

Nova Training

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

11–14 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Provision for learners with high needs	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Programmes for learners are highly individualised. Learners make excellent progress in their learning and into further study or jobs.
- By undertaking a good range of tailored work experience, learners are prepared exceedingly well for their employment and future careers.
- Apprentices develop high-quality trade skills and achieve their qualifications in the planned period. They become valuable employees swiftly.
- Learners with high needs make outstanding progress towards their goals of independence, and gain employment with supportive employers after a period of carefully planned internship.
- Staff provide a broad range of enrichment programmes. These prepare learners very well for the challenges of modern life and promote health, emotional wellbeing and safety.
- Staff are highly skilled and experienced. Their teaching challenges, stimulates and inspires learners to learn and make progress.
- Learners develop a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe in the workplace and online, diversity in society and fundamental British values, helping them become more responsible citizens and mature individuals.
- Learners make excellent use of technology and the internet to gain greater knowledge and skills which reinforce their learning and progress.
- Learners fully recognise the importance of English and mathematics in their future careers and higher studies, and develop good and often outstanding skills in these subjects.
- Leaders, managers and staff are strongly focused on continuous improvement. All aspects of provision have improved to outstanding levels.
- Leaders have made substantial investment in providing high-quality learning centres and resources. Learners use these facilities to improve their skills and earning potential.
- Programmes meet the needs of the learners and employers exceptionally well. Managers have swiftly established high-quality provision in the east of England, supporting the learners from failed training providers.
- Through rigorous and thoughtful weekly case conferences staff evaluate the progress of all learners, including those who miss sessions, and provide exemplary support to help them succeed.
- The quality of support for learners is exemplary. This helps ensure that learners overcome personal barriers and successfully complete their learning.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Founded in 1992, Nova Training (Nova) is an independent learning provider. With its head office based in Willenhall in Walsall, Nova operates from 18 centres throughout the West Midlands. The newly established Wolverhampton vocational training centre acts as a hub for the other centres.
- The study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 account for the largest number of learners. Since October 2015, Nova has established study programme provision in five centres in Norfolk and more recently extended it to a further five centres throughout the east of England. Nova has assimilated learners from four training providers who had lost their contracts with the funding agencies. Learners on apprenticeships and the recently introduced programmes for learners with high needs are based in the West Midlands. Nova offers training in several vocational areas including motor vehicle, construction, business administration, customer service, sales, warehousing, hairdressing, beauty therapy, retail and hospitality.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Proceed with well-considered plans to strengthen further governance of the provider, so that leaders and managers can benchmark themselves against the best in the sector and remain focused on their strategic direction.
- Ensure that all staff use target setting to a consistently high standard to enable all learners to make rapid progress towards achieving their potential.
- Provide support for all staff to ensure that they consistently help learners improve the accuracy of their written English.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Leaders and managers have successfully responded to the recommendations for improvement inspectors made at the previous inspection in 2013. As a result, far more apprentices now achieve their qualification within the planned time compared with similar providers. Functional skills pass rates have improved and are now high. Tutors and learners make better use of information and learning technology (ILT) in their lessons, which contributes significantly to their learning and progress. In addition to these improvements, leaders have considerably expanded the provision. They have opened 10 new centres in the east of England and have successfully established provision for learners with high needs.
- Leaders have carefully analysed the priorities of a wide range of local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) in the areas covered by Nova to ensure that their programmes meet skills needs and help reduce the number of learners not in education, employment or training (NEET). Partnership working with local authorities, chambers of commerce and employers is very successful. Senior managers have responded swiftly and effectively to offer relevant courses when approached by stakeholders seeking to replace providers who have ceased trading. They respond exceptionally well to changing needs and requests from employers to make improvements to learners' training.
- Managers have developed strong and successful links with schools. They are very proactive and particularly effective at promoting work-based learning as an attractive alternative progression route for those learners aged 16, and to support transition into further study for learners with high needs. As a result, a greater number of school leavers are joining apprenticeship and study programmes as their first option.
- Rigorous performance management and extensive staff development combine very effectively to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have established a strong culture of continuous improvement, which has resulted in excellent cooperative working by staff in different roles to build a 'team around each learner'. Managers support tutors well to improve where their teaching is judged to be less effective. They take swift and appropriate steps to ensure that those staff who are unable or unwilling to respond to the support provided and improve their practice, leave Nova's employment. Staff are open and honest about their needs when they seek support, such as to improve their ability to manage learners' behaviour. Inspectors found numerous success stories of staff who have benefited from support and gone on to provide similar effective support to their peers.
- Managers and staff meet regularly to share good practice and provide peer support, which is particularly effective in the newly established centres. The rates of progression of learners in the newer Norfolk centres are even higher than for those in the West Midlands. Staff in the other centres in the east of England work extremely well to support and change the mindset of the learners by setting very high standards.
- Staff have embraced the philosophy of study programmes particularly well to provide each learner with a highly individual programme. All learners are working towards progression into employment as their core aim alongside developing skills in mathematics and English. They gain relevant work experience and many take part in and contribute to the organisation of enrichment activities for their peers. These activities develop learners' understanding of democracy, morality and social responsibility. Managers use the funding resources very effectively to support the most vulnerable learners to achieve their goals. Most of the learners progress to apprenticeships, further education or employment.
- Quality assurance arrangements are extensive and are centred on regular, frequent and highly effective case conferences to scrutinise the progress of each individual learner. Conferences involve all staff who come into contact with learners and cover every element of their programme, including personal skills, behaviour, attendance, punctuality and other related employability skills. Staff use these meetings well to set specific targets for each learner every week. Targets are monitored during the following week including in lesson observations, to ensure that tutors are setting appropriate work to enable the learners to meet their targets. In a very few instances, tutors and assessors set targets in lessons or progress reviews that are not specific enough. As a result, these learners do not know precisely what they need to do and by when. This slows their progress.
- Managers have fully established a well-organised and comprehensive observation scheme covering all interactions with learners. They use the findings from these observations very well to improve learners' experience on a continuous basis.

