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Miss Sally Lucas
Executive Director
Coventry and Warwickshire
Chamber of Commerce Training Ltd
Commerce House
St Nicholas Street
Coventry CV1 4FD

Dear Miss Lucas

Short inspection of Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce Training Ltd (CWCT)

Following the short inspection on 24–25 February 2016, 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 CWCT was judged to be good in November 2009.

Because of the length of time that has elapsed since the previous full inspection, inspectors prepared lines of enquiry drawn from your own most recent self-assessment report. Our findings are set out under these lines of enquiry.

This provider continues to be good.

Your ability to assess and improve the quality of the programmes you offer, the experience that apprentices have and the extent to which you meet the needs of local and regional employers are very good and support your continued capacity to be good. You skilfully analysed the reasons that led to apprentices making slower than expected progress through their qualifications in 2014/15 and rapidly introduced a wide range of measures to rectify this decline. Early indications are that these measures are rapidly returning your achievement rates to their previously very high levels. Most apprentices have taken at least one functional skills test this year and most of them have passed.

Managers use information from themed observations of teaching, learning and assessment and quality audits well to review and continually improve provision to meet the needs of apprentices and employers. In one example, observation themes exploring the quality and effectiveness of feedback to apprentices on their work led to robust staff development in how to provide the most useful feedback and set specific targets leading to timely achievement. In another example, observation

themes exploring employers' engagement enabled managers and internal verifiers to improve their understanding of the specific needs of particular employers and ensure that the apprentices made rapid progress and achieved the qualification within the planned time.

Training advisers and their managers now monitor apprentices' progress closely through detailed weekly reports. Those falling behind receive prompt support including attendance at additional workshops, additional visits from training advisers, individual support and more involvement of their employers. As a result of these interventions, current apprentices make good progress and develop valuable employment and technical skills as well as confidence at work.

One of the factors you identified in the decline in apprentices' achievement within the planned time was functional skills arrangements. Some of the difficulties were linked to delays in starting on functional skills and the merger of two awarding bodies, but you took the opportunity to implement a variety of strategies to drive improvement successfully. Actions have included emphasising the importance of functional skills from the beginning of all programmes; increasing the support provided by training advisers for all apprentices, including those capable of progressing more rapidly; running specialist weekly workshops located within major employers and providing better-quality resources to support learning; and providing staff development. Early indications are that apprentices are now better prepared for the functional skills examinations, take their examinations earlier in their framework and that examination pass rates are now high. In turn, this is leading to more apprentices achieving the whole qualification more rapidly and in the case of a small minority, well within the planned time.

Apprentices, employers and training advisers collaborate well to meet specific programme and workplace needs. For those learners already in employment, training advisers work closely with employers and the apprentice in a detailed initial discussion that focuses on current job roles and the best fit of qualification option units for the apprentice's future career development. Managers work with employers effectively to develop programmes following the introduction of new qualifications and standards; for example, when changes in standards occur, employers are invited to participate in employer forums to discuss skill requirements and what the industry may require. These discussions help you and your managers to plan the most appropriate learning and skills development activities.

Support for apprentices is good, including for those who have additional learning needs such as dyslexia. Apprentices undertake an initial assessment that your staff have been trained to analyse. Training advisers are able to refer particular cases to an outside agency if the initial assessment suggests that an apprentice may have an additional need. This results in a detailed diagnostic assessment and report which enables you to plan the most effective support. Employers are made aware of the needs their apprentices have so that they are able to contribute to the effective whole-programme support. We found specific and effective examples of help being

provided for apprentices, such as additional functional skills workshops and individual coaching in how to create and write reports.

CWCT has one specialist motor vehicle subcontractor with 82 apprentices. Managers in both organisations work closely to monitor the progress of these apprentices using detailed reports from the subcontractor that identify anyone at risk of not achieving their qualification on time. This monitoring recently prompted an investigation into falling standards of off-the-job training provided by a local college under contract for a small group of learners in motor vehicle paint and bodywork. This decline followed a substantial restructuring at the college and the loss of specialist teachers in the vocational area. When the nature of the problem became apparent, your subcontractor took decisive action with your support to remove the learners from the provider and promptly provided good alternative training for these apprentices at another college. Subsequent monitoring shows that the apprentices are making at least the progress expected of them. Their feedback on the quality of this new provision is very positive. At the same time, your subcontractor has ensured that another group of apprentices attending the same college are progressing well. You have very effectively supported these actions through your own direct contact with the senior leaders in the college.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and the leadership team have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and action is taken to safeguard learners. You take appropriate action to ensure that staff appointed are suitable to work with young people and you keep records of recruitment checks. Your designated safeguarding officers have formed long-established links with relevant external agencies to provide support to learners who are considered at risk of harm. You have updated your policies and arrangements in line with the new 'Prevent' duty; all staff and members of the board have been trained to understand the duty and link it to wider safeguarding arrangements. Two staff members have undergone training as trainers to ensure that they are able to update colleagues at least annually or more frequently if necessary. You involved two local police forces in this training and in the induction programme for the new group of apprentices you recruited this year. Guidance for training advisers includes four prompt questions clearly linked to the 'Prevent' duty; these are intended to supplement discussion linked to current topics around radicalisation and extremism in the media, although this is in the early stages of development. Apprentices develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through these regular discussion topics, including when using the internet or social media, and some have found the topics sufficiently interesting and informative to use them in their functional skills speaking and listening assignments.

