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Mr Stephen Howard
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Dear Mr Howard

Short inspection of V Learning Net

Following the short inspection on 3 and 4 November 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in November 2009.

This provider continues to be good.

The strengths observed at the previous inspection have been maintained and there has been good progress to address the areas for improvement identified. Significant changes in the staffing of the leaders and senior managers since the last inspection have led to more robust governance and a clearer focus on developing the provision to meet community needs. Trustees are actively involved in the management of the provision and challenge all strategic proposals appropriately.

Leaders at V Learning Net (VLN) manage the partner organisations with which it works effectively, ensuring that they deliver good quality programmes that learners complete successfully within the allotted time. Partners value the regular and frequent quality improvement visits, which not only monitor performance, but also promote improvement through a well-developed programme of professional development events. Attendance at these events is compulsory, ensuring that all partners are kept up to date with new developments.

Typically, learners come from very disadvantaged backgrounds with multiple barriers to learning. They make good progress and a very significant number of them move into further training or employment. Support for learners is excellent and learners make significant progress in developing good personal and social skills. However, managers do not record centrally the development of these skills and therefore are not always aware of this progress.

Tutors provide good quality teaching, learning and assessment. They go out of their way to ensure that they meet the specific needs of a wide variety of learner. For example, providing support for disabled learners with very specific needs.

At the previous inspection, inspectors judged that your leadership and management were good. The senior management team had a clear strategic vision and had managed the provision effectively. It had modified the provision to meet the needs of the targeted learner groups and the community better. Outcomes for learners were good, with a significant majority of learners achieving their qualifications and progressing well into positive outcomes, such as further training and employment. Teaching and learning were good. Managers worked effectively to monitor and manage the partner organisations. The promotion of safeguarding was effective, but there was insufficient promotion of the awareness of equality and diversity within the teaching.

Leaders and managers have taken decisive action to improve the quality of the provision and have moved the provision forward. The impact is clear because:

- the very significant number of learners who complete their qualification has increased further and success rates are high
- the few gaps in performance between groups have been closed, especially through the very successful 'I can achieve' programme for learners aged 16 to 18
- robust governance has provided a clearer focus on the changing employment needs within the community and has provided better management of the provision to meet those needs
- improvements in the procedures for observing teaching and learning have provided more accurate reports and better guidance on what needs to be improved in teaching and learning.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers continue to keep learners safe. All staff have had the appropriate security checks, and managers at VLN check the records of all staff in their partner organisations to ensure that they are up to date. Managers have risk assessed all partner venues and ensured that they are covered by up-to-date health and safety policies. Designated safeguarding officers have been trained to the appropriate level and are headed by the chief executive officer who is a trained Prevent officer. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and managers monitor any potential safeguarding issues in their partners closely. Nearly all partner staff have completed training to promote their understanding of the Channel programme as part of VLN's response to the Government's Prevent strategy. Learners' understanding of safeguarding is good.

Inspection findings

- Governance is robust, with a board of trustees who are actively involved in supporting the management of the provision and who exercise appropriate challenge to any strategic initiatives. Leaders and managers develop the provision well to meet local and national needs and also to take account of the changes in funding requirements.
- A very large majority of learners complete their qualification successfully within the allotted time. They enjoy their learning and many make significant improvements to their social and personal skills. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications successfully in English and mathematics has risen, but it is not yet high enough. Not enough apprentices complete their apprenticeships and gain their qualifications within planned timescales.
- The vast majority of learners progress into further training or employment. The number of learners with unknown destinations has reduced significantly. However, the number of learners who do not continue in education, employment or training after achieving their qualification is too low.
- Managers use management information well to monitor the progress of learners within each of the partner organisations. Quality visits check performance and also identify best practice. Partners share this information at the continuing professional development training sessions and make improvements as a result.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, although a small amount of teaching requires improvement. Observations of teaching and learning are managed well and contribute effectively towards staff appraisal and continuing professional development. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved.
- Support for learners is excellent. Staff are particularly good at resolving the equality and diversity issues relating to the welfare of their learners and also challenge effectively any unacceptable behaviour. The promotion of learners' awareness of equality and diversity such as cultural, age and gender differences is not yet fully effective.
- Managers have made good progress in meeting the needs of the government's Prevent agenda, with nearly all VLN and partner staff having completed the training about the Channel programme. Learners are aware of the risks about extremist behaviour and know how to avoid becoming involved with extremist organisations.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- more learners gain their qualifications in English and mathematics by providing more support to learners
- the proportion of apprentices achieving their qualification in the allotted time improves
- managers monitor and record learners' development of personal and social skills across the partners in order to maintain this progress

- good practice, some of which is outstanding, is shared widely and promptly across the provision
- learners' understanding of equality and awareness of diversity is enhanced by better promotion in their programmes and training.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charles Clark
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by the chief executive officer as nominee. We met you, senior leaders and members of your staff. We visited seven of your main partners to meet with staff and learners, observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners and employers by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires and by seeking the views of learners and partners during on-site inspection activity.