

Riverside Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

8–12 August 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
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Apprentices and trainees develop good vocational skills because of well-planned individual coaching sessions. These add value to their job roles and employers benefit from their skills greatly.
- The large majority of apprentices and trainees achieve well and they make good progress into sustained employment.
- All apprentices and trainees grow in confidence and through good teaching understand both theory and practice. They enjoy learning ways of improving their skills.
- Staff provide good information, advice and guidance that enable apprentices and trainees to develop clear and realistic plans for career progression.
- Very effective partnerships with local and national employers and external agencies lead to apprentices making good progress and gaining employment.
- Apprentices and trainees are encouraged and supported to lead healthy lifestyles. Assessors frequently check on their well-being and their safety. Staff, apprentices and trainees understand the 'Prevent' duty well.
- Leaders and managers set high expectations for staff, apprentices and trainees so that everyone is highly motivated to achieve.
- All apprentices and trainees have a good understanding of equality and diversity. The large majority have a good understanding of British values.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- The planning and provision of functional skills is not effective in meeting the needs of all apprentices, particularly those who need information and communications technology at level 2.
- The majority of assessors do not give apprentices sufficiently detailed feedback to help them reflect on what they need to do to improve.
- Advanced management apprentices do not perform as well as the other apprentices. Not enough are completing their qualification.
- Targets set for apprentices are too brief and insufficiently detailed. They do not provide short-term, clear and specific targets to help apprentices achieve.
- The observations of teaching and learning do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning and the progress of the apprentices.
- Systematic recording and reporting of data for apprentice and trainee eventual employment or further training does not take place.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Riverside Training (Riverside) is a private training provider based on a single site in Hereford. Established in 1996, Riverside provides apprenticeship programmes and traineeship programmes. Contracting with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), the organisation provides training on a regional and national basis. Riverside also subcontracts with three local training providers. At the previous inspection, Riverside was a local provider. They now operate on a national basis.
- At the time of the inspection a total of 702 apprentices and trainees were following training programmes. This comprised of 691 apprentices and 11 trainees. Apprenticeship programmes include health and social care, early years and playwork, business management and administration, hospitality and catering and customer service.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all assessors have the appropriate skills and confidence to better support apprentices' development of English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Prepare apprentices better to succeed in their functional skills by further developing the role of specialist support staff and enhance the use of learning resources. Ensure through rigorous initial assessment and ongoing support that apprentices have the capability to achieve ICT functional skills at the first attempt.
- Further develop staff teaching and coaching skills by ensuring a more robust observation process which provides substantive and constructive feedback and which clearly identifies what staff need to do to improve.
- Improve target setting for apprentices and trainees to ensure that targets are more detailed, measurable and meaningful by identifying the skills, knowledge and progress required to ensure they achieve their qualifications within the planned time. Ensure that apprentices are clear on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work by providing more detailed and constructive feedback.
- Gather ongoing information of trainees and apprentices' eventual employment or further training in a systematic way. Produce and analyse data for management on a regular basis to confirm how successfully individuals have progressed into sustained employment, further education or training.
- Improve achievement rates for advanced management apprentices by using the information gathered when advanced management apprentices start. Better plan learning activities to address individual development needs and ensure that targets agreed with apprentices will enable them to make rapid progress and achieve within the planned time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and senior managers set high expectations for staff and apprentices and are achieving good outcomes for learners and good-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders are successfully restructuring the organisation to deal with the significant growth of provision with clear strategic planning, and the setting of ambitious targets for growing apprentice numbers nationally.
- Strong partnerships exist with a small number of national employers in construction, financial services, health services and the motor trade. Riverside is also maintaining strong links with local smaller employers and is continuing to meet their needs effectively. Good partnerships exist within the local enterprise partnership (LEP), and a senior manager from Riverside chairs the local provider network. The organisation helps meet local needs effectively by working with the LEP. Leaders meet with them regularly to review local performance and tender for new funding.
- Senior managers are developing the curriculum well, with a strong focus on further developing the provision around its core strength of business management and associated subjects such as administration and customer service. Managers have introduced higher level management apprenticeships and recently gained accreditation to deliver financial services qualifications to meet employer needs. A small and successful traineeship programme is in place, which is linked well with the local Jobcentre Plus.
- Managers are improving the range of off-the-job learning for apprentices. Good use is being made of web-based presentations that cover a wide range of vocational and other topics such as equality and diversity. A recent web-based presentation has helped learners and assessors to have a better understanding of how to prepare for functional skills ICT tests. Managers are developing learning resources to support technical certificates and mandatory NVQ units well.
- Management of contractual performance is good. Managers collect and use performance data very well to monitor against key indicators such as success rates, assessor visits and frequency of progress reviews. Monthly assessor caseload reviews are effective in tracking apprentices' progress and highlighting any at risk of not achieving on time. Following the decision to end subcontracting arrangements, subcontractors are receiving effective referrals to other providers and ongoing monitoring to ensure that learners receive sufficient support to complete their apprenticeships.
- Leaders and senior managers promote equality and diversity well. Regular training provides staff with the confidence and knowledge to support apprentices, who themselves demonstrate a good understanding of topics such as discrimination, harassment, cyber bullying, and gender stereotyping. Good-quality learning resources help to underpin their knowledge. Managers use data well to monitor participation and achievement by different groups.
- Self-assessment is broadly accurate. Managers use data well to inform judgements and staff contribute well to identifying strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Effective reviewing of progress by leaders and senior managers ensures quality improvement actions take place rapidly and effectively.
- The management of English, mathematics and ICT teaching, learning and assessment requires further improvement. While some progress in providing additional support is being made, particularly for ICT to address low achievement rates, managers are not yet ensuring that all staff have sufficient skills and confidence to better support apprentices and prepare them for functional skills tests which too many fail at the first attempt.
- Quality audits of learner files, completion of progress reviews and assessment practice are robust. The assessor quality reports highlight the standard of their performance and identify where support is required. However, the teaching and learning observation process requires further improvement. Observers do not focus sufficiently on learning, the apprentice or trainee, or provide staff with sufficient actions regarding what they need to do to improve the quality of their teaching and coaching. The observation process does not include the observation of apprentices' progress reviews to ensure that they are of a consistently good standard.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The chief executive officer (CEO), along with the newly appointed managing director (MD), participates actively in senior management team roles, responsibilities and meetings. Between them, they have an excellent understanding of the organisation, including the strengths and areas for improvement, and are providing strong leadership in driving business growth.

