

DART Training Ltd (DART)

Independent Training Provider

Inspection dates 6–9 October 2015

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
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Directors have a wide range of relevant skills and experience that enable them to challenge and support managers well to improve outcomes for learners.
- Leaders and managers understand the needs of employers and local communities particularly well, enabling them to match employers', apprentices' and learners' needs accurately so that they make quick and positive contributions in the workplace.
- The curriculum is designed skilfully to develop apprentices' and learners' employability skills well and to enhance their personal development.
- Staff ensure that apprentices and learners adopt safe working practices and that they learn in a supportive, secure and open culture that allows them to achieve well.
- Staff are knowledgeable, well qualified and skilled in all aspects of the provision, and use their considerable experience to inspire and motivate apprentices and learners through a good range of teaching, learning and assessment activities.
- The attainment of qualifications is very high on apprenticeship programmes, and the majority of learners on study programmes and traineeships progress onto further education, training or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Apprentices and learners do not receive regular, impartial careers advice and guidance and their English and mathematics skills are not developed beyond the requirements of the course to prepare them well for their next steps.
- A minority of staff provide insufficient feedback on apprentices' and learners' work so that they are not aware of what they need to do to improve.
- Targets set for apprentices and learners lack sufficient detail and do not identify clearly what skills and knowledge they need to develop and build on.

Full report

Information about the provider

- DART Training Ltd was founded in 1999 and has its head office in Shardlow, near Derby. Since the last inspection it has entered a strategic alliance with Reaseheath College. It offers training in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire mainly within land based operations, agriculture, animal care, horticulture, trees and timber, veterinary nursing and conservation. Subcontracted provision is placed within three providers who provide additional training opportunities in veterinary nursing, health and social care and business administration for apprentices in the Midlands, Monmouth and Nuneaton.
- Around 652 learners study with DART and its subcontractors. About 577 are intermediate and advanced apprentices of whom 365 are aged 19+. Twenty-five learners are aged 16-19 and are on study programmes mainly in land-based operations. Twenty-two learners are on traineeships; nine of these learners are aged 19+. A few learners are on workplace learning programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that targets are sufficiently detailed and challenging for apprentices and learners to reinforce their understanding of the knowledge and skills they need to develop to make good progress.
- Ensure that independent advice and guidance is available to all apprentices and learners and encourage them to develop their English and mathematics skills further to maximise their potential.
- Increase the clarity of feedback to stretch and challenge the more able and provide detailed guidance for all apprentices and learners on how they can improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers encourage staff to adopt a supportive, personalised and flexible approach to meet and often exceed learners' and apprentices' needs and expectations. They encourage staff to promote DART's values and culture in their daily work by placing learners and apprentices at the centre of everything they do. The recent strategic alliance between DART and Reaseheath College provides apprentices and learners with improved access to a range of provision and progression routes.
- DART operates in a niche market, focusing particularly well on providing land-based industries with highly relevant learning programmes. It engages particularly well with employers and the communities it serves to offer a curriculum that matches very effectively their needs. The work-based design of the study programme and traineeship provision is particularly effective in providing learners with very good opportunities to develop their employability skills in high-quality work placements.
- Staff at all levels use detailed management reports to evaluate and improve performance. For example, recent reporting of out-of-funded learners has resulted in a dramatic reduction in their numbers. Performance management arrangements are effective in improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- Arrangements to raise the aspirations of all apprentices and learners to develop their English and mathematics beyond the requirements of their programme require improvement. Opportunities for more-able learners to extend their achievements in English and mathematics are insufficient.
- Staff liaise very well with a wide range of schools and agencies to improve access to impartial guidance on careers opportunities and further education in land-based industries. However, arrangements to provide current apprentices and learners with impartial guidance when deciding their next steps require improvement.
- DART's self-assessment processes and reporting are thorough. However, self-assessment reports of the majority of its subcontractors do not identify the impact of processes, procedures and improvements on apprentices and learners.
- DART's quality improvement plans are used well by all staff to monitor progress but improvement actions are not always prioritised or risk assessed. The recent quality review accurately identifies key strengths and weaknesses.

