

Reynolds Training Academy

Independent Learning Provider

Inspection dates

11–14 October 2016

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have made recent good progress in dealing successfully with weaknesses identified through self-assessment and at the previous inspection.
- Virtually all teaching, learning and assessment is at least good and a minority is outstanding.
- Senior leaders use their very good understanding of the sectors in which learners work, or will work, to prepare learners well for employment. They maintain good communication with employers and have strong links with appropriate sector bodies.
- Apprentices benefit from extensive high-quality on- and off-the-job training which enables them to improve rapidly the skills and knowledge they need to meet the demands of their employment.
- Tutors and assessors are well qualified and carefully selected to ensure that they have proven high-quality sector experience. They use this experience to plan highly effective sessions that inspire learners and link learning well to industry expectations and standards.
- Current learners are making good progress.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Reynolds Training Academy (RTA) provides a range of learning programmes for 16 to 19 and 19+ learners as well as apprenticeships for all age groups. The main subject areas are performing arts, beauty therapy and sports and fitness. Learners study together in mixed age and provision type groups. The RTA principal reports to the Reynolds Group owner. The group includes a separate company whose spas and gymnasiums provide some of the work-experience and employment opportunities for RTA learners and apprentices.
- A very recent change of senior RTA managers has increased capacity and enabled greater focus on data monitoring and improving outcomes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all tutors and assessors are skilled in identifying for each learner how they can improve their work and fulfil their potential.
- Make sure that all teaching staff identify spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' work and provide them with accurate guidance on how to improve. Managers also need to ensure that tutors embed the development of learners' mathematical skills within vocational lessons more effectively.
- Ensure that tutors, assessors and specialist English and mathematics tutors support learners to achieve functional skills qualifications at an appropriate level as early as possible during their study programmes or apprenticeships

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. Senior managers work well with local employers, and the local authority, providing programmes that successfully develop learners' skills in the creative and health sectors and meet the priorities identified in local skills strategies. The new management team communicates high expectations very clearly to the RTA teaching and support staff to fulfil their mission to 'make dreams achievable for anyone who shows potential to become professional'.
- Leaders and managers know their academy well and what needs to improve. Good use is made of learners' feedback to inform self-assessment, but employers' views are not yet formally captured by managers. The quality improvement plan is a useful and well-used working document that highlights actions needed to improve the quality of provision. Recent management changes have led to a much better focus on the use of data to manage and improve the provision. This is not yet reflected in all of the targets within the quality improvement plan.
- Managers have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is achieved through accurate observations of teachers and assessors and the development of action plans that help individual tutors and assessors improve. Teaching staff also benefit from extensive, continuing professional development and the sharing of good practice. The observation process, learners' feedback and teachers' self-assessment inform the topics for regular staff development days.
- Senior leaders and managers ensure the effective management of subcontracted provision, and consequently achievement rates are high for learners at the single subcontractor. Managers ensure that appropriate due diligence procedures are undertaken before establishing a contract and that the performance of the subcontractor is comprehensively quality assured. This assurance includes direct observations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and managers promote equality well and help prepare learners to work in a diverse Britain. The tutorial programme is very effective in helping learners to understand and respect people from different backgrounds, to formulate and share opinions in a respectful way and to improve their understanding of British values. An understanding of democracy is reinforced by ensuring that learners participate in activities such as voting for class representatives. Performing-arts tutors choose topics for productions carefully in order to explore themes such as the oppression of minorities.
- Managers routinely monitor the progression and destinations of their learners but the destinations of a minority of study programme learners are unknown. Almost all apprentices progress onto permanent, full-time employment.
- Managers ensure that the very small number of high-needs learners receive particularly good support.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are good. The owner, who is also now the chief executive officer, knows the company well and supports and challenges the new management team to evaluate and improve the quality of the provision continuously. This is achieved

through monthly senior management team meetings which include thorough reviews of increasingly focused and relevant performance data.