- Leaders and managers recognised the high strategic importance of mathematics and English to learners and implemented new arrangements well in advance of the introduction of study programmes. They invested heavily in staff development, mentoring support and shared resources to ensure that all tutors were fully confident in developing these skills in vocational lessons. Most tutors and assessors mark learners' work diligently and challenge learners to improve the accuracy of their written English. However, a few do not follow the company's new procedure for marking work and this means that learners continue to repeat mistakes in their written work.
- Self-assessment is accurate and involves all staff. Learners have a strong stake in Nova and also produce a self-assessment report from their perspective that is included in the main report. Staff make outstanding use of learners' feedback and encourage them to take responsibility for organising surveys or 'listening groups'. Leaders challenge managers to back up their evaluations with achievement data and lesson observation outcomes. Leaders and managers know their provision exceptionally well. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. Quality improvement plans are very detailed and measure the impact on learners precisely. As a result, the provision has improved from good at the previous inspection to outstanding in all aspects at this inspection.
- Managers have made a significant contribution to improve the life chances of learners. Most of these learners had been NEET, had dropped out of college courses or had poor prior achievements. Learners at Nova find a direction to their lives and careers. By awakening the love of learning among these learners, managers have enabled them to gain knowledge and skills to become qualified workers ready to support themselves. Learners who are in receipt of bursaries make excellent progress to join apprenticeships, employment or further study.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The board of directors sets the clear strategic direction for the company based on a thorough analysis of employers' needs and government priorities. They communicate this strategy very clearly to all staff and ensure that their high expectations for both learners and staff are understood and shared.
 - The operations director represents the board of directors in providing governance. He knows the strengths and weaknesses in the provision exceptionally well and provides continuous challenge to managers to ensure that all learners achieve to the best of their ability.
 - Directors are establishing a partnership with another independent learning provider to provide external scrutiny and benchmarking of achievements for additional rigour in governance. This initiative is at an early stage of development and therefore has not yet had any impact on the quality of provision.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Nova has a distinguished history of particularly effective safeguarding arrangements. Managers have ensured that staff are very well equipped to respond to the 'Prevent' duty, and do so when required.
 - Learners have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when they use social media or the internet. They understand well the importance of following safe working practices at work and in workshop training.
 - During induction, in lessons and in assessment visits, staff cleverly link the concepts of radicalisation and extremism, fundamental British values, and equality and diversity into discussions. Learners understand very well how these concepts affect them at work and in their daily lives.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Learners find their lessons interesting and enjoyable. Tutors challenge and support learners so that they make consistently very good progress towards ambitious goals. The majority of learners face barriers to learning and many have a history of poor attendance, low achievement or exclusion. Skilful teaching and support from staff successfully re-engage them in learning. They contribute well in classes and produce work of a high standard. Standards set are high and expectations of learners' skills increase rapidly as they move through their programmes. Apprentices develop excellent vocational skills, make strong progress at work and contribute very well to the growth of their employers' businesses.
- Tutors conduct a thorough initial and diagnostic assessment to identify the learners' starting points clearly. This includes a careful diagnosis of English and mathematics skills and learning needs. Staff identify learners' support needs quickly and accurately. Tutors use the findings of diagnostic assessment to plan bite-sized learning tasks, which build individual learners' confidence and motivation as they consolidate their skills. However, in a very small minority of cases, tutors set learners targets that are focused on the completion of tasks rather than on achieving learning objectives. In such cases, targets are not time bound or specific enough to enable learners to achieve challenging goals.

