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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Audrey Dawson
Director
McArthur Dean Training Limited
Old Custom House
Market Place
Hull
HU1 1RS

Dear Ms Dawson

Short inspection of McArthur Dean Training Limited

Following the short inspection on 23 and 24 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 January 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Leadership and management have continued to improve since the last inspection; managers and staff are striving to improve the quality of the learning experience for all learners. You and your staff have worked well to address all of the areas for improvement identified at your last inspection.

The directors support each other extremely well in their delegated roles within the organisation and have a very clear understanding of the changing landscape in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes. You make very good use of clear, detailed strategic and business plans to maintain a clear focus on your primary goal to deliver outstanding provision and you are making good progress to achieve this. The good use of targets that you devolve effectively to relevant staff ensures that they all work towards achieving better outcomes for their learners.

The organisation has also entered into an extremely effective and unique partnership arrangement with another local provider. Although McArthur Dean Training and its partner are competitors in some aspects of their work, the partnership works extremely well to offer provision to learners in outreach centres in Scunthorpe and Grimsby by sharing premises and other resources. You have also created a separate organisation to enable you to manage the payment to apprentices placed with providers who are unable to include more staff on their own payroll. This is highly effective in enabling apprentices to access these companies, resulting in many of them progressing to permanent positions during their training.

Increasing numbers of apprentices are completing their programme successfully and a significant number achieve within their planned time. They also make excellent positive progression; nearly three-quarters achieve permanent employment and nearly a quarter carry on in their learning by progressing to higher-level qualifications such as the next level apprenticeship programme. The remainder progress to other further education.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your staff have maintained effective safeguarding arrangements since the last inspection and you have revised them to reflect the 'Prevent' duty requirements very effectively. Managers and staff have continued to prioritise safeguarding for both staff and your learners to make sure that you take all reasonable precautions to ensure their safety in their training and their workplace.

You, as designated safeguarding officer, have undertaken appropriate external training and you have ensured that all staff receive regular internal training. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe, have a good understanding of safeguarding and health and safety, and they know how to report any issues should they arise. The innovative use of wristbands and credit-card sized cards displaying all the relevant contact details ensures that all apprentices are fully aware of the Freephone telephone number if they should need it.

Staff and apprentices also receive training on the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Because of this, a majority of them are able to express and discuss these issues well. However, a small number are not able to articulate their understanding as clearly. You and your managers are aware that you need to do some further work to strengthen apprentices' and employers' broader knowledge and understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

Inspection findings

- Your staff manage teaching, learning and assessment activities well and they make good use of revised documents and electronic systems to monitor achievement and progress. Learners are making good progress in completing their units of study and they develop good, high-level skills and knowledge related to their workplace and job role. However, in a very small number of cases, the planning of learning does not take sufficient account of the individual needs of learners.
- Assessment is thorough, accurate and reliable. Assessors check knowledge and understanding using a variety of methods including probing questions. Learners receive good verbal and written feedback on their performance and work generally, which helps them to improve.
- Senior managers have developed the internal observation of classroom delivery, assessment and reviews of learners' progress further. These now focus more strongly on learning and assessment. Observation reports are thorough and provide a good basis for identifying areas needing improvement.

- Since the last inspection, you have revised your strategy for delivering the English and mathematics components of programmes well. Your staff give the delivery of functional skills a high priority and you now deliver these early in apprentices' programmes, enabling your learners to apply and integrate their learning into subsequent activities very effectively. Consequently, your learners improve their confidence in both English and mathematics, and this supports them to make good progress.
- Your delivery methods and the positive approach of your staff support the personal development of your learners very well. The initial advice and guidance that learners receive is very good. All learners have further screening regardless of their GCSE grades to identify any remaining support needs. The comprehensive support systems and 'open door' policy used by many staff enables learners to access support as soon as they need it.
- Staff identify a wide range of welfare support needs early in the programme and they are effective in providing relevant support or devising strategies to overcome these issues. The good use of a risk-rating system ensures that staff monitor learners' progress at regular staff meetings well.
- Many of your staff now successfully integrate equality and diversity issues, and more latterly British values, in many of the learning activities.
- On a few occasions, the written records of review meetings lack sufficient detail and do not reflect fully the richness of the verbal discussion about equality and diversity. A small proportion of learners are also less articulate regarding the broader aspects of the 'Prevent' duty, such as the dangers of extreme 'right-wing' groups.
- You and your staff have made excellent progress in improving the tracking and monitoring of learners' progress as recommended at your last inspection. Nearly all of your learners now make use of a wide range of electronic systems that record and monitor their progress through the various aspects of their programme. Staff regularly review with learners their progress and set appropriate targets to keep them on track and progressing well.
- In particular, staff track the progress of learners in English and mathematics very systematically. This ensures that learners are very aware of the progress they are making and what they need to do next. Assessors provide prompt support when learners need it. The achievement rates for functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics are significantly above the current national rates and current apprentices are also making good progress in their learning programmes.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the planning for learning takes sufficient account of the different starting points of learners so that trainers meet learners' individual learning needs better, enabling all the learners to make progress and reach their full potential

- all learners are able to articulate their understanding of what the 'Prevent' duty is and can demonstrate that they understand the full range of dangers from radicalisation and extremism in all its forms
- all employers are clear about their role and expectations in supporting the implementation of the 'Prevent' duty
- as the use of digital technology continues to increase, they develop ways to ensure that the recording of reviews with learners captures the content fully, so that staff record the richness of the discussion that often takes place, especially with regard to equality and diversity and British values.

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

Tim Gardner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two Her Majesty's Inspectors, assisted by two Ofsted inspectors and the director for quality, as nominee, carried out the inspection. During the inspection, inspectors met with managers, staff and external partners. They observed teaching activities, assessments and reviews. They also met and talked to apprentices and staff in the workplace and classrooms. Inspectors also reviewed a number of documents, learners' files and records.