

# Midlands Training & Development Ltd

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

16–19 May 2016

## 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	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have taken effective steps to ensure that programmes meet the needs of learners, partners and employers very well.
- Particularly well-focused staff development has led to improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which is now good.
- Staff identify and use learners' starting points very effectively to plan highly effective individual learning and support.
- Tutors provide detailed, informative verbal and written feedback which learners use well to improve their work, especially in mathematics and English classes.
- Learners demonstrate high levels of respect towards their peers, staff and environment and are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Young people on study programmes achieve well; and most secure employment at the end of their training.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- A small minority of learners do not attend lessons or work placements with sufficient regularity.
- Learners' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism lacks sufficient depth.
- Progress reviews are poorly completed and do not provide learners with sufficiently clear guidance about what is expected of them.
- Tutors do not correct learners' spelling and grammar routinely and systematically.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Midlands Training & Development Ltd (Midlands TD) is the result of a merger of Nuneaton Training Centre and Midlands Professional Development, in July 2015. The provider holds a contract with the Education Funding Agency to deliver study programmes from its training premises in the centre of Nuneaton. Midlands TD recruits learners from the surrounding Nuneaton and Bedworth areas, where the proportion of learners achieving five or more GCSEs including mathematics and English is considerably lower than both county and national averages. Five trainees were enrolled at the time of the inspection, all of whom were working towards vocational awards in health and social care.
- This inspection looked at study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19, many of whom have significant barriers to learning and poor prior educational experience. In addition to study programmes, Midlands TD delivers apprenticeships as a subcontractor to another provider; this provision was not within the scope of this inspection.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Set out clear expectations of attendance for all learners; ensure that parents and carers understand programme requirements, and take prompt action to challenge learners when they are absent.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of progress reviews so that learners clearly understand their targets; and use reviews as an opportunity to reinforce learners' understanding of all aspects of personal safety, including the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Agree and implement a strategy to ensure a consistent approach for marking learners' written English, so that learners make better progress in the acquisition of skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders ensure that Midlands TD has a very clear strategic focus on engaging and meeting the needs of learners for whom college and apprenticeships are not yet an appropriate option. A thorough review over the last 12 months has resulted in the organisation having a well-defined remit and an ambitious sense of purpose.
- Managers have worked particularly well with staff to develop and introduce study programmes which meet the needs of learners and local employers clearly and coherently, providing employment and skills in sectors such as health and social care, which are crucial to the local community.
- Highly effective communication has contributed to the success of a recent restructure. This has resulted in the whole-hearted agreement of all staff to agreed values relating to teamwork, honesty and care for others. Working relationships between managers and staff, and staff and learners, are exemplary.
- The drive to ensuring the improvement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong and effective. Staff maintain high standards. The strengthened internal observation process and resulting action plans have led to tutors' improved performance in areas such as the use of learning resources, questioning techniques and the pace of delivery. Learning and progress have improved as a result.
- Managers are self-critical; they prioritise continually the improvement of the standard of provision. They seek learners' views routinely and use these well to bring about change. Self-assessment is accurate and leads to a useful development plan. The drive to improve has led to most recommendations made at the previous inspection being tackled successfully.
- Leaders and managers have a clear commitment to developing learners' English and mathematics skills and to their achievement of higher-level qualifications. The managing director has ensured that learners may sit GCSE examinations in English and mathematics at the local college. Staff understand their role in developing learners' English and mathematical skills. Those teaching English and mathematics as discrete subjects are well qualified in their specialisms. However, there is no agreed strategy to guide non-specialist staff in the marking of learners' spelling, punctuation and grammar, so opportunities to reinforce learners' skills in these aspects are not consistently taken.
- Managers make good use of detailed reports to monitor learners' performance and to identify where improvement is needed. Prompt action to tackle identified concerns includes the introduction of more stringent initial assessment to ensure that learners are on appropriate programmes, and strengthened attendance monitoring. Staff have access to this data; however, they do not use it with the same degree of confidence to steer change to ensure learners make consistently strong progress.
- Constructive dialogue with a wide range of external partners has helped Midlands TD to ensure that study programme qualifications support learners' progression into the workplace; this has resulted in a most learners securing employment. Staff respond flexibly to employers' needs to ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in the workplace. Midlands TD has struggled to recruit learners onto the study programme. Work with local schools and other providers has successfully raised awareness of employment opportunities within the care sector, but further work is needed to widen participation and recruit new learners.
- Staff promote equality very well and are good role models of professionalism, courtesy and respect for all. They understand equality-related issues, recognise and celebrate diversity, and are clear on how they ensure a healthy and safe learning environment.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Directors are well informed and have a good understanding of learning, quality and financial management. They provide managers with highly effective support and challenge.
  - Having led the development of a well-articulated strategic plan and worked with managers to identify key strategic objectives and performance targets, directors monitor the organisation's progress closely. Progress towards achieving objectives to date is good.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Safeguarding is effective. Staff observe robust safeguarding policy and procedures; and all staff, including directors, are well trained in a wide range of safeguarding issues, including the 'Prevent' duty. Reporting arrangements are clear and the small number of incidents have been handled appropriately. The company has completed all required checks on staff and maintains a central register of these checks. Learners feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe.

