- Senior managers are very responsive to local and national priorities and are in the forefront of sector developments. Managers are extremely knowledgeable about the local and regional employment opportunities and vocational training needs. As a result, they have recently introduced traineeships in retail and administration which are resulting in more than three quarters of learners progressing onto an apprenticeship or into employment.
- A good range of apprenticeship programmes is available at intermediate, advanced and higher levels. Managers are involved with the local university in the development of a graduate qualification for work-based learners. Most employers are now better informed about the commitment needed for apprentices to succeed. English, mathematics, and information and communication technology are not fully integrated into all the apprenticeship programmes. Not all learners are stretched and challenged to develop their English and mathematical competencies to the highest possible level.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well by MTL. Learners and staff are protected from harassment, bullying, discrimination, and unfair treatment because British values are upheld through effective policies and procedures. All staff receive annual training at an appropriate level. If complaints are received, they are recorded and investigated fully. The provider is actively seeking to recruit apprentices from under-represented groups. In reviews tutors do not always test and extend apprentices' knowledge of equality and diversity well enough or link it to workplace practice.
- Processes and procedures to safeguard learners are good. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements. Two designated safeguarding officers are suitably trained. All staff who work with learners are correctly checked and a single central register is maintained. Learners say they feel safe. Safeguarding incidents are discussed at board level and are taken very seriously by senior management. Good links have been made with external organisations, for example the local domestic abuse centre, adult social care and the local safeguarding children's board, and learners are referred to appropriate organisations when the need arises. Recently staff have received 'Prevent' training but most learners have not yet been informed of the dangers associated with terrorism, extremism, and radicalisation.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Provider name Meadowhall Training Limited

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
Retail and wholesaling	2
Administration	3
Business management	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16-18 and 19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1795							
Managing Director	Ann Cadman							
Date of previous inspection	December 2010							
Website address	thesource@meadowhall							
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+
	7	3	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	156	317	28	199	N/A	41		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	7		3		10			
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:	N/A							

Contextual information

Meadowhall Training Limited (MTL) is an independent training provider. Established in 1999, MTL is part of British Land Ltd. The Meadowhall Centre is a large shopping complex on the outskirts of Sheffield. MTL offers apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher level, funded by the Skills Funding Agency, in retail and commercial enterprises and business, administration and law. MTL offers training across most of the English regions. The large majority of apprentices are located in Yorkshire. Many are employed by various retailers situated at the Meadowhall Centre or employers in the South Yorkshire region. The proportion of people unemployed in Sheffield at 8.6% is slightly higher than that for the Yorkshire and Humber region. Around 5.9% of young people are not in education, employment, or training.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Andrea Machell HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the Quality 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

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