

GK Training Services Limited

Independent learning provider



17–19 November 2015

Inspection dates

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and tutors understand the needs of learners and the local community very well, enabling them to help learners to make effective choices about their destination goals.
- Leaders promote a culture of respect for individual differences and diversity very well and as a result learners demonstrate tolerance towards each other and a good understanding of diversity.
- As a result of good teaching, learning and assessment, a large majority of learners make good progress through their learning programmes and develop their English and mathematical skills very well.
- Almost all learners achieve their vocational, English and mathematics qualifications.
- A significant majority of learners who left in 2015 progressed into traineeships, employment, apprenticeships and higher-level courses.
- Support for learners is very effective and helps learners make good progress and gain confidence.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Teaching and learning is not always sufficiently varied or individualised to promote effective learning.
- Tutors do not systematically summarise learners' progress towards their targets and personal and social development to reflect accurately their progress over time.
- Too few current learners are able to take advantage of timely work experience.
- Written feedback on learners' work is too often descriptive and does not clearly tell them how they can improve.
- Lesson observations do not focus sufficiently on what tutors need to do to improve the pace and quality of lessons.

Full report

Information about the provider

- GK Training Services (GKTS) Limited is a privately owned company established in 2005, specialising in retail and customer services. It is located in Leigh town centre and offers study programmes to learners across the East Wigan borough. GKTS has a direct contract to deliver study programmes for 16–19-year-olds. The large majority of GKTS' learners have a range of significant difficulties which prevent learning, and a history of academic underachievement, especially in English and mathematics. Only a very small minority of learners join the study programme with a GCSE at grade C or above in English and mathematics.
- GKTS offers a 17-week study programme to around 85 learners a year. During the inspection, 19 learners were on the programme. GKTS offers traineeships and apprenticeships through a subcontracting arrangement with Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) but these programmes are not within the scope of this inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Provide further training for managers to enable them to carry out lesson observations with a consistent approach to identifying and recording the quality of learning taking place. Ensure that they identify clear strengths and areas for improvement relating to learning as well as specific development points for tutors to ensure that all lessons are good or better.
- Develop opportunities for tutors to share good practice so that all lessons are planned to meet the needs of individual learners. Ensure that all lessons incorporate a variety of activities to promote good learning and progress. Monitor the quality of these developments through lesson observations.
- Ensure full implementation of the plan for all learners to be prepared for and experience high-quality work placements. Establish and monitor a central record of learners' work placements in relation to the quality and level of learners' engagement.
- Establish clear criteria for tutors to provide written feedback on learners' portfolios that enable learners to improve the quality of their written work. Monitor the quality of tutors' feedback and share best practice.
- Ensure that individual learning plans include clear targets for learners' personal and social development, and that the recording of learners' progress against all targets is accurate and specific and provides a clear summary of skills developed over time. Monitor the quality of the tracking of learners' progress and skills development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers have an effective focus on the quality of the provision and have high expectations of learners. Managers enable a high level of effective and individual support. As a result, learners make good gains in their skills, confidence and understanding.
- Leaders understand the needs of learners and the local community very well, and as a result help learners to identify realistic long-term goals. They have well-established external links for safeguarding, and more recently have been developing links with employers for work experience. The curriculum matches the needs and vocational interests of the majority of learners well in relation to their destination goals.
- Managers acknowledge in the self-assessment report that the provision of work experience for current learners is not sufficiently effective, and are implementing a detailed action plan. They aim to promote work experience to learners and ensure that it is integrated effectively into their individual programmes within the next month.
- Senior managers focus well on improving teaching, learning and assessment through professional development and close monitoring of staff performance. Regular observations of lessons are effective in identifying and rectifying a range of issues relating to health and safety, the quality of resources and how well learners participate in lessons. Good use is made of feedback from learners during observations to identify areas for improvement. Observers are improving their skill at judging the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment. Their written feedback is detailed, but a few observers focus too much on teaching rather than assessing its impact on learning.
- Managers systematically check the quality of the study programme, and engage all staff in the quality assurance process. Staff are involved in making judgements and grading aspects of the self-assessment report. Data are used well to identify strengths and monitor learners' achievement of their qualifications effectively.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and in agreement with many of the findings of the inspection. However, it does not sufficiently disaggregate the quality of the study programme from the separate subcontracted traineeship and apprenticeship provision.
- Leaders promote a culture of respect for individual differences and diversity very well. Leaders, managers and tutors have high expectations of learners and encourage them to demonstrate respect for each other and explore diversity through the programme. Managers and staff understand well their learners' needs, and their significant personal and social issues which hinder learning and progress. They use a supportive and individualised approach to meet learners' needs and expectations, and to exceed them where possible. Action to promote equality and diversity is good. Leaders closely monitor the achievement of different groups of learners and have identified that none are underperforming.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Directors convey high expectations to staff. They set clear and specific targets for the operations manager and tutors in relation to learners' progress towards and achievement of qualifications, learners' enrolment on programmes and completion of staff training.
 - Leaders effectively monitor staff targets during monthly individual performance meetings and review carefully those learners at risk of not completing their qualifications.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding**
 - Effective safeguarding arrangements are underpinned by detailed policies and procedures, and supported by appropriate criminal records and other checks on staff. A comprehensive process is in place to identify and monitor learners at risk. Individual risk assessments are incorporated well into learners' assessments and support reviews.
 - Learners feel safe and know whom to contact if they have safeguarding or health and safety concerns. The prevention of bullying is managed very well. GKTS has responded well to the government's requirements to raise understanding of the risk of extremism and radicalisation. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of these issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors plan programmes carefully and in detail. They have good skills, training and experience in vocational subjects. Learners make good progress through effective guidance in lessons and in regular, individual support lessons. Learners enjoy their classes and the majority are challenged to work hard to complete tasks and make good progress. In a small minority of lessons, tutors use too limited a range of activities and do not tailor learning sufficiently well to meet individual learners' needs.
- Support for learners is very effective. Learners appreciate the range of support from tutors, and feel valued and more in control of their lives. Learners report that tutors listen to them and enable them to make decisions. Learners with multiple problems which hinder learning are supported very effectively to gain in confidence, so that they travel independently, attend regularly and participate in lessons.
- Staff conduct thorough progress reviews to monitor learners' progress, and they provide verbal feedback on how learners can improve. Learners enjoy the opportunity to reflect on their progress and the good gains they make in skills, confidence and understanding. However, written feedback on learners' work is too often descriptive and does not tell them clearly what steps they can take to improve their work.
- Tutors ensure that learners' individual learning plans include clear targets for English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) as well as for wider vocational qualifications. However, the plans do not routinely include specific targets for personal development or behaviour. Staff identify, monitor and record progress on personal development issues in detail in a range of records including assessments, learner support meetings and progress reviews. However, learners' progress towards their personal development targets is not systematically summarised to accurately reflect their progress over time.
- Tutors develop learners' work-related skills effectively in lessons. Learners have opportunities to attend external work preparation events, and benefit from external trainers who deliver lessons on keeping healthy, staying safe and welfare issues. A few learners have had work experience prior to joining the programme, and a minority have part-time volunteering jobs. An action plan is in place for work placements to start this term. Although not all learners are yet ready for work experience, those with the skills, experience and confidence would benefit from a placement at an earlier stage in their programme to develop their workplace skills.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity appropriately using resources that prompt discussion about tolerance and respect. Learners are encouraged to consider the wide range of diverse groups in British society. They demonstrate good understanding of diversity, tolerance and the dangers of radicalisation. Learners design a good range of effective and useful posters to promote equality and celebrate diversity that are displayed throughout the centre. Groups produce their own behaviour codes which focus well on respect, listening to others and behaving fairly.
- The development of learners' functional skills is very effective. The initial assessment of learners' skills and levels of attainment in English, mathematics and ICT is thorough. Learners are assessed quickly and registered on the appropriate qualification level ranging from entry level to level 2. Learners who make good progress at level 1 are supported to move quickly to the next level in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Learners are motivated and enjoy their lessons; as a result, attendance and punctuality are good. They understand the importance of their studies in improving their opportunities to progress into further training and a job. They organise their portfolios well and take pride in the good standard of work they do. They work diligently in lessons and make good progress.
- Advice and guidance for learners' progression onto the next stage of their careers are effectively provided through progress reviews and attendance at careers events. Learners identify a range of longer-term aspirations in addition to their current programmes in retail and customer service, and how to progress towards those aspirations. For example, learners routinely carry out research on different vocational careers and produced detailed information on the skills and qualifications needed.
- A few learners have prior experience in the workplace. Current learners have not yet taken part in work placements but detailed plans are in place to implement these in the current term across a range of relevant vocational choices. In their plans, managers are focusing appropriately on learners who have the skills and confidence to benefit from work placements straightaway, while working with other learners to develop these skills.
- Tutors guide learners well while completing their qualifications. Tutors are responsive and provide a good level of individual support. Qualifications are well matched to learners' ability, skills and knowledge.

