

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association Limited

Independent learning provider



Inspection dates	24–25 February and 29 February–2 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Apprentices develop excellent personal and social skills through a range of highly engaging enrichment activities.
- Apprentices are very proud of their achievements as most earn a graduate level salary at the end of their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices' achievement of qualifications is outstanding; the mix of qualifications they achieve enhances their employment and promotion prospects significantly.
- Apprentices become highly skilled engineers or business administration and accounts executives; their progression into higher level programmes, a variety of sustainable job roles in the field and promotion is excellent.
- Employers are thoroughly engaged in designing high-quality apprenticeship programmes for their businesses so that apprentices are well-equipped to work alongside more experienced colleagues.
- Board members provide exceptional levels of support and challenge to managers that lead to excellent learning experiences for apprentices.
- Apprentices' attitudes to learning and work are excellent; their progress and progression are very strong as a result of high-quality learning experiences.
- The links between theory and practical skills development are exceptional; this enables the apprentices to gain knowledge and hone their skills to become highly competent professionals.
- Highly motivated apprentices take full responsibility for their learning and careers and become very effective independent learners, preparing them well for life and work.
- Most training staff are ex-apprentices and very well-qualified industry experts; they understand the needs of apprentices and businesses well and ensure that their teaching reflects current industry standards.
- Assessment and coaching in the workplace are exceptionally strong and help apprentices to sharpen their engineering and accountancy skills.
- Apprentices pay good attention to health and safety and safe working practices and feel safe.
- Apprentices benefit from very good support enabling them to develop English and mathematics skills that prepare them for their next steps in learning and their future careers.
- Managers are strongly focused on continuous improvement and have improved the provision significantly since the previous inspection.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Herefordshire Group Training Association, founded in 1967, is now known as Herefordshire and Worcestershire Group Training Association (H&WGTA). It is a registered training charity, owned and controlled by member companies through a board of trustees. It has two training centres in Hereford and Worcester.
- Currently, 490 apprentices are undertaking engineering, business administration and accountancy programmes. Of these, 111 are on intermediate, 347 on advanced and 32 on higher apprenticeship programmes, and 272 are aged 16 to 18. The largest number, 303, are on engineering programmes with 183 on business administration and accountancy and a very small number in retail.
- Since the previous inspection, the provider has reduced the number of subcontractors from five to one and appointed a new chief executive 18 months ago. No learners are on traineeship programmes, although the provider has a contract for this provision.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Gather the apprentices' destination data and achievement of additional qualifications more fully to inform future planning.
- Ensure that all apprentices, particularly in years two, three and four, develop good understanding of radicalisation and extremism and British values in line with that gained by first-year apprentices.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Leaders, managers and trustees are passionate in their vision for apprentices to have high ambitions to succeed. All staff are equally passionate about providing outstanding apprenticeship and enrichment programmes. Staff morale is very high and all have a 'can do' attitude. The current chief executive and the previous post holder are ex-apprentices of the company. Staff act as role models and encourage apprentices to aspire to high levels of achievement. As a result of this drive, apprentices develop into competent professionals.
- Trustees, who are all employers, provide exceptional support and challenge to the newly appointed chief executive and the senior managers. Under their guidance the chief executive has secured substantial resources from two local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) to enhance the facilities at both centres in Hereford and Worcester. The plans to upgrade facilities are well advanced.
- Managers design programmes extremely well to meet the needs of the employers and the industry. Employers invest extensively in the training of their engineering apprentices by insisting they undertake a range of additional qualifications. As a result, apprentices become versatile and multi-skilled. Employers support a large number of their apprentices to undertake higher national certificates, diplomas and degrees. In doing so, the leaders and managers have established the provision as a vocational college where the apprentices constantly learn theory and improve their practice under the expert guidance of highly skilled engineers and business executives.
- Trustees have established a particularly strong culture of high performance. They hold leaders and managers to account to raise standards. For example, the trustees receive a detailed report on the apprentices' performance a week before their meeting to enable them to scrutinise the outcomes in advance and to demand an explanation for any dips in performance.
- Employers are very forthright in their requirements and managers work diligently to design and implement programmes well. Over the past 49 years, leaders and managers have supplied well-rounded apprentices who perform a wide range of tasks and roles thereby adding significant value to the businesses. However, managers do not keep sufficiently detailed records of apprentices' additional qualifications and their destinations on completion of the apprenticeship to give a sufficiently precise view of the difference they have made to apprentices' lives and the businesses where they work and to inform future planning.
- Monitoring arrangements for the subcontractor are exemplary with very regular meetings, sharing of lesson observation outcomes and highly detailed reporting on apprentices' progress. Managers make very good use of data to manage staff performance, holding them to account for the progress and achievement of the apprentices that they support.
- Leaders and managers evaluate the programmes thoroughly and maintain a relentless focus on quality improvement. They conduct a holistic evaluation of the quality of programmes through programme review teams; observations of teaching, learning and assessment; evaluation of learning at all stages by apprentices; considering employers' views and by making excellent use of the apprentices' voice through the apprenticeship council. They implement changes promptly to improve standards and inform the apprentices accordingly.
- The process of self-assessment is well-established. Leaders, managers and trustees know their provision very well. They produce a comprehensive self-assessment after critical evaluation of a wide range of evidence. The current report is comprehensive and an accurate evaluation of the provision.
- The development plan is highly effective and is sharply focused on maintaining strengths and areas for improvement. For example, managers swiftly identified a dip in performance in higher apprentices in accounting and devised a robust action plan which included bringing the provision 'in-house'. This resulted in improved quality of provision and a much better skills match for the employers and apprentices.
- Improvements since the previous inspection in 2009 have been substantial. Leaders and managers have maintained and improved standards and dealt with the areas for improvement successfully. The process for observing teaching, learning and assessment is much improved and clearly identifies strengths and areas for development leading to greatly increased standards. Leaders and managers have developed significant capacity to maintain the momentum of high performance.
- Leaders and managers provide good support and training to trainers to help them improve and update their skills. For example, managers have supported two trainers to complete a level 5 in additional learning support including English and mathematics. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They use their skills well to inspire apprentices. Trainers improve their skills by sharing good practice very well

