

MiddletonMurray Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates	26–29 July 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
Traineeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders have developed very strong links with employers and stakeholders to construct a programme that supports the progression of trainees into work particularly well.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and trainees, and are relentless in their pursuit of excellence.
- The large majority of trainees achieve their learning goals and move on to full-time jobs.
- Trainees are prepared well for employment and benefit from high-quality work experience.
- The standard of trainees' work while on placement is high and, in the majority of cases, exceeds expectations.
- Teaching to develop learners' interpersonal and presentation skills leads to trainees developing a particularly strong work ethic; they dress smartly and are respectful and professional.
- Well-thought-through activities in the classroom enable learners to work well together, individually and in small groups and to present their work confidently to their peers.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Managers' use of observations of lessons and action plans for teachers requires improvement to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Achievement rates for functional skills qualifications at level 2 in English and level 1 in mathematics are low.
- Teachers' feedback to trainees lacks sufficient detail on the quality of written work, including presentations.
- Errors in trainees' written English are not always identified and corrected.
- Managers do not do enough to ensure that employers have a deep enough understanding of how to protect trainees from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Full report

Information about the provider

- MiddletonMurray Limited was established in 2002, primarily as a recruitment consultancy serving Sidcup and the surrounding areas. In 2008, the organisation diversified into the training sector, mainly offering employability programmes, and later as a subcontractor for apprenticeship programmes. It now provides apprenticeships in its own right trading as 'Astute Minds Ltd', which was inspected in March 2015.
- MiddletonMurray started offering study programmes at level 1 to learners aged 16 to 18 who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in 2013. Since the ending of this latter programme in February 2016, MiddletonMurray has had a contract with the Education Funding Agency for traineeships, which is the focus of this inspection. It now operates from a central London head office and has four centres in Sandwich, Canterbury, Romford and Sidcup.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that self-assessment reports and observations are much less descriptive and much more judgemental about the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on trainees.
- Provide more critical and constructive feedback to trainees on the quality of their written work. Encourage tutors to apply the same rigour to marking written work as they do to the development of trainees' wider employability skills.
- Support employers to improve their understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and their ability to identify the tell-tale signs of trainees at risk. Review the 'Prevent' risk assessment process to ensure that procedures reflect the risk factors within the geographical areas in which training takes place.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The chief executive officer (CEO) provides strong leadership for the company and a clearly defined purpose for the traineeship programme. Leaders and managers set and meet high expectations for success. They have established a culture of achievement, which has contributed well to meeting the needs of employers and enabling learners to progress to apprenticeships. Staff take pride in their work and the impact they have on young people's lives. Staff are empowered to make improvements and have a strong sense of ownership and accountability.
- Leaders and managers work well with local authorities and other organisations such as schools to raise the profile of traineeships. MiddletonMurray and its partners have been effective in reducing the number of learners who are NEET. Managers have responded well to requests from local authorities and developed new provision in areas of greatest need. For example, at the request of Kent County Council, which has a high NEET population, MiddletonMurray opened a new centre in east Kent.
- Leaders and managers have established excellent relationships with local employers, who greatly value the quality of trainees they receive for work experience and who comment favourably on how well trainees match their employment requirements. The large majority of trainees progress to apprenticeships within their placement.
- Leaders and managers promote a culture of continuous improvement. Staff meet every six weeks to evaluate the quality of provision, share good practice and participate in good-quality training activities. Managers make good use of feedback from trainees to make improvements in the quality of provision and the experience trainees have while studying. For example, as a result of feedback from trainees, managers have updated computer software and increased the number of practice interview opportunities.
- Managers evaluate the performance of staff against stretching and measurable targets and review regularly the progress that trainees make. Performance management of staff is thorough. Where teachers do not meet the high standards expected, they receive support to improve, and if they do not improve they leave the company quickly.
- Leaders and managers review the quality of provision and key aspects of the company's performance thoroughly on a weekly basis, through the use of accurate data reports and the tracking of progress at each stage of the traineeship. Following reviews, managers are quick to implement changes where needed. Observations of teaching and learning are regular. However, records of the quality of teaching are too descriptive and do not focus enough on the amount of learning that takes place, or how well the most able learners are challenged to reach their full potential. Action plans following observations are insufficiently precise and do not enable managers to monitor effectively the impact of improvements made.
- Leaders and managers have a clear commitment to developing trainees' English and mathematics skills and have an appropriate policy and procedures for staff to follow. As a result, staff give good support to the majority of learners who do not have GCSEs at A* to C grade in these subjects, and consequently most achieve their functional skills qualifications. However, managers recognise the need to further improve English and mathematics. They are in the process of reviewing how the programme is timetabled, and are supporting staff to improve their knowledge and skills through specialist teaching qualifications.
- The self-assessment report, although broadly accurate in identifying many areas for improvement, is not sufficiently evaluative. Managers do not make enough use of qualitative data to support judgements relating to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, the quality improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on the aspects of teaching, learning and assessment needed to further improve the quality of provision and help to eliminate the minority of underperformance in the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance arrangements are good. While there is no board of governors or directors, the CEO and the associate director have made good arrangements to quality assure the provision. The use of independent consultants to scrutinise performance at each of the centres is good. They provide effective challenge in relation to the achievement of key performance indicators set by the CEO for key aspects of operation.
 - The CEO has set clear targets for performance and holds managers to account for the areas of performance for which they are responsible. Senior leaders support and challenge each other well and work closely with managers and staff to ensure that learners are making the expected progress.