- Governance arrangements successfully steered the company through a period of significant change in the senior leadership and management team and has ensured that the new management team focuses on making even better use of data to assist in driving forward improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. RTA managers conduct thorough recruitment checks to ensure the suitability of all staff, and visiting speakers are also checked. Managers carefully assure the health and safety requirements and practices in apprentices' and learners' workplaces. Tutors carry out risk assessments of studio and beauty therapy activities and promote safe working practices very well in training sessions. Learners' and apprentices' awareness of health and safety is good.
- Leaders and managers ensure that all staff are trained to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. They ensure that learners develop an awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism during induction, and this also forms a key element of the tutorial programme.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment for study programme learners and apprentices is good. Learners benefit from skilful teaching by staff who are well-qualified professionals in their programme areas and who mostly hold relevant teaching qualifications. Managers are supporting effectively the very small minority of teachers without formal teaching qualifications to achieve these as part of their continuing professional development.
- Teaching staff plan lessons, reviews and assessments well that meet group and individual learning needs. Tutors plan sessions skilfully to develop individual learner's practical, theoretical and employability skills, and to challenge learners to achieve their full potential. They provide very good instructions and demonstrations for each task and set clear, high expectations for learners. They provide good advice and tips to learners which help them improve their techniques. Learners in different year groups and on different programmes are thoroughly and carefully integrated within lessons. This enables them to learn from and support each other well during and between lessons. Assessments and reviews of individual learners' progress in improving their skills and knowledge are planned well by teaching staff, using an effective range of assessment strategies.
- Tutors and assessors provide good support to learners and apprentices with additional needs, both during lessons and in one-to-one tutorials. As a result, learners build confidence, make clear progress and participate fully within the mixed-ability groups. For example, an assessor worked skilfully with an employer to develop the confidence of an apprentice with high needs so that they gained the self-belief and raised aspiration to work five days a week for the first time.
- Apprentices and study programme learners are safe and say they feel safe. They understand how to safeguard themselves in the learning environment and the workplace. Beauty therapy and sports and fitness learners take great care to ensure that they

correctly identify clients' contraindications and use this information effectively to provide them with safe beauty treatments and fitness plans. Study-programme learners complete effective risk assessments and practise safe techniques during lessons.

- Learners demonstrate a good understanding of the principles of equality and diversity. They work successfully with a range of client groups and manage personal information sensitively to meet their individual needs. For example, fitness apprentices designed specific exercise plans to meet the diverse needs of older clients, enabling their inclusion and access to a greater range of activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Study-programme learners and apprentices take pride in their work and rapidly increase confidence in their own abilities. Most have a real passion for their studies in, for example, performing arts, beauty therapy or sports and fitness and are happy that they are on the right courses to meet their needs and aspirations.
- All learners display an excellent attitude to their learning. They arrive on time and ready to learn, treat each other and their tutors with respect and support each other to make the best possible progress. Learners show high energy levels and are extremely confident. Attendance levels are very good and learners do not like to miss lessons. For example, the small number of performing arts learners who need to rest their voices or limbs, continue to play as active a role in singing or dance lessons as their injuries allow.
- As part of the recruitment and induction process, staff provide good initial advice and guidance, which ensures that learners make well-informed choices. Good, impartial career and industry guidance and support continue throughout learning programmes, and this helps learners to realise their ambitions and enhance their opportunities. For example, a learner was encouraged and supported to move to another provider at the end of their second year, rather than staying at RTA, as that provider would better meet their needs and aspirations.
- Learners benefit from work experience which fits well with their career aspirations and development needs, as well as a wide range of work-related presentations. Managers and tutors have good links to industry and secure a wide range of guest tutors and speakers throughout the year. This enhances the programme and ensures that learners have a very good awareness of the demands and rewards of their chosen careers. For example, guest speakers from leading cosmetic companies provide learners with up-to-date knowledge to ensure that their skills match well with the needs of high-profile employers and to enhance their employment prospects.
- Learners are aware of the importance of British values and the vast majority have a good awareness of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Teaching staff broaden learners' awareness skilfully through themed tutorials. Learners benefit from excellent tutorials on British values and topics related to the 'Prevent' duty. These themes and those related to valuing diversity and providing equality of opportunity are skilfully woven by managers and tutors into the fabric of learning programmes. For example, performing-arts project work was based carefully around the impact of being 'blind to prejudice'. Apprentices and their employers have a less well developed awareness of topics associated with the 'Prevent' duty. Managers recognised this during the inspection, and took rapid action to increase awareness.