- Midlands TD promotes British values well. There is a close alignment of British values and those of Midlands TD. This has helped staff and learners to see how such fundamental values apply in practice. Notices in the centre are attractive and visible; staff facilitate in-class discussions which increase learners' understanding. As a result, learners are very well prepared for life in modern Britain; however, their understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism is insufficiently clear.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good**

- Tutors use their experience and knowledge well to plan stimulating learning activities which engage learners and which meet closely their individual needs. They encourage learners to review their peers' work and to make constructive comments, which extends their learning and progress. Learners work confidently together. Good use of ICT, such as smartboards, maintains learners' interest, encourages reflection and confirms and extends learning.
- Good learner support arrangements ensure that staff identify early potential barriers to learners completing their study programmes and take appropriate actions. An experienced support officer is available to help with issues such as the use of bursary funds, mental health, housing or transport difficulties which may adversely affect learners' progress. As a result of this support, and of a thoughtfully devised individual study programme, a higher proportion of learners complete their programme and progress onto their next steps in learning and employment.
- Tutors are well qualified and occupationally competent. Learners benefit from challenging activities through which they develop useful practical skills and acquire occupationally specific knowledge. Learners' portfolios contain good, well-presented work.
- Initial assessment is broad-ranging and effectively identifies learners' social skills, their medical and personal circumstances and their competence in English and mathematics. As a result, tutors have a clear understanding of, and plan well for, the full range of learners' needs.
- Learners benefit from a high level of involvement in the planning of their learning. They agree individual targets which reflect both the requirements of their programme and other skills to enhance future employability, such as communication skills and team working. Tutors routinely record learners' targets on learning or development plans and monitor progress during reviews. However, in too many cases, tutors' written comments are difficult to read and contain spelling errors. In these cases, learners are unable to use this feedback sufficiently well to reflect on their progress and targets or as a model of good practice in the use of English.
- Midlands TD responds well to learners' views. The recently introduced learners' forum has already identified learners' views on the availability of support, their induction experience, learning resources and assessment methods for unit achievement for certain qualifications. Staff are using this information to improve teaching.
- Tutors' feedback through assessments and progress reviews is particularly productive. Verbal feedback is good and supported by written comments identifying how well learners have achieved specific aspects of their English and mathematics qualifications. Tutors use a useful red-amber-green rating system on marked work which learners find useful and motivating. Learners frequently respond in writing to tutors' written comments, entering into a dialogue celebrating achievement and identifying what needs to improve.
- Tutors contact parents or carers when problems arise, such as learners failing to attend. These contacts are productive in achieving a joint approach to improving learners' attendance. However, there is no routine process by which staff inform parents or carers of the study programme requirements or of learners' progress. The involvement of work-experience providers is good at all stages.
- Learners' understanding of equality and of diversity-related topics is strong. Tutors promote equality and the awareness of diversity well at learners' induction. Printed resources in the induction pack are clear and very readable; slides are attractive. These learning resources are particularly thought-provoking as they encourage learners to reflect on their everyday experiences. On occasion, discussion in class extends learners' knowledge. For example, in a mathematics class, learners drew graphs related to life expectancy. The tutor took the opportunity to invite learners to consider why some countries experience lower life expectancy than others. Learners develop a strong sense of moral and cultural values.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**are good**