between the two centres, such as the use of examples of well-marked work to raise standards of feedback within assignments.

- Leaders and managers recognise the importance of English and mathematics to business and industry and have made a very significant impact on the apprentices' standards and progress in these subjects through the use of two highly qualified specialist functional skills coordinators. All apprentices continue to develop these skills at higher levels to prepare them for their next steps in learning or employment.
- Leaders, managers and employers expect high standards at work and in their personal life from their apprentices. To instil these qualities in all apprentices, they invest significant time and money to run a week-long residential programme for all apprentices which results in significant character building. By undertaking work for local charities, apprentices develop a strong sense of citizenship.
- Leaders, managers and employers promote apprenticeships very well through the apprenticeship ambassador network and well-organised careers events. Apprentices understand the substantial impact the apprenticeship programmes have had on their careers and future. They enthusiastically promote the benefits of apprenticeships to parents and young people. Managers follow rigorous recruitment procedures to recruit high-calibre young people to the apprenticeship vacancies.
- Leaders and managers have taken very effective action to promote British values to prepare young people for modern Britain and global society. The first-year apprentices are well aware of extremism and radicalisation through training and reinforcement through workplace reviews. Although the provider is meeting its duties under the 'Prevent' legislation, the rollout of the programme requires improvement for apprentices in years two, three and four. These learners' understanding is not as good as for those in the first year.
- Apprentices feel safe both in the workplaces and in the training centres. They clearly understand their rights and responsibilities and know how to protect themselves from bullying and harassment.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The trustees, who are very knowledgeable and committed employers, provide exceptional levels of challenge and support to the senior managers to hold them to account for their performance, thus ensuring that all apprentices receive high-quality training and support to become highly valued employees.
 - Trustees maintain a strong focus on quality improvement and invest their time, resources and wisdom to ensure that the organisation has substantial capacity to maintain its position as one of the best providers of bespoke apprenticeships.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Leaders, managers and trustees have established a very strong culture of safeguarding throughout the organisation and within the businesses where the apprentices work.
 - Managers conduct rigorous checks on the suitability of the staff to work with learners.
 - Managers routinely identify vulnerable apprentices and provide particularly effective and prompt support to protect them.
 - Leaders and managers promote internet safety to ensure that apprentices are aware of the dangers of social media, including grooming.
 - Staff and apprentices have good awareness and knowledge of radicalisation and extremism and know who to speak to should they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Trainers and employers have very high expectations and ambitions for the apprentices, and almost all rise to this challenge. Trainers understand what makes an excellent apprentice as most of them have been apprentices in the industry and use their recent experience to plan and deliver sessions that inspire and challenge apprentices.
- Trainers link theory to practice very well, choosing topical examples from the workplaces. This consolidates apprentices' understanding and prepares them well for applying their learning in the workplace. Lessons have clear objectives and trainers use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies to make learning relevant and engaging. Apprentices take part in lessons enthusiastically and enjoy their work.
- Apprentices learn their trade in engineering by using high-quality, industry-standard learning resources. They apply the knowledge and skills developed in the training centres to their workplaces and demonstrate confidently their capabilities.