- The standards of learners' work meets or exceeds the requirements of awarding bodies and employers. Employers value the close working relationship they have with RTA assessors and the new skills and knowledge that their apprentices develop through on-the-job and extensive off-the-job training. They value the positive attitudes to work that apprentices develop, including their team working abilities. Assessors also help apprentices develop their English skills, for example by providing good feedback on their written work. The development of learners' mathematical skills is not as effective. Managers have recently introduced discrete mathematics classes for those preparing for functional skills or GCSE examinations in order to improve outcomes for learners.
- Learners practise safe techniques during sessions. They understand clearly that this is particularly important where activities can be strenuous in performing arts or fitness, or where client safety is vital in beauty therapy. Learners also feel and are safe in the academy and in their places of work. Tutors and assessors provide very good pastoral care and all learners feel very well supported.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Most current study-programme learners and apprentices are making good progress. This good progress includes the effective development of functional skills, from carefully identified starting points, for those learners who need them. Managers have increased their focus on ensuring that learners complete all the elements of their programmes within planned timescales.
- Learners' work meets or exceeds the requirements of their qualifications and meets industry standards. For example, performing-arts learners achieve the high standards and techniques demanded by West End productions.
- Apprentices gain skills which help them make progress in their careers; employers value the new skills and knowledge that their apprentices acquire and apply in the workplace. Virtually all apprentices remain in permanent jobs on completion of their programmes
- The only significant achievement gap is between 16 to 18 and 19+ learners. This reflects the lower rate of achievement of functional skills qualifications by the small minority of 16 to 18 learners without high-grade GCSE passes in English and mathematics. The main factor in this poorer achievement is that learners secured jobs early and consequently left the programmes before taking their functional skills examinations. First-time pass rates are high for those learners of all ages who take the examinations.
- The very small number of high-needs learners gain good vocational skills and increased confidence during their study programmes or apprenticeships.
- There has been a gradual improvement over the previous three years in the achievement rates for apprentices. The provider's own data shows that overall achievement rates have improved to levels achieved nationally. Rates for achievement within planned timescales have also improved, but remain slightly below the rates achieved nationally. Two factors have hindered further progress: the ongoing negative impact of a large number of fitness apprentices who could not complete the programmes due to radical changes in their employment patterns and locations; and the insufficient focus by managers and tutors on the need to ensure that apprentices complete functional skills within the planned timescales.

- Study programme achievement rates are higher than those of similar providers, but below rates achieved nationally. This again reflects the low completion rates for functional skills qualifications.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Study programmes are within two main areas of performing arts and beauty. Learners at all levels and ages are fully integrated in lessons and tutorials.
- Learners make good progress in the large majority of lessons. Their energy levels and commitment are excellent. Learners' behaviour, attitudes and approaches to learning are very good. Learners improve and make significant progress throughout the lessons. Tutors check learning particularly effectively and challenge and extend the more able learners. Learners make good use of personal communication devices in lessons to record singing, or to film dance or beauty techniques for future review with peers or tutors. In beauty programmes learners have developed closed groups on social media, which enhances interaction within the group and with tutors.
- Learners work together exceptionally well and peer support is particularly strong. All learners demonstrate good working relationships with each other. Learners provide a good level of respectful and useful feedback to each other that includes constructive criticism and praise at all levels. Peer observations and the analysis of each other's work are used well to help learners' development, both at group and individual level. Learners who cannot participate fully in lessons due to injury continue to contribute in other ways to support the group.
- Tutors provide good feedback to learners, focused on the development needs of both groups and individuals. Feedback to learners in lessons is good, and in performing arts learners also record a reflective journal based upon their experience of the lesson. Tutors give good, developmental feedback on written work submitted, and learners also receive extremely detailed and helpful feedback through the new e-portfolio system. This feedback lets learners know exactly what they need to do to improve and provides clear guidance on improving their written English. Recorded feedback to learners following assessments identifies what learners need to do to further develop their skills, and gives them a clear record to refer back to. Tutors review learners' progress toward targets and goals thoroughly during formal reviews. Learners' skills development targets and broader personal targets closely reflect their individual aspirations and goals.
- Links to industry are very good. Tutors are very experienced and qualified and bring a great deal of industry knowledge to their lessons and create a network of useful industry contacts. Tutors teach different techniques which highlight the links with current industry expectations. For example, learners benefit from sharing industry experts' recent auditioning experience. A wide variety of guest tutors and guest speakers further enhance the programme. Beauty learners complete additional qualifications which are valued by employers and improve their employment prospects. Good impartial career and industry guidance and support help learners to realise their ambitions and enhance their opportunities for employment or progression.
- Tutors develop learners' English and mathematics skills effectively. Most learners do not require specific English and mathematics qualifications. Where they do, functional skills