- Tutors plan the curriculum very well, focusing strongly on developing skills that improve learners' prospects for employment and promotion in the workplace. Learners try out different vocational areas through work trials and vocational tasters before committing to a particular area. As a result, learners make exceptionally good progress towards gaining employment and progress in their job roles.
- Learners on study programmes are introduced to English, mathematics and work experience from the start of their learning, and fully recognise the importance of these aspects of their programme. Work experience is matched very carefully to learners' interests and learning goals. Assessors and employers work very well to ensure that apprentices gain relevant and useful experiences. These significantly contribute to their learning and prepare them well for their future career.
- For learners with high needs, frequent communication between job coaches, employers and tutors helps to develop excellent work-related skills. Most of these learners secure employment.
- Teaching and support staff share a strong commitment to enable their learners and apprentices to discover and achieve their full potential. Skilled tutors have current and valuable industry experience. They use this very successfully to enthuse learners. As a result, learners become fully familiar with the up-to-date work practices and become competent workers during their apprenticeship programme.
- Teaching and support staff have benefited from an exceptional range of training and professional updating. They have a thorough understanding of the many barriers learners face. They use their empathy and skills highly effectively to adapt their teaching to enable learners to overcome these barriers and make very good progress.
- Staff provide exceptionally good support to enable learners to improve on their poor prior attainment and achieve their potential to gain skills and employment. Small group sizes and careful support from learning support assistants enable learners to build confidence, improve self-esteem, concentrate on their work and achieve. Verbal feedback in classes is clear, helpful and builds learners' confidence so they can recognise their progress and achievement. Job coaches provide exceptionally strong support to learners with high needs in the workplace. This support promotes learners' independence. Tutors use highly effective questioning, which develops learners' communication skills, especially in speaking and listening. They frame questions carefully to enable learners to think how their newly gained knowledge can be applied to different situations.
- Learners are fully engrossed in their work and can speak clearly about what they have learnt. Tutors plan activities carefully and imaginatively to promote discussion and to make links between the different aspects of learners' programmes. For example, a research project related to world population day is used very effectively to enable learners to apply their mathematics skills and gain knowledge about diverse cultures and people in the world. Learners develop sound awareness and understanding of important information about safeguarding, employability, welfare, British values and diversity. They use this to their advantage to gain skills or employment. This learning is skilfully reinforced through displays, discussions, contextualised activities and questioning.
- Tutors make good use of technology to make learning fun and easily accessible. This helps learners accelerate their acquisition of new knowledge and helps in consolidating learning. For example, learners use QR bar codes to gain access to information and resources instantly through their mobile devices. Tutors use online, interactive quizzes increasingly well to test the learners' knowledge, often providing them with instant feedback, challenging them to explore further. Learners use computers well for research purposes, to complete tasks and activities and review their progress. Nova has newly developed a custom-made e-portfolio to help learners speed up evidence gathering. This facility is being extended to all learners.
- Learners benefit from clear developmental feedback on written work, including guidance and pointers for improvement. In a very small minority of cases, tutors do not follow Nova's marking policy and do not insist that learners submit corrected work after the developmental feedback. This makes it difficult to measure whether learners have improved the weaknesses in their work. In a few cases, tutors do not routinely identify errors in spelling and grammar and do not clearly explain what learners need to do in order to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

- Learners demonstrate a clear commitment to learning and ambition to do well in their chosen careers. They speak confidently about their work and make rapid progress towards achieving their qualifications. The standard of learners' work is high and they take great pride in the work they complete for their course and for their employers. Apprentices very quickly become valuable employees.

