

# ACE Training and Consultancy Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

8–11 November 2016

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	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

- Learners achieve high rates of sustained progression to apprenticeships, employment and further education.
- Learners make good progress in developing construction skills in practical sessions and produce a good standard of work.
- Learners receive good coaching and support in practical sessions.
- Construction tutors provide good informative verbal feedback, enabling learners to understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work.
- Managers and staff develop very effective partnerships with local support agencies and schools to promote the study programme and with employers to source work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Leaders have taken very effective action, using their good links with the Construction Industry Training Board, to develop the curriculum, particularly by offering an entry-level award leading to a more appropriate level 1 award that is focused on practical skills, that meets learners' needs well.
- Directors set a very clear vision and commitment, shared well by all staff, to support those who are disengaged from learning and with significant barriers to employment.
- Staff promote British values well, increasing learners' understanding of respect and tolerance of staff, other learners and those from different cultures and groups.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- ACE Training was established in August 2011, and is located on an industrial estate in Kidlington near Oxford. The company works closely with construction companies across Oxfordshire and surrounding counties. ACE Training provides a 16 to 19 study programme, within the context of construction, for school leavers and those not in employment, education or training. The study programme provides opportunities for learners to progress to construction apprenticeships, also provided by ACE Training in partnership with another provider under a separate contract and not included in this inspection. Three directors have overall responsibility for the company with all aspects of the training, apart from work experience, provided within the training centre.
- At the time of inspection 20 learners were following a 16 to 19 study programme, working towards entry and level 1 qualifications in carpentry or brickwork.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance in English and mathematics sessions by offering more individual support sessions to better meet the needs of those learners who have that as their preferred learning style. Also, re-evaluate the current strategies for improving attendance that are not proving to be sufficiently effective.
- Make better use of the results of assessments of learners' starting points in English and mathematics to deliver learning and support more effectively.
- Make more effective use of learners' reviews by better recording and evaluating their progress on the study programme. For example, to evaluate work experience, and to provide more written feedback and clearer actions on areas for improvement, such as their written work and attendance concerns.
- When observing learning sessions and progress reviews, ensure that observers consistently provide constructive feedback and clear actions for improvement, to share best practice and further raise the overall current good standard of teaching, learning and assessment.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Directors provide very effective leadership and set out a clear vision, shared by staff, to support those who are disengaged from learning and who are not yet ready for employment. Directors ensure good communication channels by attending weekly staff meetings and holding frequent discussions with individual managers and staff to review performance. The operations director collects and uses data to monitor performance and track learners' progress well.
- Directors have taken successful action to develop the curriculum to better meet learners' needs. A new entry level 3 construction qualification introduced in August this year is proving very successful, enabling learners to achieve early in the programme before progressing onto a new level 1 qualification and also greatly reducing the number of learners who leave their programme early.
- Partnership working is very effective. Directors and managers have good links with local enterprise partnerships and understand local issues such as the need to fill skills gaps in construction to meet the future growth of house building. Good links with schools and local agencies, such as the youth offending service, are helping to promote learning and employment opportunities. Local employers often visit the centre to meet learners and look at the quality of their work, taking the opportunity to assess their suitability and offer work experience and apprenticeships.
- Resources are good and meet learners' needs well. The carpentry and bricklaying workshops are spacious, well equipped and provide a good learning environment which learners respond to well, significantly improving their practical skills. Managers are currently developing a plastering workshop in order to further develop the provision they can offer. Vocational staff have good industry experience which they introduce well in theory and practical sessions to develop learners' understanding.
- Certain quality assurance processes need to have more rigour in order to further raise the standard of teaching, learning and assessment. Observations of teaching and learning do not provide sufficient feedback and actions for tutors to improve. Managers do not check the quality of individual learning plans thoroughly enough to ensure that they meet learners' needs, nor do they check that reviews of progress consistently provide learners with appropriate actions and targets for improvement.
- Attendance overall is too low, Directors and managers have put several strategies in place to improve attendance, including the use of minibuses to bring learners in from Banbury and Abingdon, a moped hire scheme and a daily monetary incentive to encourage attendance. However, these strategies have not been sufficiently effective. For example, the monetary incentive stops after six weeks, at which point attendance tends to decline.
- Directors and staff promote equality and diversity well. Staff use opportunities to promote British values effectively in lessons, using topical issues to involve learners in effective discussions. Directors are aware that females are under-represented on the study programme and are involved in a project to raise participation; this has resulted in more females taking part in taster days at the centre but, as yet, has not increased female participation on the study programme.

