

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



21 June 2016

Rob Colbourne – Managing Director  
Performance Through People  
Ridings house  
Ridings Park  
Eastern Way  
Hawkes Green  
Cannock  
Staffordshire  
WS11 7FH

Dear Mr Colbourne

### **Short inspection of Performance Through People (PTP Training) Ltd**

Following the short inspection on 8 and 9 June 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 the provider was judged to be good in May 2012.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

You have maintained the high levels of achievement of apprenticeship frameworks by learners in spite of a rapid increase in learner numbers to around 1,485 in the current year. The number of 16–18-year-old apprentices has doubled – a tribute to the success of the 'search and select' team in forming strategic alliances with schools. You have worked very closely with schools to promote apprenticeships, often making them aware of how apprenticeship training contributes to school performance tables. As a result, a much higher number of school-leavers are choosing to take up an apprenticeship.

Apprentices develop good levels of vocational, interpersonal and essential skills that employers value, such as team-working, problem-solving, English and mathematics. These skills enable learners quickly to become valued members of the workforce. They demonstrate a 'can-do' attitude and become loyal employees. Many stay in their job roles and progress within their companies. They make a strong contribution to the growth of the businesses and help to increase the number of satisfied customers, thus raising the image of their employers. An increasing

number of apprentices are progressing well to higher levels. Learners attend their programmes punctually and enthusiastically, demonstrating their keenness to learn.

You have made a substantial investment in learning resources by establishing a good-quality engineering workshop. Learners learn using industry-standard CNC machines and develop high-end engineering skills such as in CAD/CAM that are valued by businesses. The investment in the digital classroom has improved the variety and levels of content and the methods of learning to meet learners' needs and interests more precisely. Learners make efficient use of the learning resources from a wide variety of sources to research the topics of interest and match these to their framework. However, learners are still relying heavily on completing paper-based portfolios. In many cases this slows down access to the broad variety of evidence available and the recording of learners' progress. Managers are considering alternative models to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of developing portfolios.

Programmes match the needs of the learners and employers exceptionally well. Staff go 'the extra mile' to understand the business of the employers and update their professional knowledge and skills, so that they can customise the apprenticeship frameworks. For example, an employee worked at one of the Co-op stores in order to understand the challenges the employers face and to customise training. By gaining first-hand detailed knowledge about the employers, staff are able to help learners extend their knowledge and challenge them to do better. You have maintained the strong performance in the retail sector, making further improvements.

A dedicated business development team works very closely with a broad range of employers to develop apprenticeships and sector-based work academies (SBWA), supplying well-trained candidates for their business. For example, leaders and managers have enabled unemployed adults with significant personal barriers to secure jobs. Many of these are clients of Walsall Works – a unit within Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. Learners benefit from valuable training that prepares them well for seeking jobs. In the last year, of the 611 learners on short programmes delivered through SBWA, nearly a third have obtained jobs with multi-national employers, such as IKEA, and public sector bodies such as the local NHS. The rest of the learners now feel more confident of securing jobs, as they at least have achieved short qualifications, such as door supervision, first-aid, warehousing, customer services and health and safety in the workplace. These are much in demand by employers. Apprentices are well aware of the opportunities open to them. Staff have worked with the local NHS trust to develop a highly-specialist

programme for ambulance technicians: the only one of its kind.

Partnerships with employers remain strong. Employers fully appreciate the benefits of high-quality apprenticeship learning to their businesses and willingly make a considerable financial contribution to the training.

With its origins in the chambers of commerce, PTP is an organisation that is well known to local employers. Managers keep a very close eye on developments in the locality and provide positive solutions to employers' problems and needs. Staff listen to employers and learners keenly, and make improvements to the training quickly. For example, PTP managers have reintroduced group training sessions in response to the learners' request. Learners enjoy learning the knowledge and theory part of their programmes together with their peers from other businesses. This has enriched their learning experiences and enhanced their knowledge of the sectors they could work in.

You are a passionate champion of apprenticeships, having risen through the ranks from an apprentice to your current position. Staff share your passion for apprenticeships and create a learning environment and culture that is open and honest. Senior leaders support staff well through training, support and learning resources. Staff are very committed to the apprentices and fully recognise the difference they are making to their lives. Staff morale is high and they enjoy working at PTP. This continuity and stability have contributed strongly to the development of the business.

In recent months you have restructured the provision and have appointed some well-qualified and experienced managers. You have also supported others to make best use of their ability, keeping a keen eye on the welfare of the apprentices. By doing so, you have consolidated and enhanced the company's capacity to make further improvements, although, in a few cases, the pace of change has been slow in removing less suitable staff.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Senior managers and staff ensure that learners are taught in a safe environment. As a result, learners feel safe. You have strengthened safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection, successfully incorporating changes such as the 'Prevent' duty and protection from extremism and radicalisation.

Managers conduct thorough checks on the backgrounds of all staff and appoint those who are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Staff gain good levels of knowledge on safeguarding matters through attending thought-provoking training on an ongoing basis. Designated officers have established productive relationships with local authorities and services, including the local police forces. They use these strong links to seek advice and guidance, access training and make referrals.

Learners have a sound working knowledge of issues around safeguarding and how it affects their life. They are vigilant to the dangers in society, such as grooming, bullying, radicalisation and extremism through the internet.