- Support for learners is outstanding. Learners on study programmes, the majority of whom have complex needs, gain significantly in confidence and self-esteem, preparing them well for work. Learners with high needs are supported well to gain greater self-confidence and develop, to a high standard, the skills they need for independent living, such as managing a household budget and learning to travel independently.
- Learners acquire excellent work-related skills, such as teamwork and using their initiative, through the combination of exceptional employer support and training, and learning in classes. Attendance and punctuality are good. Most learners on study programmes have either completed substantial purposeful work experience or have clear plans to do so in the current year with a wide range of local and national employers. As a result, most learners develop employability skills that benefit them when considering their career pathways, including the earning potential within each role. They consider the sectors that they can work in and progression opportunities, including further study to gain professional qualifications. Learners with high needs benefit from a highly effective supported internship programme, enabling most to progress to permanent employment.
- Apprentices develop very good vocationally relevant skills that their employers value, enabling most to successfully secure permanent employment at the end of their apprenticeship and rapidly progress at work. Workplaces are of a high standard and apprentices work well with their employers and colleagues. Hairdressing apprentices are confident and apply excellent communication skills when carrying out consultations with clients. They develop a wide range of skills in cutting, different colouring techniques, blow-drying, setting and perming. Automotive apprentices gain the skills to compete successfully at national 'auto-skills' competitions.
- Learners benefit from high-quality teaching and support to develop their English and mathematics and computer technology skills, as these subjects are integrated well in vocational learning. As a consequence, learners apply these skills very effectively in their work.
Learners on motor vehicle study programmes use mathematics skills well to measure tyre pressures accurately, and use specialist diagnostic equipment skilfully.
- Most learners on study programmes enhance significantly their personal and social skills through a varied enrichment programme. Most learners attend events that promote the benefits of healthy lifestyles, the risks associated with alcohol and drug misuse, and managing emotional health and stress. Learners participate enthusiastically in local community events, raising money for charities such as Comic Relief. Study programme learners enjoy participating in an annual event known as the 'Nova games' that learners from all centres in the West Midlands organise and participate in. As a result, learners make significant gains in confidence and work-related skills, such as teamworking and leadership skills that prepare them well for work.
- Information, advice and guidance are highly effective. Learners benefit from impartial careers guidance enabling them to make informed choices about their future work and study options. As a result, most learners have clear plans for progression. Most learners on study programmes progress to apprenticeships, employment or further study. The vast majority of apprentices progress to sustained employment and, where appropriate, to higher-level job roles or to higher-level training.
- Learners observe health and safety practices in the workplace very well. Staff regularly reinforce the importance of complying with safe working practices at all times. Hairdressing apprentices carefully check the temperature of water prior to shampooing clients' hair. Learners have a very good awareness of fundamental British values and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Learners report that they feel safe and know whom to contact should they have any concerns. Learners have a good awareness of e-safety and know how to stay safe and protect themselves and others when using social media.
- Learners develop good independent learning skills, which equip them well for employment or further study. Attendance for a very small minority of learners on study programmes, with particularly complex needs, is low. Managers have acted decisively and with increasing success to ensure that these learners improve their attendance levels and receive the necessary support to help them catch up with missed work.

Outcomes for learners

are outstanding

- Most learners complete their programmes, enjoy their learning and achieve their qualifications. Learners make very substantial progress. Most achieve positive outcomes such as progression into employment, further education or apprenticeships. This is an outstanding achievement given the very low starting point for most learners on study programmes and the range of barriers many have faced in life, including offending, poor school attendance, exclusion, drug misuse, bullying and being in care.