- Learners' behaviour is very good. They are polite, helpful, take good account of the needs of their peers and offer each other support in lessons. Learners are very tolerant of and celebrate the diversity of their peers, a number of whom have learning difficulties.
- The majority of learners develop as confident communicators. They learn to develop understanding of complex issues and express their feelings and views well in group discussions. In one session, learners demonstrated good understanding of the 'Prevent' strategy and discussed issues related to radicalisation.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Tutors skilfully provide a high level of effective support for individual learners. As a result, most learners achieve a functional skills qualification in English, mathematics and ICT, and make good progress from their starting points. A small minority of current learners have progressed on to an English and/or mathematics qualification at one level higher than their initial assessment.
- The large majority of learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications in customer service or retail, and employability skills. In the last year, a small number of learners progressed to level 2 in their employability skills qualification. The large majority of learners complete work to a good standard.
- Few gaps exist in achievement between different groups of learners. Managers make good use of data to monitor achievement across different learner groups and take action to support those at risk of falling behind. Current learners are making good progress towards their targets.
- A significant majority of learners who completed their study programme in 2014/15 progressed into traineeships, employment, apprenticeships or into further education courses at a higher level. For example, one learner progressed from the study programme into a traineeship at GKTS and gained employment with her work placement provider; in this job she plans to start her level 2 apprenticeship in January 2016.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	85
Managing Director	Graham Roe
Website address	www.gktrainingservices.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No subcontracted provision 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Margaret Hobson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Margaret Thompson

Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning lessons, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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