- The governance of the provider
 - New governance arrangements between DART and Reaseheath College are developing well. The non-executive directors, consisting of the senior college leaders and key college governors, bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise that they use well in their oversight of DART. They receive good, relevant training to ensure they can fulfil their duties.
 - Directors provide good support and challenge of DART's senior managers and make constructive use of management reports to evaluate staff performance to improve outcomes for apprentices and learners. They ensure they are well informed in their decision-making.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective
 - DART's monitoring of health and safety in apprentices' and learners' workplaces is robust. Individual learner risk assessments are good and identify prohibited activities well. For example, when using chainsaws, staff ensure adequate supervision arrangements are in place. Tutors promote safe work practice very well in training sessions and through a variety of monthly topics such as lone working and avoiding insect bites. Learners' and apprentices' awareness of health and safety is very good. They learn quickly to stay safe both on and off the job. Welfare officers provide learners with good support and ensure staff respond quickly to all concerns.
 - DART has completed appropriate risk assessments and has developed associated action plans, including with their subcontractors, to meet its responsibilities to prevent extremism and radicalisation. The action plans are in the early stages of implementation. Designated officers, directors and staff are appropriately trained in health and safety and the prevention of extremism. DART carries out appropriate recruitment checks and keeps detailed records of staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff are knowledgeable, well qualified and skilled, using their considerable expertise and experience well to plan and deliver learning sessions that motivate and inspire apprentices and learners to achieve. They set work that develops skills rapidly but safely, and employers are keen to move apprentices onto more complex work and increased responsibility as soon as they are ready. Apprentices and learners use information and learning technology well to consolidate and extend their learning and to develop their independent learning skills.
- The provision is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of apprentices, learners and employers. A wide range of trips, visits and seminars, additional qualifications and certification keeps all apprentices and learners well motivated and challenged. Most employers give apprentices very good opportunities to develop new skills for assessment in a broad range of settings. For example, agricultural apprentices regularly visit each other's farms for training, which extends their experience of different business and management practices.
- Staff develop individualised programmes that meet the needs and interests of apprentices and learners and support regional business interests and skill shortages very well. Employers value this highly. Many apprentices progress into supervisory roles and a few set up their own enterprises following their programmes. Almost all apprentices progress to sustained employment.
- Staff provide very good care and support for apprentices and learners that helps remove barriers to learning. Courses for school pupils and disaffected young people provide a good route into land-based occupations. The majority of study programme learners progress to further education, training or employment.
- Staff are good role models for their respective industries and set high expectations for attitudes and behaviour. The promotion of equality and diversity are generally made relevant to apprentices' and learners' working environments, and staff are currently introducing fundamental British values and the Prevent agenda into reviews.
- Apprentices and learners prepare well for individual progress reviews by reflecting on their own performance, which enhances discussions with staff. Employers and staff are ambitious for apprentices and learners to progress quickly, and parents or guardians are kept informed of attitudes and behaviour of younger learners. Although apprentices and learners make good progress, improvement and progress targets are often too vague and lack focus on improving knowledge and skills.
- Assessment practice is reliable and frequent and ensures apprenticeship completion. However, not all staff provide sufficient feedback to help learners and apprentices, particularly the more able, know what they need to do to improve.
- Staff are particularly adept at helping apprentices and learners improve their mathematics skills, for example, when calculating seed and fertiliser rates or when preparing livestock rations. In the subcontracted veterinary nursing programmes, English and mathematics skills are developed to prepare apprentices well for their next steps in learning and employment. As a result many become practice managers or progress to higher education. This is not applied systematically across all apprenticeship programmes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Apprentices and learners develop good personal and social skills and demonstrate increased self-confidence in the workplace. Study programme learners and trainees are in good quality work placements that match their needs well.
- Apprentices and learners display industry-related skills in a wide variety of settings, such as veterinary nursing, business administration, horticulture and agriculture. Employers appreciate the often rapid transition they make in becoming more confident and professional in their conduct, often in highly sensitive and emotional environments.
- For most study programme learners and trainees, the development of employability skills allows them to become more independent and successful learners. For example, those who demonstrate reliability and punctuality during work placement are able to take on increased responsibility. Apprentices develop good independent learning skills and are coached to reflect on their learning to enhance understanding.
- Apprentices and learners feel safe and have an increased awareness of health and safety, e-safety and safe working practices. They receive clear messages about the impact of bullying in all its forms and are

confident that staff will intervene swiftly to resolve issues. As a consequence they make good progress in an open and tolerant learning environment.