- Learners very clearly demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired and show how these have helped them to develop the habit of continued learning. Apprentices produce a very high standard of work that is valued highly by their employers. Learners on study programmes gain essential skills such as teamworking, using initiative, problem solving and communication. The acquisition of these skills prepares learners well for their work placements where they can showcase their skills.
- Learners with high needs on supported internships produce work of a very high standard and often exceed their own expectations as they become aware of their abilities and potential. This boosts their morale. Most of them have previously considered their learning difficulties and/or disabilities as barriers to achievement. Most have secured permanent jobs. They make very good progress towards achieving their goals of independent living and gain valuable work experience.
- Learners develop their English and mathematics skills very well. All learners progress by at least one level in English and mathematics. A small but increasing number of learners improve their skills by two levels. The majority of learners pass their English and mathematics tests at the first attempt.
In the current year, learners with a grade D in GCSE English or mathematics have made good progress to achieve higher grades. An increasing number of learners are achieving vocational diplomas that prepare them well for undertaking learning at higher levels in their chosen vocation.
- Most apprentices achieve their qualification and more complete in the planned period when compared with the other providers nationally. The number of apprentices completing their framework in the planned period has improved rapidly as a result of very effective support. Most apprentices progress well in their job roles and the majority progress from intermediate to advanced levels. They improve their earning potential and take on additional responsibilities in their workplaces. As skilful employees, they contribute to the reduction in skills shortages faced by employers.
- The small number of learners on traineeship programmes make rapid progress and almost all of them either secure a job or enter an apprenticeship. All achieve their learning aims.
- Most learner groups achieve their qualifications equally well. Learners with free school meals and various bursaries, accounting for almost half the learners on study programmes, achieve equally well and overcome their barriers. Although the proportion of apprentices with disabilities achieving their framework has significantly improved, they still achieve less well than their counterparts with no disabilities. Advanced apprentices achieve even better than intermediate apprentices.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes are outstanding

- Nova currently has 787 learners on study programmes, having enrolled 1,968 learners in the current year. Study programmes meet exceptionally well the needs of learners, as they are able to choose from a broad range of vocational areas such as motor vehicle, construction trades, business administration, customer service, beauty therapy and childcare. Most learners do not have English and mathematics at GCSE grade C or above when they enrol with Nova. The majority of learners have multiple barriers to learning and receive significant amounts of tailored and highly effective support.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of learners. They have considerably improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which has accelerated learners' progress. As a result, outcomes have consistently risen and are high. Disadvantaged learners, in receipt of extra funding (free school meals and bursaries), make outstanding progress from their starting points and achieve as well as their peers.
- Learners are prepared very well for their training. The thorough two-day induction captures learners' attention and develops well their teamworking and decision-making skills. For example, learners were challenged in groups to build the tallest, unsupported structure using marshmallows and spaghetti. This helped develop their team-building skills, communication and teamwork, skills that are valuable for work and personal life.
- Learners set their own personal targets agreed with tutors, and these targets are monitored regularly. As a consequence, learners develop essential work behaviours such as punctuality and relationship building. Attendance has considerably improved for many learners who have a history of poor attendance.

- Tutors understand learners' individual needs very well. They know the barriers to learning that most learners face and give highly sensitive support that leads to improved stability, particularly for learners who are low in confidence or self-esteem. Weekly 'team-around-the-learner' meetings ensure that highly effective support activities are put in place if any individual falls behind, so that they quickly catch up and perform as well as their peers. Tutors motivate all learners, including the most able, to respond well to challenges. For example, learners in motor vehicle classes were encouraged to research information for themselves by completing a word search on an engine's cooling system and writing about a component.
- The quality of teaching and learning, especially in practical lessons, is outstanding. For example, in motor vehicle, carpentry, and painting and decorating, tutors use their extensive subject knowledge to inspire and engage learners very effectively. Learners benefit from very good practical demonstrations and enthusiastically put into practice what they have learned.
- Tutors have improved their use of assessment to good levels since the introduction of the revised marking policy. Most tutors apply it well and the learners understand what they need to do to improve their work. However, a few tutors do not apply the marking policy consistently well in all classes to ensure that learners improve according to their potential.
- Learning is planned very thoughtfully around work-related projects. For example, learners participated in the Sandwell Enterprise Event. They bought and 'up-cycled' Christmas candles, which they sold for a profit. Learners developed high levels of enterprise skills as well as skills of decision making, creativity and problem solving. This prepares learners very well with the skills needed for sustained employment.
- Learners make best use of a wide range of work experience opportunities offered to them to prepare them exceptionally well for securing and holding down a job. For example, learners in painting and decorating are skilled in using measuring devices to line up wallpaper, and perfecting the technique of cutting accurately into an internal corner. Business administration learners are able to make and receive phone calls in a polite manner, take messages, transfer calls and communicate clearly the purpose of the phone call. Motor vehicle learners can remove a wheel, check and replace worn brake pads, and change a tyre to industry standards and at commercial speeds, working alongside experienced colleagues.
- Learners benefit from detailed advice and guidance that prepares them successfully for applying for jobs. This includes help to produce a curriculum vitae and mock interviews, so they become familiar with the type of questions they might face. Progression and recruitment officers ensure that learners are placed with supportive employers who share Nova's commitment to supporting young people.
- High-quality impartial careers guidance enables learners to develop clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. As a consequence, most learners progress on to apprenticeships, further education or full-time employment, sometimes within a few weeks of starting their work placement.
- Learners develop good English and mathematics skills and use these very well to become more confident and competent in their personal lives and at work. They are able to use percentages to accurately calculate, for example, the amount of tax that is paid on wages. In response to the EU referendum, learners wrote a highly informative and impartial newsletter, resulting in high numbers of learners registering for and casting their vote. A majority of learners are challenged to work towards higher-level functional skills qualifications. Those learners studying GCSEs are making rapid progress towards grade C or above in English or mathematics.
- Learners benefit from an extensive range of additional activities and guest speakers, such as from Public Health England and the Citizens Advice Bureau. These events broaden their outlook on life and they raise their aspirations and lead a more fulfilling life. They learn and implement findings from the wide-ranging topics such as managing personal finance, eating a healthy, balanced diet and taking regular exercise. Learners learn to consider their role in society and how to help those less fortunate than themselves, for example, through collecting donations for local food banks.
- Learners' cultural and social awareness is developed very well. They celebrated Nelson Mandela day and were interviewed on local radio during International Women's Day. Transgender learners feel confident to discuss their gender identity during presentations as part of their speaking and listening assignment. Activities prepare learners well for life in modern Britain.
- Robust safeguarding arrangements help to ensure that learners are safe at work and know whom to contact if they are worried about anything. Learners know the hazards of working in an office environment, for example adopting the correct seating posture and screen height when using computers. The promotion of British values builds learners' resilience to radicalisation. Learners complete a 'radical' quiz that helps them understand the risks associated with terrorism, and how to protect themselves from the dangers of extremism.