lessons are good and focus closely on the individual needs of the learners, helping learners to progress well. In most lessons tutors help learners to improve their English skills through detailed feedback on their written and oral communications. The development of learners' mathematical skills is less well embedded by tutors in the majority of lessons.

- Learners are not sufficiently involved in setting their individual targets for improvement, and they do not always have sufficient ownership of the personal targets reflecting their aspirations and goals. As a result, feedback from lessons is not sufficiently detailed in learners' own reflective journals and is not adapted effectively into clear targets to help learners improve.

Apprenticeships

Good

- RTA offers apprenticeship programmes in beauty, fitness, leadership and management and customer care. The provider also manages one small subcontractor which supports ten apprentices in digital media.
- Apprentices make at least the progress expected of them compared to their starting points. The vast majority of current apprentices are making good progress.
- The information, advice and guidance apprentices receive are good. Apprentices use the information well to make informed choices about their futures, resulting in virtually all of apprentices progressing to the next stage of their learning or career. For example, most level 2 beauty learners' progress to level 3 beauty apprenticeships, and all fitness apprentices progressed to sustained employment.
- All apprentices undertake initial and diagnostic tests, but tutors and assessors do not make consistently best use of the information to meet apprentices' individual needs. Target setting for a small minority of apprentices is not specific enough to ensure that they practice and improve their English and mathematical skills. Recent changes to the provision have provided apprentices with more English and mathematics at the start of their programme; it is too soon to evaluate whether this will result in improved achievement rates.
- Good off-the-job training prepares apprentices well for work, enabling them to develop the expected knowledge and practical skills and apply these quickly in their workplace. Tutors make good use of a wide range of relevant classroom and practical activities to relate theory to practice, and they skilfully question apprentices to extend their learning. For example, during a practical massage treatment learners first drew the outline of bones on the body to identify their correct position and then named the bones and muscles. Learners also reinforce and extend their understanding through access to an online specialist anatomy and physiology resource.
- Assessment planning and practice are effective. Reviews are frequent and provide apprentices with appropriate feedback on their progress, including practical skills, knowledge and behaviour. However, not all feedback is sufficiently detailed or challenging and it does not consistently identify errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Apprentices develop high levels of confidence in their ability and future career aspirations. They behave professionally, are courteous and work hard to complete their studies. In one case, an adult learner benefited from a leadership and management apprenticeship

which helped them to adapt their practice, and to increase their confidence by improving organisational communication in their workplace.

- Apprentices benefit from employers' high-quality working environments that advance their practical, sales and customer service skills. In addition, they develop high-level expertise in activities such as intimate waxing, spray tanning, applying acrylic and gel nails, and sports massage and sports nutrition. In addition, beauty therapy employers offer apprentices advanced training with leading cosmetics and skincare companies, giving apprentices detailed product knowledge, cutting-edge skills and improved career opportunities. Employers value highly the contribution apprentices make to their businesses and work closely with the provider to develop future training and assessment.
- Apprenticeship provision is well planned, meets the requirements of each framework and is aligned to local skills needs. The progression of apprentices to sustained employment is good. Nearly all of apprentices continue with their current employer on either a full- or part-time basis, and a few are quickly promoted to management posts.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54916
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	629
Principal	Amanda Tooms-Peel
Telephone number	01634 840440
Website	www.reynoldsgroup.co.uk/training

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
			19	120	47	37	9	7
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	2		17	25				
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+				Total	
Number of learners aged 14 to 16								
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	2							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Creative Process							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, 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 learners 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.

Inspection team

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Tricia Pugsley	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Deane	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Bamford	Ofsted Inspector

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