Managers and training advisers take prompt and swift action to safeguard apprentices when they are considered to be at risk; in one example, when you discovered that an apprentice who is looked after was in an abusive relationship, you provided rapid support to safeguard her. Learners feel safe, respect one another's

views and say that their groups are mutually supportive. Staff use social media regularly and effectively to promote safeguarding topics and fundamental British values in ways that learners find helpful and informative. A 'theme of the month' provides guidance and discussion topics for training advisers on a range of safeguarding themes including e-safety.

Apprentices are aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism; apprentices in particularly sensitive sectors, such as childcare and teaching, are being prioritised for further training. One apprentice described how, after 'Prevent' training, she and a friend had alerted their tutor to another apprentice in their group whose behaviour and appearance had changed. The tutor offered support to the apprentice, which successfully resolved some emerging personal issues.

Inspection findings

- The large majority of your employers are fully involved in the planning, target setting and review process; targets are detailed, clear, developmental and incremental. Employers effectively set their apprentices targets to meet the needs of the business and the development of the apprentice. In one case, a hairdressing employer needed their apprentice to develop their skills on 'root retouches' in time to work in the salon on the large number of clients requesting this service during the Christmas period. Written feedback to apprentices is generally good and enables them to progress well. Feedback on the newly introduced electronic portfolio is highly detailed, covering both vocational topics and specific feedback to develop English skills, such as 'when writing formal reports, use paragraphs and sentence structure' and 'by next visit complete men's cut and blow-dry and develop your skills using a razor cut'. Employers are not yet making full use of the facilities in the electronic portfolio to monitor or contribute to their apprentices' progress.
- Training advisers prepare apprentices well for local and regional competitions, particularly in hairdressing, that provide effective realistic opportunities to demonstrate high-quality professional skills. Many employers are involved in these competitions, sitting on judging panels where they comment on the high standards of work produced by apprentices, which motivates them to achieve well.
- Training advisers have successfully completed a level 4 coaching programme that has provided them with skills to coach and support apprentices more effectively in preparing for their functional skills qualification. Advisers have developed their own skills in mathematics and English as well as attending 'maths resilience' workshops to build their confidence and develop strategies to support apprentices to achieve. Advisers provide regular feedback, particularly on spelling and grammar, and set apprentices challenging targets to develop their English skills further, for example to structure sentences and paragraphs more effectively. Apprentices understand the value and importance of functional skills and see these as necessary steps for their future progression.

- Employers praise the development of high-level practical communications skills that enable their apprentices to add value to the organisation, such as in writing increasingly sophisticated reports. Too few employers recognise and value the development of their apprentices' numeracy skills in the contribution they make to the employer's business and in the apprentices' daily lives.
- Employers work very closely and productively with you to ensure that learners receive good opportunities to expand their experience and gain their qualifications. They meet frequently with the training advisers to discuss how well their apprentice is progressing and to review future training plans. As a result, they are fully aware of their apprentices' progress and can often quote the percentage of the qualification that has been completed as well as specific targets of the apprentice.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- where apprentices use an electronic portfolio, employers are encouraged and supported to make full use of the system to monitor the progress of their apprentices and, wherever possible, provide feedback, additional information about training or evidence of the apprentice's competence at work
- training advisers develop and regularly update scenarios about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, drawing on relevant and carefully chosen contemporary media reports as appropriate, to be used in assessment and progress reviews so that all apprentices develop their understanding of the dangers, and their ability and confidence to protect themselves and their colleagues
- employers recognise the importance to their apprentices of developing confidence in using numeracy and mathematics in their work and their daily lives as a key element in enabling them to progress through their careers and support employers' succession planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Nick Gadfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection we were assisted by you as executive director. We held meetings with staff and managers. We observed teaching, learning and assessment and looked at learners' work and the facilities available to them. We spoke to employers and apprentices whenever possible, both face to face and by telephone. We reviewed key documents including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners and employers that you had collected and by seeking their views during the inspection.