- Nova provides apprenticeships in business administration, motor vehicle, hairdressing and beauty therapy, customer service, warehousing and distribution, hospitality and catering, manufacturing, sales, and retail. Currently 665 apprentices are in training with the large majority undertaking apprenticeships in business administration and motor vehicle. Just over 60% of apprentices study at intermediate levels and the remainder study at advanced levels.
- Apprentices make excellent progress and most achieve their apprenticeship framework within the planned timescales, as a result of the very well-planned programmes and the careful support and encouragement from tutors and employers. Tutor assessors are well qualified and experienced in the occupations in which their apprentices are employed. Their expertise, conduct and experience make them excellent role models for apprentices to aspire to. They have very high expectations of apprentices and strongly challenge them to do better and achieve high standards.
- Tutor assessors plan training and assessments very well, in conjunction with employers. This helps to meet the individual needs of apprentices and their employers based on their prior learning and experience. Tutor assessors provide very good oral feedback to apprentices with clear guidance on how they can improve. They use questioning techniques very skilfully to establish the level of apprentices' understanding and to challenge them to extend their problem-solving skills and apply theory to practice.
- Apprentices produce work of a very high standard and develop excellent vocational skills. Motor vehicle apprentices often work independently, diagnosing vehicle faults and completing repairs, meeting the exacting standards expected by customers. Apprentices are well motivated and enjoy both their time in the workplace and in the centres. Tutor assessors are skilled at nurturing apprentices' enthusiasm for their work. They develop strong working relationships, with a high level of mutual respect, with apprentices. Employers highly value the excellent contribution apprentices make in the workplace.
- The large majority of apprentices are set clear, challenging targets by their tutor assessors that are reviewed regularly to ensure that all are on track to achieve their qualifications in the planned period. In a few cases, apprentices have severe barriers to learning. Staff provide excellent support and set these learners effective short-term targets, helping them to grow very quickly in confidence and the acquisition of skills. However, in a small minority of cases, tutor assessors do not set sufficiently specific and time-bound targets. As a result, these apprentices do not make sufficiently rapid progress to achieve their qualifications in time, although their development of skills and knowledge remains very good.
- Apprentices develop a 'safety first' attitude and have a high level of health and safety awareness. Motor vehicle apprentices ensure that they are vigilant in caring for themselves and those around them. They wear the correct protective equipment and use tools and lifting equipment safely. Business administration apprentices assess the risks and hazards of working in an office environment, for example using the correct seating posture when using computers at work.
- Apprentices receive excellent careers advice prior to starting on programmes, throughout their stay with Nova and beyond. By taking part in work trials in a range of vocational areas, prospective apprentices gain a better understanding of what it is like to work in their chosen industry before they sign up to a particular programme. Staff provide very good guidance on how to progress within each industry, earning prospects in the sector and progression opportunities. Apprentices raise their aspirations and have a clear view of the next steps in their career development. Many apprentices progress into positions of responsibility and management at work. For instance, one business administration apprentice now mentors new apprentices in the workplace to help them become successful and respected employees.
- The development of apprentices' skills in spoken English and mathematics is very good, as these skills are an integral part of their training programmes. Most apprentices develop these skills very well and a large majority of them pass their functional skills tests at the first attempt. They are extremely well supported by tutor assessors and a team of specialist trainers in these subjects. However, in a very small minority of cases, tutor assessors fail to identify apprentices' errors in spelling and punctuation. As a result, those apprentices make the same mistakes in subsequent work.
- Apprentices develop a sound understanding of equality and diversity in society through lessons and reinforce it well during thoughtful discussions in progress reviews, where they show the implications of these topics at work. Apprentices are very effectively challenged in lessons and by tutor assessors to demonstrate and improve their understanding of British values, the threat of radicalisation and extremism, and safeguarding. For example, in a functional skills class, the tutor set clearly focused, individualised tasks for apprentices to complete, based on press releases about recent terror attacks. The tasks included mathematics, reading and writing, and the use of information and communication technology.