- Learning takes place in well-decorated, spacious accommodation, which learners appreciate. Staff place great emphasis on shared values, which are reinforced by posters encouraging learners to respect their environment, their peers and the authority of their tutors and Midlands TD's management. Learners and staff adhere to a learner code of conduct firmly and learners value the positive relationships they enjoy with staff and peers alike. As a result, there is a consistently harmonious atmosphere which supports learning.
- Staff manage work experience well. Learners engage with their work experience company through an initial meeting along with Midlands TD's support officer. Employers are clear about Midlands TD's expectations relating to learners' development through work experience. Learners maintain records of their workplace activities and skills development. However, tutors do not review these records with sufficient attention to detail, accuracy and presentation, and so learning available from work experience is not fully captured and reinforced.
- Learners have a good understanding of the importance of developing their English and mathematics skills and of acquiring the appropriate qualifications in these subjects. Former learners who have progressed to employment or an apprenticeship in the care sector confirm how the development of their written English helps them in writing care plans.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. In most cases, learners are focused on careers in the health and social care sector. Work experience confirms which aspect of care attracts learners. Conversely, in some cases, work experience in the care industry has led learners to consider other career options. Tutors actively support learners' progression by, for example, accompanying them to interviews where appropriate and to the local college to explore other vocational routes.
- Learners reflect well on their development of personal and social skills and other skills which prepare them for work. They describe how they have acquired occupationally specific knowledge related to aspects such as dementia awareness and infection control; as well as broader employability skills, such as an increase in confidence when working with groups.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality in lessons and during work experience requires improvement. Staff understand that public transport from some outlying areas is unreliable and do their best to ensure that learners know what work they have missed, if they are late. They agree with learners what they need to do to maintain their progress. However, low attendance during work experience adversely affects employability related development and progression to apprenticeships.
- Learners feel safe. They understand how to raise concerns. However, despite clear posters helping to reinforce the risks radicalisation and extremism, learners do not understand these terms enough.

## **Outcomes for learners**

**are good**

- Learners enjoy their learning and a large majority make good progress relative to their starting points. Most learners have significant barriers to learning and have had poor academic achievement at school.
- Learners achieve well: the proportion of learners who successfully complete their qualifications is high and above the average for similar providers. Most learners remain on their programmes and successfully complete their learning goals. However, managers recognise that while good, the achievement of English functional skills awards needs to be improved to bring it into line with achievement on other programmes.
- Learners acquire a good understanding of the health and social care sector through their training. They develop valuable vocational and personal skills to a good standard, which assists them in securing and sustaining employment. They produce a good standard of work; they understand, and can articulate, the relevance of this work and their wider training to their future lives and careers.
- Most learners move into full-time employment on leaving Midlands TD. However, managers recognise the need to increase the number of learners who progress onto an apprenticeship on completion of their programme.
- No significant variations exist currently in the performance of different learner groups. Managers monitor learners' progress closely to assess the performance of different groups of learners and have successfully implemented strategies to tackle any variation. For example, over the last 12 months effective support has improved the success of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, bringing it in line with their peers.

## 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	28
Principal/CEO	Mr John Shuter
Website address	<a href="http://www.midlandstd.co.uk">www.midlandstd.co.uk</a>

## 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)	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ N/A							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Judith Hamer, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Clive Blanchette

Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the managing director, 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 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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