- Business administration and accountancy apprentices impress their employers by applying the principles of business and project management to make the businesses more effective and efficient. For example, a marketing apprentice designed the 'Herefordshire live' website and produced a plan for launching it on social media. Apprentices conduct independent research well to produce very high-quality work.
- Coaching and mentoring in the work place are inspiring. Managers and senior engineers provide excellent mentoring and support to current apprentices. Work-based assessors and mentors provide thoughtful and structured support and challenge to apprentices to enable them to excel in their roles. Motivational feedback enables apprentices to demonstrate their highly relevant vocational skills.
- All first-year apprentices in engineering attend extensive and high-quality off-the-job training. Employers demand and receive a very solid learning foundation that provides apprentices with a broad range of skills to become multi-skilled and highly competent engineers. Employers pay for higher-level engineering qualifications. This raises the expectations of the apprentices and attendance is consequently very high. The standard of teaching on this qualification is very high.
- The quality of off-the-job training for business administration apprentices remains highly effective. This extends the apprentices' knowledge and skills to become very competent business or accounts executives.
- Initial assessment is particularly thorough. Trainers and employers use information from the detailed initial skills assessment and accurate additional medical and behavioural assessments of apprentices to plan learning very precisely to meet individual needs. Trainers use detailed information to challenge the most able and support those who need additional learning support. All current apprentices are making good progress.
- Apprentices develop a sound understanding of, and skills necessary for, peer and self-evaluation as a result of challenging teaching and learning. They give constructive feedback to each other that helps to engender healthy peer group challenge, and as a result they produce work of the highest standards that the employers value highly. In a business administration class, apprentices learned the art of a 'praise sandwich' to encourage their peers to do better. This is a considerable improvement as assessment was judged to be only satisfactory at the previous inspection.
- Apprentices benefit from frequent, very high-quality workplace assessment. Assessors use thorough questioning particularly well to check and confirm apprentices' understanding and challenge them to do better.
- Trainers' very helpful feedback provides guidance and practical demonstrations to apprentices as to how to improve their skills. Apprentices evaluate their inspection and test reports after receiving motivating comments from trainers. This improves their skills and confidence. Commerce trainers give rigorous but supportive feedback which, for example, shows apprentices how to improve the layout and presentation of documents. As a result, many apprentices make rapid progress and are very enthusiastic about their futures. Employers take a strong interest in their apprentices' progress and development, which motivates them to do well.
- Progress reviews are thorough. Apprentices agree very ambitious targets that are specific, measurable and time-bound with their assessors and employers. Assessors review these targets frequently with the employers to ensure that apprentices undertake a good variety of roles to demonstrate their competence and skills and make good progress.
- Information, advice and guidance are outstanding. Trainers, assessors and employers use initial and diagnostic assessment exceptionally well to ensure that apprentices are placed onto an appropriate apprenticeship at the correct level.
- Apprentices fully recognise the importance of English, including the use of correct spelling and grammar, for their current job and future prospects. They take pride in producing high-quality and grammatically correct written work. Staff provide helpful advice and correct spelling and grammatical errors routinely and systematically. Apprentices improve the quality of their written work and technical understanding very well.
- Practical functional skills mathematics for engineers in the workshop is particularly effective. Extra sessions allow most-able apprentices to achieve higher competences while additional sessions support learners who struggle with mathematics. Individual coaching sessions enable apprentices to overcome their particular difficulties. Apprentices with grades A* to C at GCSE are strongly encouraged to develop their technical skills in English by studying for additional qualifications and many volunteer to do so. This prepares them for studying further or applying for higher-level jobs. Business administration apprentices develop additional mathematical skills appropriate to their job roles.
- Equality and diversity training is extremely well designed and effective. Trainers make very good use of strong visual imagery to help apprentices to explore their prejudices and learn from each other and

develop more open-minded attitudes. Through candid discussion in small groups, trainers raise apprentices' awareness of important equalities issues in the workplace. All apprentices know who to approach if they have any concerns. In a few, isolated cases, assessors do not deepen sufficiently learners' knowledge of cultural diversity and British values during reviews.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are outstanding

