

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 December 2016

Mrs Tracy Wilson
Managing director
ITEC NE Limited
The Digital Factory
Durham Way South
Aycliffe Industrial Park
Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 6XP

Dear Mrs Wilson

Short inspection of ITEC NE Limited

Following the short inspection on 15 and 16 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in September 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

You have ensured that learners and apprentices continue to receive good education and training. You ensure that learners are at the heart of everything you do, which leads to excellent care and support. Apprentices and learners value the support they get from staff and their employers and make good progress.

You have established strong partnerships with two subcontractors, who also provide a good standard of education and training. Tutors and assessors know their apprentices and learners well and are quick to act if they identify any as being at risk. The vast majority of apprentices complete their training and go on to secure permanent employment, gain promotion or move on to further education. The number of adults who successfully gain a qualification in English or mathematics is impressive and much higher than that of their peers nationally.

Achievement rates in 2015/16, particularly for apprentices aged over 19, who are the majority, are high and a good proportion now complete in their planned timescales, which is higher than in the previous year.

The achievement rate for the small number of apprentices aged 16 to 18 at level 3 fell slightly in 2015/16 and is too low. You and your managers are monitoring carefully the progress of current apprentices through the tracking systems you have

implemented; this has resulted in a lower number of early leavers. While the vast majority of adults gain a functional skills qualification in English or mathematics, the proportion who progress to employment is too low.

You have rectified successfully the vast majority of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. You have reduced significantly the number of early leavers by improving recruitment processes and monitoring closely the progress that apprentices make through the introduction of new tracking systems. You have increased the number of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship within their planned timescales and there is now less variation in achievement between different ages, although the achievement rate for apprentices aged 16 to 18 at level 3 remains lower than that for apprentices aged over 19.

You have recently restructured managers' roles and responsibilities within the organisation, including the recruitment of a new managing director and data manager. Trustees and managers now receive accurate and timely data to inform them of the performance of the organisation.

Trustees and the managing director have a good understanding of the organisation and are aspirational for the apprentices and learners in their care. Trustees and senior managers monitor performance effectively, including that of subcontractors, and ensure that managers put actions in place quickly where necessary. This is ensuring that the large majority of apprentices and learners make good progress.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have maintained effective safeguarding arrangements since the last inspection and have revised them in respect of the 'Prevent' duty. Learners say they feel safe in reviews, in feedback from surveys and through a webinar during the inspection. Apprentices and learners are clear on what they need to do if they have a concern; very well-documented case studies demonstrate that this happens in practice.

An effective 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan is in place and this ensures that all staff are clear on their responsibilities and how to deal with any potential situations. It links well to other relevant safeguarding policies. All trustees and staff have had training on the promotion of British values and the 'Prevent' duty. Apprentices and learners demonstrate a good understanding of British values; their behaviour is excellent and they treat each other with respect. However, they have only a basic awareness of the risks posed by radicalisation.

Managers carry out appropriate recruitment checks and keep accurate records, including for subcontractors. All staff and trustees have had safeguarding training and this is regularly updated during monthly meetings.

Designated safeguarding officers have received appropriate training. The senior designated officer has developed good partnerships with external agencies such as the local police force to keep learners safe.

Learners demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe while at work. For example, administration apprentices understand the importance of locking up procedures in a doctors' surgery at night and how to stay safe when working online.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Tutors and assessors receive good training and development and share good practice through a lead tutor. Tutors and assessors, including those in subcontracted provision, are well qualified and experienced. They provide high levels of support, which learners value highly and recognise as helping them to make good progress. Tutors and assessors use coaching techniques effectively to motivate their learners and ensure that they stay on their course. Learners produce work of a good standard; tutors and assessors assess their learning frequently and provide useful feedback to help them improve.
- Tutors and assessors accurately assess learners' starting points in literacy and numeracy and use this information successfully to set specific targets for each learner to improve their skills. Learners develop their understanding by applying the concepts they learn to real life. For example, they use mathematical formulae to work out the best-value deals when booking holidays online or to calculate prescription amounts for patients.
- Tutors and assessors provide very effective individual support particularly during progress reviews, resulting in the majority of learners making at least their expected, and sometimes better than expected, progress on their courses.
- Tutors and assessors have received training on equality and diversity since the last inspection, and have developed a wide range of learning resources. While apprentices have a basic appreciation of equality and diversity, their knowledge and understanding of how it applies in their workplace is superficial.
- Managers have improved the range of learning resources accessible to staff and learners since the last inspection through the establishment of an effective virtual learning environment (VLE). Tutors have researched and developed resources to meet the needs of apprenticeships and adult programmes. Learners use the physical and online resources confidently to develop their learning.
- Managers use the new standards for apprentices well. Tutors and assessors carefully plan and monitor a programme that includes all key components of the apprenticeship frameworks and provides a good standard of on- and off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices develop self-confidence and the skills they need for work. For example, administration apprentices realise the importance of good communication with customers in enhancing their company's reputation.
- Managers respond well to meeting the needs of local employers through good partnerships. Apprenticeship programmes consequently lead to a high proportion of apprentices securing sustained employment. Apprentices develop the skills they need to work in a modern and changing workplace. For example, managers reviewed the information technology apprenticeship after analysing the low achievement rates, and changed it to a new digital marketing course. Employers

value the contribution that their apprentices make to their businesses.

- Managers ensure that courses provided by subcontractors are of a high standard. The quality manager monitors the quality of provision through rigorous audits and assessment. Managers diligently follow up recommendations to ensure that any improvements needed are made swiftly. Where subcontractors have failed to meet the required standards, their contracts are terminated.
- Managers ensure that all staff are supported to improve their practice through effective staff development. Managers take swift action to remove any underperforming staff from the organisation. While lesson observations broadly identify the main strengths and areas for improvement, a minority focus on the tutor or assessor rather than on learning and progress, resulting in key areas for improvement not being identified.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their programme within the planned time has improved and is now high, particularly in administration and on level 2 apprenticeships, which make up the greatest proportion of the provision. There is no difference in achievement rates between males and females. Learners aged 16 to 18 achieve well at level 2; however, at level 3 apprentices' achievement dipped slightly in 2015/16 due to apprentices leaving their programme early. In the current year, because of effective intervention, this has improved.
- Adults, often with low starting points, achieve very well on literacy, numeracy, employability and aviation courses and many progress to higher levels because of the highly effective teaching they receive from specialist tutors at subcontractors. Around a third of adults progress on to a relevant qualification from these courses; however, too few progress to employment.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification within their planned time is increased, particularly for learners aged 16 to 18
- the proportion of adults who progress to employment is increased
- apprentices and learners develop a broader understanding of equality and diversity and the risks posed by radicalisation and how it applies to their lives
- all staff who observe lessons focus on learning and progress rather than the performance of the teacher.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Machell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by you, and the quality manager as nominee. We met with members of the leadership team, tutors, assessors, learners, apprentices and employers. We observed sessions in the centres, including at subcontractors, and in the workplace. We reviewed learners' and apprentices' assessed work and electronic portfolios. We obtained learners' views through an online survey, webinar and face-to-face interviews. We reviewed key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to strategic planning, lesson planning and assessment, quality assurance and performance monitoring and safeguarding.