- Impartial careers advice and guidance is currently not available to all apprentices and learners.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Success rates for apprentices on all programmes are well above the national average and have been for the last three years. The large majority of intermediate and advanced apprentices achieve their qualification within agreed timescales. Apprentices on all programmes make at least the progress expected of them; the majority make significant progress. The proportion who progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is high. The large majority enter sustained employment at the completion of their apprenticeship.
- Learners on 16–19 study programmes and traineeships make good progress. Trainees who do not progress to apprenticeships remain on a study programme. The majority of learners progress from a study programme to further education, training or employment. The proportion who progress from a study programme into an apprenticeship is low.
- Learners who have significant barriers to learning or who start their programmes from a low base are supported well and make good progress, particularly on the study programme and traineeship. The success rates for both males and females on intermediate and advanced apprenticeships are well above the national average. The proportion of learners who do not achieve their qualification within agreed timescales is low.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- DART has 25 learners on 16–19 study programmes, mainly in land-based operations, agriculture, horticulture and animal care.
- Assessors use their expertise and experience in the workplace well to enrich learning and to encourage and motivate learners. They use their considerable industry knowledge to develop learning and understanding through probing questions and by discussing relevant work-related scenarios. Learners enjoy learning and appreciate the skills they develop.
- Assessors plan work-related activities skilfully and check learners' progress in English and mathematics. For example, learners use measurements and interpret instructions in order to enable them to erect a puppy run as part of a project on a local farm.
- Assessors offer learners a good level of care and practical support that includes close partnership working with employers, flexible assessment visits and timely help with personal and academic issues. As a result, learners' self-esteem and practical skills develop very effectively from their starting points.
- Learners develop their employability skills significantly through work experience that matches their needs particularly well. They display professional values and behaviours such as good punctuality, attendance, and being courteous to both peers and employers. As a result, a learner with learning difficulties on a study programme placement in a cattery is able to travel independently to work. He is always on time, takes pride in his work and shows respect to his employer and customers. This has led to his employer trusting him to take charge of the cats' daily feed.
- Assessors successfully retain the vast majority of learners on study programmes. Learners make good progress to higher levels of study or to employment. However, targets that are set for learners are often focused on assessment requirements and not on building knowledge and skills.
- Specialist functional skills assessors do not sufficiently share initial assessment information and English and mathematics plans with assessors and employers to further support the development of learners' English and mathematics skills. Careers advice and guidance is not always available, so learners do not fully understand all future options and their next steps.

- DART has 577 apprentices in seven subject areas, specialising in veterinary nursing, horticulture, agriculture, animal care, trees and timber, health and social care and business administration; 235 are advanced apprentices.
- The proportion of learners completing apprenticeships is very high and the number completing their apprenticeships within the planned timeframe is increasing. Current apprentices make good progress in their training activities compared with their starting points. A large majority of apprentices progress to higher-level apprenticeships or sustained employment. Assessors have clear expectations of what each apprentice can achieve. As a result, apprentices make good progress, are keen and talk confidently about their work.
- Apprentices benefit from very strong employer commitment and involvement. Employers are actively involved in choosing relevant and challenging optional units and reviewing progress so that the curriculum is matched well to employers' and learners' needs. As a result employers gain well-skilled and knowledgeable staff who become valued employees that contribute effectively to business performance.
- Skilled assessors ensure that training is well planned, with interesting and relevant tasks, so that it is matched well to each apprentice's development at work. Staff link theory with practice well, enabling apprentices to develop their skills and knowledge to industry standards. For example, veterinary nurses develop skills in animal handling, X-ray practice and understand the need for lined walls and to wear exposure dosimeters. Animal care apprentices acquire useful animal handling skills and learn to wash, dry and clip a wide variety of dogs.
- Apprentices develop good, relevant skills that enhance their employability, such as fire safety, communication, researching online, managing waiting lists, time management and improving their skills to speak clearly on the telephone. Apprentices develop useful information and communication technology skills to support them in their work. As a result, apprentices fit in well with work colleagues, work with confidence and quickly become valued members of the team. Assessors regularly monitor apprentices' progress and set targets, although these are mostly focused on achievement of qualifications rather than on the development of incremental skills and knowledge.
- English and mathematics functional skills development is well supported for those apprentices who do not have an appropriate GCSE pass grade. For those that do have a suitable pass grade, assessors do not plan for the development of their English and mathematics skills well enough to prepare them for future steps. In a minority of cases, feedback to apprentices does not stretch and challenge the more able or provide a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Careers advice is not routinely delivered as part of all apprentices' programmes.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	604
Principal/CEO	Anne Morgan
Website address	www.darttraining.co.uk

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)	24	11		18				
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	160	128	52	235			2	
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	13		9		22			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bottle Green Training ■ Abbeydale Vetlink ■ Midlands Training and Development Ltd 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Robert Hamp, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Cutting	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector
Laurie Brown	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Operations Manager, 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 students 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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