- Although senior leaders have focused well on improving the quality of provision, they have not yet eradicated the areas of weaker performance in teaching, learning and assessment.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- The designated safeguarding officer takes swift and effective action when safeguarding issues arise and liaises with external agencies where appropriate. Managers have appropriate policies and procedures in place and check regularly that safeguarding procedures are being maintained.
- Senior leaders, managers and staff have had appropriate training in safeguarding and the prevention of extremism and radicalisation, including the referral process. They receive weekly reports on the number and type of safeguarding incidents and ensure that learners receive the appropriate support they need.
- Managers make appropriate checks on employees and employers to ensure that trainees work and study in a safe environment and rigorously follow safe working practices and procedures. However, managers have not ensured that employers have a sufficiently detailed understanding of safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Managers assess the risk to learners from extremism and radicalisation and focus well on the risks from online material. However, managers recognise the need to reinforce the rigour of their risk assessment practice and take into account the geographical context of where learners live or study.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The structure of the traineeship programme is effective, with six weeks of classroom-based training and six weeks of work placement for each trainee. Trainees' confidence and motivation improves significantly and they develop very good interpersonal and presentation skills.
- Most tutors are appropriately qualified and have good vocationally relevant experience, which they use well to engage trainees, tailor learning to meet trainees' needs and expectations, and help them expand their knowledge and understanding.
- Training in the centres features a useful range of activities, which effectively link to trainees' ambitions and aspirations. Training helps trainees develop good personal presentation skills and encourages the use of social media to research job opportunities. Tutors know their trainees well. They benefit from a thorough recruitment and initial assessment process where their past experiences and ambitions are discussed and skills in English and mathematics assessed. Tutors receive detailed information which helps ensure that training activities match each trainee's individual needs.
- In the large majority of lessons, tutors plan learning activities well to meet trainees' needs and aspirations. Trainees work well individually and in small groups. However, in a small minority of lessons, tutors do not set sufficiently challenging work for the most able trainees; as a result, these trainees do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Tutors set trainees useful research activities on topics which may help them find employment. They present their findings to their peers, which helps improve confidence and presentation skills. Trainees develop a very good work ethic. They dress smartly, are punctual and are respectful of their peers and staff.
- The focus on developing trainees' English and mathematics skills is appropriate. Training sessions highlight well the use of English and mathematics in the workplace and trainees work confidently towards qualifications in functional skills where needed. While tutors emphasise the importance of body language, clear speech and the correct use of technical terms, on a small minority of occasions tutors do not identify and correct errors in the use of grammar and spelling in trainees' slide presentations and other written work. Similarly, feedback to trainees on the quality of their work, although positive and motivational, lacks sufficient detail on how they can improve.
- Links with employers are excellent. Employers visit each group of trainees in their training centres to conduct interviews for job placements. The large majority of trainees secure good-quality placements at the halfway point of the traineeship, which link well to their aspirations. Employers are committed to the development of trainees and provide them with good opportunities to improve their skills and confidence. For example, after a short period in the workplace, one learner working in recruitment was dealing with clients and matching them to suitable positions.
- Trainees have good knowledge of how to stay safe online and are aware of what to do if they feel unsafe or are bullied or harassed. However, they have a lower level of understanding of the benefits of a diverse workforce and wider aspects of equality.