They know what to do to protect themselves from such dangers. For example, learners have updated the settings of their social media accounts to protect their identity and reduce the risk of being a victim of cybercrime or bullying. Staff use examples of radicalisation exposed in the local media to bring the matter home to learners. They become cautious and wise as a result. They are able to recognise the symptoms of radicalisation among their peers.

Staff conduct regular risk assessments of venues and sessions to ensure that learners are not exposed to any dangers. Learners and staff benefit from an inclusive learning and work environment that fosters mutual respect and demonstrates tolerance and respect of others' views. You acknowledge that the need to ensure that the British values are fully part of all aspects of learning.

Staff have demonstrated they are quick to identify any dangers of radicalisation and take swift action to protect learners.

### **Inspection findings**

- The vast majority of learners receive good information, advice and guidance. As a result, they make informed choices about their chosen vocation and enrol on the correct programmes. Staff conduct a detailed diagnostic assessment to identify and meet well learners' specific and ongoing support and development needs. Many learners take up additional study and extended qualifications to increase further their employability skills or prepare them for their next steps in learning. Historically, a small minority of learners have left their programmes because staff did not make them fully aware of the expectations and challenges faced by the apprentices in those vocations. Their employers were not fully committed to apprenticeship training. Managers have improved the vetting of employers and do not work with those who are not fully committed to apprenticeship training.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the non-executive directors had insufficient knowledge and experience of apprenticeships and the issues facing the employers in those sectors where PTP provides learning. They

were not fully able to support and challenge senior leaders, or provide useful links and ideas to signpost them to appropriate sources of help. The directors had not been ambitious enough in their vision for the company and had not challenged the senior leaders to become an outstanding provider of learning. The current board of non-executive directors have begun to take far greater interest in the quality of learning and are supportive of the managing director's efforts to make further improvements.

- Senior managers have maintained the good quality of training and have successfully addressed almost all areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have devolved responsibility to all delivery teams for the performance of learners in their team and successfully hold them to account.
- Managers have employed better-qualified staff. They have provided them with an extensive range of training to improve their skills in the teaching of English and mathematics to learners and in the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment. A minority of staff without level 2 qualifications in English and/or mathematics receive support, to achieve level 2 and complete a mathematics resilience programme. This helps them to embed functional skills into learning activities and assessment.
- Learners' achievement of qualifications in English and mathematics is good. Their skills development is equally good. Learners appreciate the value of English and mathematics to their current role and future employment. For example, around 50 learners have opted to improve their English and/or maths from level 1 to level 2, beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship frameworks.
- Teaching, learning and assessment remain good and are improving further. Learners benefit from learning activities that build on previous learning and extend their knowledge and understanding, equipping them with skills to use in their chosen employment.
- In a small minority of activities, tutors do not use assessment strategies effectively to monitor individuals' progress in lessons. For example, when recapping on learning activities, tutors simply tell learners what has been achieved. Some questions do not allow learners to build on ideas and experiences. As a result, learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- You have made significant strides in ensuring that apprentices complete their frameworks in the planned period. You have sharply reduced the

number of learners continuing beyond their planned period of learning from 20% to 8% at present. Current learners are making good progress. Some 75% of learners are due to complete their qualifications in time.

- A significant number of learners did not complete their qualifications in time in previous years. Many left the programme altogether. The managers took appropriate steps to re-engage the learners without success. The main reasons for the dip in performance were that the company inherited a number of learners from other training providers, and that one of the largest employers in retail apprenticeship restructured its workforce and lost some apprentices in the process.
- You have responded admirably to developing new provision in response to the demands of the funding bodies and employers. Since the previous inspection, you have successfully developed SBWA and higher level apprentices at level 4 and 5 in accountancy and management. After initial difficulties, the numbers have grown substantially and the current, higher-level apprentices are progressing very well through their qualifications, adding value to their businesses and developing their careers.
- You have worked tenaciously to make traineeships a success, with good results including progression into apprenticeships. The numbers, however, remain very low, mainly because of the restrictive eligibility criteria.
- Managers have devised and implemented a thorough quality improvement plan, and have addressed almost all areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Management information is available on all aspects of the company's performance. However, managers do not produce sufficiently succinct summaries of what it tells them, and do not use this information sufficiently strategically to make far-reaching changes to promote successes and grow the business further.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- The board of directors sets an ambitious vision for PTP; it provides high-level support to the managing director and holds him to account so that the organisation becomes an outstanding provider of learning
- Training advisers use digital learning consistently well, so that all learners benefit from access to learning outside the classroom to complete their studies and portfolios more quickly and consistently, and make the progress of which they are capable

- Observers focus more sharply on measuring the learning and progress of learners during lesson observations in order to get a more accurate view of quality, and raise the standards of learning further by sharing good practice among staff
- Senior managers sharpen the performance management of staff and the subcontractors by setting, monitoring and evaluating key performance indicators for the impact of actions, using interim targets to make improvements at a faster pace; senior managers use the analysis of data strategically to improve the reach and impact of the organisation.

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

Yours sincerely

Harmesh Manghra  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection the team was assisted by the operations director, as nominee. We held meetings with you, your senior leaders, the chair of the board of directors, managers, teaching staff, partners and learners. We visited three sites with members of your staff to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We spoke with learners at all sites, from across most apprenticeship programmes, including adults on classroom-based learning and traineeship. We reviewed key documents including self-assessment, the quality improvement plan, staff development, organisations' performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires, from your own learner survey and by seeking the views of learners during onsite inspection activity.

