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Mr Steve Roe
Avant Partnership Limited
Brough Business Centre
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Dear Mr Roe

Short inspection of Avant Partnership Limited

Following the short inspection on 26 and 27 April 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in August 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

Learners, apprentices and trainees continue to receive good education and training. The vast majority of apprentices complete their training and go on to secure permanent employment, gain promotion or move on to further or higher education. Achievement rates for most apprentices, learners and trainees are high. The introduction of traineeships and other courses to help get young people ready for an apprenticeship is effective.

You have resolved each of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection; teaching has improved, apprentices, trainees and learners enjoy their work and develop the skills and attributes they need for employment. You have improved monitoring systems and intervene quickly to reduce significantly the proportion of apprentices and adult learners who do not complete their training. Most now complete their programmes within the planned time.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, senior managers, delivery partners and all staff have prioritised safeguarding across the partnership. Through mandatory training, all staff know how to ensure and maintain safe working practices, and are very clear about reporting procedures should they have concerns about learner safety. The comprehensive induction programme for learners gives them a firm understanding of the risks they may face. Staff and learners are fully aware of the 'Prevent' duty; all have undertaken training

and are able to talk confidently about the impact of radicalisation and extremism on themselves and their communities. Because you and delivery partners have prepared and shared well-designed teaching and learning resources, learners develop and apply British values well.

Inspection findings

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is good. The vibrant partnership that you lead has enabled delivery partners to grow and offer new programmes to meet the changing employment needs of the localities and regions in which they operate. Through the partnership you develop important work skills so that the most disadvantaged young people and adults, many of whom come to you with no previous qualifications and negative attitudes to education and training, leave with clear career plans.
- With your support and well-directed interventions, your delivery partners have developed good progression routes for learners that build upon effective initial assessments and careers guidance. For example, a successful traineeship programme in building and construction has improved retention and progression for young people who go on to become successful apprentices and gain permanent employment. This has been replicated in hairdressing, where, after poor results in 2014/15, the numbers of learners staying on and succeeding has improved dramatically. In early years training, a delivery partner has taken steps to become an examination centre for GCSE English and mathematics so that they can better serve their learners who want to progress to higher levels of study.
- Learners, apprentices and trainees make good progress in developing their mathematics and English skills. The proportion who achieve qualifications, from very low starting points, is impressive.
- The use you make of data to monitor the progress that learners make has improved. Tutors, assessors and learners know their targets for achievement, and managers at every level scrutinise data and set actions for improvement that have ensured that the numbers of adult learners achieving their qualifications has risen markedly. Targets for most learners, apprentices and trainees are, however, too vague and are insufficiently challenging. Targets focus too much on the qualification and not on the skills and knowledge that they need to gain.
- The large apprenticeship programme is good, and the large majority of apprentices complete their studies within planned timescales. They develop new skills very well, and are articulate when describing the impact that their apprenticeship has had on their lives; for example, rapid promotion to site supervisor, or the life-changing move from homelessness to permanent employment.
- Since the previous inspection, partnership managers have made significant changes to the observations of teaching, learning and assessment. What was an area for improvement is now a real strength across the partnership; where observers identify weaknesses you take rapid and effective action. Observers present reports that are rich in detail and look carefully at the impact of

teaching, learning and assessment on learners' progress. They set clear actions for improvement, or recommendations to share effective practice, that managers use well in performance management. This has improved standards of teaching across the partnership.

- Partnership and delivery partner managers promote equality and diversity well using well-crafted assignments, posters, learner handbooks, a diversity calendar and electronic noticeboards to ensure that learners, apprentices and trainees are able to discuss equality and diversity issues with confidence, especially in the workplace. Formal staff training adds weight to regular discussions in the online partnership forum. There is a culture of respect throughout, in which learners, trainees and apprentices work together well to explore current issues sensitively.
- By developing a traineeship route in building and construction, you have narrowed the achievement gap between men and women significantly because more male trainees and apprentices stay on and complete their training. Learners and apprentices who get additional support to aid their learning make very good progress; consequently they achieve at the same rate as all other learners.
- The contracting, performance review and evaluation of delivery partners are highly effective. By providing remote access to resources, and through webinars and face-to-face meetings, you have ensured that there is a consistent approach to quality and standards across the partnership. Each delivery partner was very enthusiastic about the support you provide: you intervene rapidly and appropriately and provide excellent partnership-wide training in areas such as improving observations of teaching, learning and assessment, the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they monitor the progress of learners and apprentices in hairdressing to sustain the improvements evident this year
- success rates in adult learning, traineeships and apprentices increase further by ensuring that targets focus more clearly on what learners need to know and do, rather than on the qualifications they need to achieve.

Yours sincerely

Dr Christopher Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by the provider's chief executive officer, as nominee. Inspectors met with members of the leadership team, delivery partner managers, teachers, assessors, employers and learners. Inspectors observed taught sessions and reviewed learners' portfolios and assessed work. They reviewed key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to quality assurance and performance monitoring, safeguarding and curriculum planning.