- Nova provides education and training for 36 learners with high needs, 22 of whom attend discrete courses at two main centres, including 12 learners on supported internships. The remaining 14 learners attend mainstream courses across six centres in the West Midlands.
- Leaders and managers have very high expectations and ambitions for the learners with high needs. They focus strongly on the learners' ability to achieve, and refuse to accept learners' disabilities as a reason for non-achievement. Evidence of this is the highly successful internship programme in which most learners gained employment in less than a year. This exceeded the expectations of the local authority managers, the learners and their parents or carers.
- Highly individualised programmes of learning inspire, engage and greatly motivate learners. Tutors skilfully customise learning activities to reflect learners' interests and the level they are working at. For example, learners researched different aspects of the first world war according to their particular interest, which included the animals and vehicles used in the war, protective equipment worn and the food eaten. Learners were highly enthused by their discoveries while developing both their English and independent learning skills.
- Learners develop exceptionally good employability skills and excel in their work placements as part of staff's very strong focus on the importance of these skills. Learners make informed choices about their future careers or vocations having tried out different types of work. Learners on supported internships make significant improvements in their confidence and communication skills. They develop excellent work skills including teamworking at their workplaces, resulting in employers offering most learners paid employment. As a result, learners are making good progress in their steps towards independence.
- An extremely well-planned curriculum with well-designed resources meets the needs of learners exceptionally well, with a good range of opportunities to gain qualifications. Tutors consistently use clearly written assessment criteria to record and accurately identify the progress learners are making in non-accredited goals. In the classroom, highly relevant topics enable learners to develop their skills in a holistic way, consolidating their learning very effectively. Fundamental British values and staying safe are an important part of the curriculum. Learners fully appreciate the relevance these have in their life and work. For example, in a session discussing the impact that alcohol has on health, very well-targeted questioning enabled learners to identify how this can affect their working life, and how drinking and driving conflicts with the rule of law, as part of British values.
- Skilful tutors, support assistants and job coaches give excellent support to learners in the classroom and workplace to overcome barriers to achieving their learning goals. Staff help learners to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills with careful and probing questioning. In the workplace, job coaches gradually reduce support at an appropriate rate as learners become more self-sufficient, subsequently developing high levels of independence.
- Leaders and managers work in strong partnership with local authorities and employers to set up highly effective work experience placements and make best use of resources. Good communication with partners and parents or carers ensures that learners receive the right opportunities to fulfil their education, health and care plans. Specialist support, such as health and transport received by some learners, is coordinated well with their programme.
- Target setting is not consistently specific and personalised, resulting in a few learners making good rather than outstanding progress. However, there is a clear trend of improvement in target setting so learners benefit from accurately capturing their progress, spurring them on to reach their full potential more quickly.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16-18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,679
CEO	David Bucknall
Website address	www.novatrainng.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)	740	47	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+
	257	171	44	193	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	6				6			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
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

Harmesh Manghra, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nick Gadfield	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kate Murrie	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Nelson	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the operations 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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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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