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Mrs Nikki Bardsley
Head of Quality
Kaplan Financial Limited
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St James' Building
79 Oxford Street
Manchester
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Dear Mrs Bardsley

Short inspection of Kaplan Financial Limited

Following the short inspection on 9–10 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in May 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

- You, senior leaders and managers continue to make a significant contribution to training apprentices for careers in the financial services sector. Highly effective leadership and management have continued to provide good training and learning for apprentices which, together with strong partnerships with employers, lead to continuing high rates of achievement for the large majority of apprentices.
- You have continued to play an influential role in the sector, making an important contribution to the development of new apprenticeship models in collaboration with large employers, policy makers and other partners.
- Developments since the last inspection include successfully introducing traineeships and achieving good outcomes for trainees. You have also fostered strategic partnerships to diversify and widen your offer of training locally.
- You are fully aware of the areas for further improvement and have robust plans in place to ensure that all aspects of your provision consistently achieve high standards of training and outcomes for all groups of learners.

Safeguarding is effective.

- Appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding are in place and work well. These are regularly reviewed. Staff have benefited from training in safeguarding and 'Prevent'. Further briefings and updates continue as a regular feature of staff development. Leaders and managers have specified a clear and appropriate action plan for 'Prevent'. As a national provider, Kaplan has organised local links for safeguarding in the local authority areas where training centres are located. Further development of these links would benefit managers and staff in their awareness of regional and local priorities.
- Apprentices and other learners receive information and training on safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' agenda, at induction. All learners feel safe and have a sound understanding of how to take responsibility for their own safety. Work is in progress to help learners develop further their understanding of 'Prevent' and the risks associated with radicalisation and dangers of extremism. Kaplan managers understand fully the need to embed this deeper understanding with apprentices and other learners still further.

Inspection findings

- Leaders and managers have strengthened the arrangements for improving teaching, learning and assessment. They apply the observation process rigorously. Managers observe training and assessment thoroughly and make robust judgements. Plans to improve the work of individual trainers have a clear focus on learning and on apprentices' progress and outcomes. Managers use the findings from observations to identify areas for improvement which are used in staff development and performance management. Support and development for staff to improve their skills are good. Trainers employ good assessment strategies which ensure that apprentices make good progress. Managers systematically apply the quality improvement strategy underpinning the development of teaching, learning and assessment, using regular quarterly reviews to monitor progress and to identify further improvement.
- The introduction of traineeships has gone well. Through good planning, managers have ensured that all aspects of the programme are covered. A particularly strong feature of the programme has been the emphasis on carefully selecting good-quality employment placements. This work experience, together with good teaching and learning, enables trainees to make good progress. The results, in terms of positive destinations for traineeships in the first full year, have been very good for the large majority. Managers have put in place sound strategies to develop a range of career pathways, which are broadening the scope of the opportunities the programme provides for learners. Plans to evaluate the early implementation of the programme are in place.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good for apprentices and all other learners. As a result, standards of work produced by apprentices are very good. The arrangements for assessment of apprentices' skills development and progress in the workplace are flexible and well managed with good support by employers. Teaching and tuition are strong features and include good examples of skilful questioning and professional discussion with apprentices to deepen understanding and extend knowledge of accountancy principles and practices. Apprentices value the skills and experience of their teachers and assessors, who are well qualified and use their expertise and current industry practices to support apprentices' learning and development very effectively. Employers contribute well to the apprenticeship programme and on- and off-the-job training are planned and integrated effectively.
- Apprentices use and benefit from the very good and consistently high-quality learning resources. They carry out effective independent learning which contributes greatly to the progress they make. Learners benefit from customised learning methods in the classroom, through which they follow a structured course, enjoying the flexibility and freedom of online learning as well as individual interaction with a tutor.
- The vast majority of apprentices start their programmes having achieved GCSE English and mathematics qualifications at grades A to C. Development of skills in these subjects continue throughout their programmes. However, this development is largely informal and not planned or reviewed like other learning, with the result that skills are not systematically developed or maximised for individual learners.
- Strong governance, leadership and management have maintained and improved strategic partnership working at national, regional and local levels. Kaplan has made a significant contribution to the development of trailblazers through its influential work in developing new apprenticeship models for the sector in collaboration with policy makers and large employers. Leaders and managers work with local enterprise partnerships to align provision with local and regional priorities. The insight and research Kaplan produces contributes to the sector in, for example, the report on school leaver recruitment. Kaplan worked closely with employers to identify best practice and ways employers can improve their recruitment of apprentices, particularly in recruiting those aged 16–18 years old. At a regional and local level, Kaplan has developed collaborative partnerships, including with subcontractors, to extend carefully and strategically the types of programmes it can offer.
- Highly effective performance by Kaplan leaders, managers and staff has sustained and improved high levels of successful outcomes for the very large majority of apprentices and trainees. Very high numbers of apprentices progress through intermediate and advanced levels of apprenticeships and professional qualifications and into responsible positions in the sector with sustainable and rewarding careers. Recently, however, the number of apprentices achieving higher-level apprenticeships, and those over 24 years of age achieving any apprenticeship, has declined. The reasons for this have been identified clearly by managers, and robust actions are in place to ensure

future improvement. The proportion of adult learners moving from employability programmes onto positive destinations has declined and is low. This decline has also been identified and work is in progress to re-design and implement changes in the way these programmes are delivered.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- more apprentices gain higher-level qualifications, by ensuring that initial assessment examines closely the motivation and career aspirations of entrants to apprenticeships at this level; by carefully determining the commitment to completing the full qualification, including production of evidence for competence in the workplace; and by encouraging apprentices to continue training when they change employers
- more adult learners secure positive destinations, by building into their learning programmes more opportunities to experience different types of jobs and work contexts, and by working with employers to present more opportunities for employment
- apprentices continue to develop their English and mathematical skills, by integrating the learning of these skills into the main programmes of learning; by using naturally occurring opportunities more to focus on the importance of these skills in professional development; by including the development of English and mathematical skills in reviews of progress; by systematically providing correction, feedback and improvement strategies
- apprentices and all learners develop good understanding of 'Prevent', by considering the risks associated with radicalisation and terrorism; and by having regular learning opportunities to consider 'Prevent' and the key importance of British values.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Derrick Spragg
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the short inspection, we were assisted by the quality manager as nominee. We met with senior leaders, managers, staff, employers and apprentices. We observed teaching, learning and assessment both on and off the job. We discussed with apprentices their views on their experience in training, and reviewed the quality of their work, their progress and the skills they had mastered.