- Apprentices are very confident in learning and at work. They take full responsibility for their learning and careers to accelerate their progress. They take great pride in the work they complete for their course and for their employers, become loyal and valuable employees and earn respect and praise from their trainers, colleagues and managers.
- Apprentices enjoy their training enormously. They are highly motivated and self-assured. Their attendance, punctuality, behaviour and professional appearance are consistently excellent. These attributes and their work with various local charities help apprentices to develop into model learners and citizens.
- Apprentices benefit significantly from the wide range of enrichment activities such as residential outdoor pursuits and gym membership for most learners. As a result, apprentices make significant gains in confidence and work-related skills such as team-working and leadership skills that are highly valued by their employers.
- Apprentices acquire excellent employability skills through the combination of exceptional employer support and training and learning in classes, and in extensive workshops. For example, business administration apprentices gain a very well-developed knowledge of how to communicate effectively at work either face-to-face or electronically. Engineering apprentices develop additional and higher levels of relevant skills such as in mathematics to improve their employability and become more valuable assets to their employers.
- Employers give many apprentices significant responsibility at work; many then progress to highly responsible careers. For example, an engineering apprentice took over the responsibilities of a very experienced design engineer after he left the employer and a former accountancy apprentice manages the finances of a company with £200 million turnover.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of equality and cultural diversity. Staff check and reinforce this understanding effectively during learning sessions and at progress reviews. Apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of recognising and respecting individual preferences and differences at work.
- The first-year apprentices have a better grasp of British values such as tolerance, respect, individual liberty and democracy and know how to protect themselves from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation than is the case for apprentices in the other year groups. Apprentices have a very good grasp of online risks and how to manage these to stay safe.
- Staff provide engineering apprentices with highly effective physical fitness training and subsidised membership of a local gym for other apprentices. Weekly running sessions significantly improve learners' levels of fitness, enabling a significant number of apprentices to enter the local half marathon and to embrace healthier lifestyles.
- Apprentices make informed choices based on their needs and aspirations due to meaningful, impartial careers advice and guidance. They find the continued guidance and teaching throughout the programmes very helpful in giving them a clear vision for their next steps. Engineering and accounting apprentices are very well informed about the range of options and additional learning they can aspire to and select. Apprentices in business administration programmes, while well-supported in their choices, have less comprehensive information about career pathways at later stages.

Outcomes for apprentices

are outstanding

- Outcomes for apprentices have improved since the last inspection and are now outstanding. The vast majority of apprentices successfully complete their courses. The provider has maintained very high success rates across almost all of its courses for the last three years, and these are well above the national rates. On a few courses where performance has dipped, leaders and managers have responded effectively to make sustainable improvements to enable even more apprentices to succeed.

- Engineering apprenticeship programmes have exceptionally high success rates with many examples of outstanding skills development. Employers, especially those that have worked with the provider for many years, value the work of their apprentices highly and see them as the cornerstone for a successful business. Current apprentices on all courses make substantial progress from their individual starting points.
- Apprentices' work is of a very high standard. Business administration apprentices provide high-quality commercial systems and processes for the storage and retrieval of information, understanding fully the implications of the Data Protection Act. Engineering apprentices make high-quality technical equipment for aircraft, motor vehicles and complex communication devices. Apprentices in accountancy learn highly effective customer service skills by visiting clients' premises, such as farms, to collect their accounts and conduct a rigorous analysis of the fees their competitors charge to design a cost-effective pricing structure to attract new clients.
- Apprentices make very good progress into further or higher levels of study, take on increased responsibility and gain promotion within their employment. Over the past three years a third of all engineering apprentices have progressed to higher qualifications. Almost all of the engineering apprentices complete several more units of their qualification, funded by their employers, in addition to their framework. This extends their skills, experience and knowledge. Apprentices become multi-skilled and more versatile within their employment, thus exceeding their employers' expectations. Some own and run the companies. The few apprentices who receive additional learning support make very good progress at all stages in their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices make very good progress developing their skills in mathematics, information and communications technology and English and they achieve well in these subjects. This puts them at a considerable advantage when applying for promotion or studying for higher qualifications. A high number of apprentices extend their learning beyond the minimum required for their qualification by undertaking functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Many high-achieving apprentices gain higher-level mathematics skills specifically geared to engineering contexts which support their career aspirations. A high and increasing proportion of apprentices achieve high grades. All apprentice groups achieve equally well; there are no significant gaps between the performances of different groups over time.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	672
CEO	Mr Duane Sanger
Website address	www.hwgta.org

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)	0	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+		
	55	56	214	133	3	29		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heart of England College Worcester 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Harmesh Manghra, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Pippa Wainwright	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Robinson	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Sharpe	Ofsted Inspector
Daniel Grant	Ofsted Inspector

The short inspection of this provider was converted to a full inspection. The team was assisted by the quality and continuous improvement manager, as nominee. 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 apprentices and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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