## **The governance of the provider**

- Governance is effective and provided by the managing and operations directors, who have full and effective involvement in the day-to-day management of the provision. They have a good understanding of the overall performance of the study programme, challenge managers and staff effectively, and continually seek to take appropriate actions to achieve improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Directors, managers and staff receive regular training and appropriate policies and records are in place.
- Staff raise learners' awareness of issues such as cyber bullying well in learning sessions and learners value the zero-tolerance approach to any bullying and harassment, instances of which are extremely rare and always dealt with appropriately.
- All staff have had appropriate training to prevent learners from being at risk of radicalisation and extremism, and the operations director has recently completed an appropriate risk assessment and action plan. However, learners' understanding of the risks needs further reinforcement.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Tutors provide good coaching and support and guide the development of learners' practical skills well. Tutors demonstrate craft skills clearly, for example showing how best to use chisels and planes. Tutors are effective in focusing on the need for learners to work accurately, resulting in learners regularly checking their work and, for example, re-laying bricks where necessary.
- Tutors' supportive guidance and well-structured workbooks develop learners' knowledge and understanding of the theory required by the construction trades well.
- Tutors make good use of video to enhance their teaching and learning. For example, to show the expectations that employers now have on building sites regarding health and safety and how this has developed over time, learners reviewed a film of a construction site in the 1950s and were required to note the differences with the personal protection equipment required on a building site today. This provided a good opportunity for them to reflect on how health and safety expectations have improved.
- Tutors assess learners' progress in the workshop carefully and provide very useful feedback that shows learners how to improve their skills, for example in demonstrating how a plane can smooth the finish for a bridle joint. However, tutors do not consistently provide enough developmental written feedback on learners' written work and do not correct the few English errors that learners make within their workbooks. This results in learners having an insufficient understanding of how they could further improve their work.
- Tutors initially assess learners' practical skills in carpentry and laying bricks very effectively during taster days. This practical assessment helps tutors to direct their support, and helps learners to make an informed choice about the trade that they wish to pursue. These taster days also provide learners with accurate and helpful information about the requirements of their course.

- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills requires further improvement. Although tutors embed mathematics in practical construction sessions effectively, they do not use results from initial assessment to plan individual learning and support and set targets for improvement sufficiently well. For example, individual learning plans focus on overall subjects, such as mathematics, rather than identifying specific skill areas such as calculating fractions or areas, that a learner needs to improve.
- Tutors develop learners' awareness of the need to treat each other with respect and tolerance, and their understanding of British values well through discussions, for example by the use of a recent overseas election to discuss views on immigration and the language and behaviour that candidates use towards others. Learners contributed well to the discussions, demonstrating a good understanding of the values of tolerance and respect.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Learners enjoy their learning and take pride in their craft skills. They develop practical skills quickly that prepare them well for the workplace, for example using trowels, chisels and saws. Bricklayers lay bricks carefully and accurately and carpentry learners, many of whom are new to woodwork, create and skilfully finish bridle joints.
- Staff have taken effective action to improve induction, with more emphasis on practical learning in the first few weeks of the programme. Learners receive good information, advice and guidance on the opportunities for progression, particularly to apprenticeships. External trips to skills fairs further enrich the learning experience.
- Learners work accurately and reinforce their mathematics skills through their practical tasks. Bricklayers ensure that they carefully measure right angles in corners of walls and use spirit levels to judge the correct position of bricks. Carpentry learners use rulers and scoring tools effectively to ensure that their joints meet the specifications required.
- Learners are safe and know how to keep themselves safe in workshops. They have a good understanding of the health and safety requirements in the building trade. For example, bricklayers take care to keep their workspaces clean and tidy. Learners adhere to the regulations regarding the wearing of personal protection equipment well.
- Learners exhibit high standards of behaviour, develop a good level of respect for their peers and staff, and have a good understanding of British values. Learners are confident, hard-working and polite, and work together effectively in the workshops. Learners' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism is less well developed.
- Learners who undertake work experience significantly improve their understanding of the workplace and meet employers' needs well. Learners also gain good experience from participating in a variety of community-based work-related activities. In one example, learners took part in clearing a local building of materials for recycling and reuse, which allowed them to apply both bricklaying and carpentry skills. Learners have also built the benches that they use in their carpentry workshops. However, the recording and review of the progress that learners make as a result of work experience are insufficient to confirm good skills development or highlight areas for improvement.
- Learners' progress in improving their English and mathematics skills and achieving their qualifications during the study programme is hampered by their low attendance in too

many lessons. Staff do not use learners' progress reviews sufficiently well to set targets to improve attendance and plan further learning. However, learners' slow progress is not preventing the large majority of learners progressing to further learning, particularly apprenticeships, where they continue to develop their English and mathematics skills.

## Outcomes for learners

Good

- Learners achieve high rates of sustained progression from their study programmes. The large majority progress successfully to apprenticeships, employment or further education, particularly apprenticeships, where the large majority successfully achieve, with many progressing onto advanced apprenticeships.
- Learners make good progress from their low starting points. They are not in employment, education or training when commencing their programme, and most have few or no formal qualifications when they start. Many are disengaged from learning and have significant barriers to progression, such as previous youth offending.
- Learners produce a good standard of work. They lay bricks well, construct straight walls and produce good-quality wooden frames. When on placement, learners contribute effectively to the business, following employer instructions well and completing work to the required standard. Learners demonstrate good levels of knowledge, particularly around the use of tools and health and safety requirements. Their written work is of a sufficient standard to meet the needs of their construction qualification.
- Learners who started their study programme from August this year are benefiting well from the new curriculum and making good progress in their construction qualification. Many have already completed their entry level 3 award and have progressed onto level 1. Of those who started since August, all remain on programme.
- Last year, too few learners achieved a vocational qualification while on their study programme, although the large majority left to continue their learning on an apprenticeship. A small minority left early last year without any qualifications, many leaving in the first 12 weeks. This year is seeing significant improvement, with learners responding well to the new curriculum. A majority of learners achieved their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at the appropriate level last year.
- A minority of learners achieve an additional first aid certificate that increases their qualification base and enhances their overall employability skills.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	59109
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	40
Principal/CEO	Mr Adam Marsh
Telephone number	01865 370040
Website	<a href="http://www.acetraining.co.uk">www.acetraining.co.uk</a>

## 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+
	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher					
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19	19+	Total					
	0	0	20					
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	None							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	None							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection 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 and telephone calls to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and assessments and sampled documentation including individual learning plans and learners' progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

### Inspection team

Gary Adkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector



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