- Leaders are currently reviewing governance arrangements to ensure that as the business continues to grow, governance arrangements remain sufficiently robust to ensure effective guidance and challenge to management.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- Safeguarding is a high priority and staff, apprentices and trainees understand their expectations well.
- Leaders have developed a safeguarding culture that ensures that all aspects of safeguarding are regularly monitored and discussed and awareness of the latest safeguarding developments is raised. Good examples of the management and resolution of safeguarding incidents involving apprentices are recorded well. Issues are quickly actioned, resolved and monitored after resolution. Referrals to external support agencies following safeguarding issues have resulted in very positive outcomes for apprentices and trainees in areas such as drug abuse and self-harming. Establishment of close working relationships with a range of local and national safeguarding bodies helps to provide the latest information for Riverside. Sharing of this information takes place throughout the organisation. Safeguarding is managed well within the subcontractors.
- All staff and the large majority of apprentices and trainees have a good understanding and knowledge of both the 'Prevent' duty and British values. Extremism and radicalisation along with e-safety and social media awareness are covered well at all stages of the training programmes. External speakers, including the local police, have helped raise awareness of potential safeguarding issues within the county. Good use of videos developed for social media reinforce safeguarding messages well. All relevant staff have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) accreditation and all staff have received recent formal training including safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values. Health and safety is monitored thoroughly both on employers' premises and at subcontractors' premises.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Apprentices and trainees are well motivated and enjoy their learning. The large majority of apprentices are making at least the progress expected. Workplaces are of a good standard.
- Apprentices and trainees develop good vocational skills through well-planned individual coaching sessions, which add value to their job role and which employers appreciate greatly. For example, apprentices on childcare courses with a subcontractor successfully plan and provide outdoor play activities, skilfully meeting children's individual development needs. Hospitality apprentices quickly gain the skills to create their own recipes and present food to a high industry standard. Apprentices speak confidently about the skills they are developing and how they have applied them in the workplace.
- Assessors use learning resources effectively to develop apprentices' understanding. For example, customer service web-based presentations enable apprentices to develop a broader understanding of call handling techniques. Resources have been adapted to meet the needs of apprentices with visual impairment. For example, information sheets are available in Braille.
- Assessors plan assessments well. They are enthusiastic, positive role models for apprentices and use their good occupational knowledge and experience effectively to deepen apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Apprentices that have recently started their learning programmes are swiftly set tasks to complete and this motivates their interest well. They are eager to carry out research and discover new information about their sector and organisation.
- Assessors prepare apprentices well for frequent assessments and observations, which enables them to be clear about how they are progressing. Assessors use a range of assessment and coaching methods, including the use of technology such as video and digital voice recorders, to encourage and motivate apprentices and trainees. The Riverside apprenticeship programmes meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship well.
- Staff provide good information and guidance services that apprentices and trainees value highly. As a result, they develop clear and realistic plans for career progression. For example, an apprentice with a subcontractor is progressing from team leading to health and social care management with another provider so that she can make progress towards becoming a registered manager in residential care. Assessors and workplace managers are ambitious for apprentices and encourage them to progress to higher-level qualifications. For example, an assessor encourages a hospitality apprentice to spend time with a specialist chocolate maker so that he can develop his interest and skills in patisserie and chocolate production.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the progress they are making. They make good use of the electronic portfolio to upload evidence and to monitor and reflect on their achievements – frequently

uploading their work in-between visits by their assessor.