- Trainees discuss British values in discrete sessions and many have the opportunity to meet the local Member of Parliament and/or visit the House of Commons. There is, however, insufficient focus on these subjects in day-to-day teaching. As a result, many trainees have a weak knowledge of the way British values impact on everyday life in, for example, data protection and the right to free speech. Training in the 'Prevent' duty is provided for all trainees, but many do not understand fully the threats posed by grooming and radicalisation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Trainees rapidly improve their confidence and self-esteem; most become assured of their own ability to interact well with their tutors and peers, employers and customers. For example, one trainee spoke eloquently about how he deals effectively with irate customers, calming them down and addressing their concerns, and another discussed how she now has the confidence to maintain eye contact when meeting and greeting customers.
- The majority of trainees improve their skills in English and mathematics. Tutors are adept at developing further trainees' English and mathematics skills through the everyday activities and tasks they set trainees to complete. For example, trainees demonstrate effective speaking, listening and thinking skills during discussions around what makes good customer service. They are able to calculate future salary levels required to cover mortgage repayments and living expenses.
- The majority of trainees receive good information, advice and guidance before and during their time at MiddletonMurray. Talks and interviews with employers develop their knowledge further. However in a minority of cases, initial guidance is not sufficiently impartial and some young people with suitable qualifications and skills are not guided towards apprenticeships. As a result, these trainees are not being effectively stretched and challenged.
- Trainees' preparation for employment is good and they benefit from high-quality work experience. Trainees settle into work quickly and thrive because managers and tutors carefully select local businesses to meet the development needs of individual trainees.
- All staff set high expectations for their trainees and ensure that they know how to keep themselves safe and adopt safe workplace practices. Trainees understand how to live a healthier lifestyle and to give something back to their communities. For example, trainees complete a wide-ranging project assessing their own health and well-being, including producing vitamin-boosting smoothies. They contribute to charity events and, as a result, develop their teamworking skills.
- The proportion of trainees who remain in learning is high. Managers and tutors are highly effective in helping trainees to overcome the challenges and barriers that have previously prevented them from completing their training and education. As a result, a large majority of trainees are motivated to work hard. They progress quickly to apprenticeships and from there to a good job. For example, a trainee with a background of youth offending who had found it impossible to obtain an interview was quickly snapped up by an employer and rapidly became an invaluable asset to the company.
- The majority of trainees attend regularly and are punctual. Tutors reinforce the importance of good and punctual attendance as an expectation of employers. Trainees complete their own timesheets and the majority of tutors take appropriate action when trainees are late or fail to attend.
- Managers and staff have established successfully an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect. Trainees have a good understanding of their employment rights and how to behave professionally at work. However, many trainees do not have sufficient understanding of how to live and work productively in a diverse society.

Outcomes for learners are good

- The large majority of trainees achieve their learning goals and progress to full-time jobs. Just over two thirds of trainees remain with their work placement provider and progress to an apprenticeship with them.
- Senior leaders collect and analyse the achievement and destination data for different groups of trainees, for example by gender, ethnicity, the borough in which they live and the learning centre they attend. Young men are more successful than young women, but only slightly. The large majority of trainees are White British, with very few other ethnic groups recruited. This reflects the areas in which MiddletonMurray

currently works. Trainees from other ethnic backgrounds achieve at the same level as the rest of their peers.

- The majority of trainees make very good progress in their work placements. The standard of trainees' work while on placement is high and in the majority of cases exceeds expectations. Employers highly value MiddletonMurray's classroom-based activities because they prepare trainees well for the world of work. However, the standard of trainees' written work is at the level expected and a small minority of the most able trainees do not reach the standard of which they are capable.
- Trainees enjoy their learning in class and in their placements. They gain particularly good work-related skills, such as being punctual and attending regularly, working with others and following instructions, as well as good customer service skills in roles that are public-facing. Trainees show initiative while on work placement and rapidly acquire good vocationally related skills by attending high-level business meetings and contributing to discussions and developments in, for example, business administration and technology. Trainees and their parents and carers are proud of their achievements.
- The achievement of functional skills qualifications in English at level 1 is above national rates for all providers. A minority of trainees do not need to take English and mathematics GCSE qualifications as they have already achieved these at grade C or above while at school or college. Achievement rates for functional skills at level 2 in English are low. Achievement rates for functional skills qualifications at level 1 in mathematics are in line with the low national rate for all providers.

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	287
Principal/CEO	Ms Angela Middleton
Website address	www.middletonmurray.com

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+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	84		0		84			
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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Rosy Belton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shane Langthorne	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Megan Whittaker	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the associate director as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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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