- Trainees and apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity and recognise the values of working within a diverse workforce. The large majority of apprentices and trainees have a good understanding of British values and how these link to their employer's values. Childcare apprentices, with a subcontractor, skilfully plan activities that develop children's knowledge effectively. For example, young children are encouraged to listen to each other and to value the contributions of their classmates in early years play.
- Assessors do not routinely use the results from initial assessments when apprentices first start their programme to plan further skills development. Apprentices and trainees complete assessments in English, mathematics and ICT when they start programmes but assessors do not always use these results to plan learning. As a result, they do not make sufficiently rapid progress in the development of these skills to enable them to reach their potential.
- The majority of assessors do not give apprentices sufficiently detailed or precise feedback to help them identify and reflect on what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. Capturing of the good verbal feedback given at the time is not sufficient for apprentices to reflect on.
- Targets set for apprentices are too brief and insufficiently detailed. They do not provide sufficient challenge or small stepping-stones to help apprentices achieve their long-term goals. Targets often relate to unit completion or preparation for a professional discussion rather than the specific development of the skills or knowledge required, or to improve apprentices' understanding of English, mathematics and ICT skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- All apprentices and trainees grow in confidence. Through good one-to-one training they understand the theory behind their practice, realise how much they do know, and learn new ways of improving their skills. For example, apprentices on hospitality training learn about the different types of fish, how to check how fresh they are and how to prepare them for cooking. Employers appreciate the way learners contribute to raising standards in the workplace, for example by improving services to customers.
- Apprentices and trainees take pride in their work and enjoy widening their experience and improving their skills. For example, customer care and business administration apprentices, working for a large national employer, improve their spelling and punctuation when writing to customers and become confident undertaking calculations when managing invoices. This employer reports that staff who have been on training score higher on quality checks on written emails than staff who have not attended training. All apprentices and trainees behave well, are punctual and attend well at work.
- Apprentices and trainees are well motivated to achieve their qualifications with the majority having clear plans for their future career or next steps. A good proportion progress onto higher levels of training or gain promotion during or after their training. The large majority of learners following traineeships complete their programme successfully and progress to other learning and employment within the company they complete their work placement with.
- Apprentices and trainees are encouraged successfully to lead healthy lifestyles and staff frequently check on their well-being as well as their safety when they review learning. Riverside has started a health and well-being project to raise awareness of issues such as healthy eating and stress management. Staff successfully promote healthy lifestyles to apprentices and trainees.
- The safety of apprentices and trainees is a high priority for Riverside. Both apprentices and trainees report that they feel safe and know who to contact if they have concerns about radicalisation, bullying or other forms of abuse. Riverside takes all concerns seriously. Apprentices and trainees know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet for research.
- Staff raise awareness of fundamental British values in discussions and at progress reviews. As a result, apprentices and trainees understand these values and show respect to one another and to customers. Apprentices and trainees develop and maintain good relationships with colleagues.
- Current apprentices and trainees are making good progress with the majority on track to complete their programme within the planned timescale. Apprentices and trainees, including those with additional needs, make at least the expected progress from their starting points. However, recording of data on apprentices' eventual employment or further training is insufficient. Although available by programme area, it is not used effectively by managers.

- Apprentices and trainees make good progress into jobs. Currently, the large majority of trainees are moving onto apprenticeships and then into sustained employment. Apprentices in the large majority of cases continue with their employer following the completion of their apprenticeship. Some apprentices gain promotion and more responsible job roles. Progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is good and opportunities now exist to progress to higher levels.
- Apprentices are acquiring a very good range of work skills while on their training programmes and many observed operate at a higher level than expected within the workplace. Good hand-skills are acquired in hospitality and catering and in health and social care. Apprentices have developed several well thought out initiatives themselves. For example, childcare apprentices have developed and introduced effective learning resources for children's playwork. In business management and administration and customer service, apprentices have developed very good teamwork skills and are highly valued by their colleagues as competent team members.
- Monitoring of the performance of different groups of learners is regular and currently no significant gaps in performance are evident. Support for specific groups of apprentices and trainees is good, particularly in health and social care and hospitality and catering where English is not their first language.
- The majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications and complete their programmes on time. Trainees perform well also and all those who remain on the programme complete on time. Apprentice achievement rates in 2014/15 were well above national rates and the provider's data for 2015/16 indicates that this is still the case. Although the proportion of apprentices who complete their qualifications within the expected time has fallen slightly, achievement rates remain good and are well above the national rate. Trainees achieve well in their employability level 2 qualifications. In business administration and management, intermediate apprenticeships' all round performance is particularly high. However, performance in advanced management apprenticeships is low for both overall and timely achievement.
- Functional skills achievements are low in some levels of English and mathematics and are particularly low in all levels of ICT. Not enough apprentices pass their functional skills tests at the first attempt and in some cases, they have several attempts before they are successful. ICT at level 2 and English reading at level 2 are the areas that perform least well.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	746
Principal/CEO	Jane Preston
Website address	www.riverside-training.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)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	49	252	19	319	N/A	52		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	7		4		11			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<div><div></div><div>Kemble Training</div><div></div><div>PGL Travel Ltd</div><div></div><div>Woodlands Nursery Group</div></div>							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Tim Hanson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Aslett	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Mathers	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Blowman	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the CEO, 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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