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13 January 2017

Katy Edwards
Managing Director
Chiltern Training Limited
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Dear Katy Edwards

Short inspection of Chiltern Training Limited

Following the short inspection on 6 and 7 December 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 March 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you have taken on responsibility for leading the organisation after the chief executive officer retired. You set high expectations through the company's vision and strategic direction. Managers and staff self-assess the quality of their work very accurately and know what needs to improve. You rectified fully both areas for improvement from the previous inspection, one of which is now a strength. Learners achieve vocational qualifications well but too many do not achieve on time. This is largely because they struggle to pass mathematics and information communication technology (ICT) tests.

The high quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been maintained. Over the last two years, you invested significantly in staff training, which has enabled you to respond very positively to changes in the early years educator qualifications. Five training coordinators now teach GCSE English and mathematics and a large number of learners take these qualifications, which helps them to progress onto the advanced level and in their career. The majority of learners now effectively use electronic portfolios, which had only recently been introduced at the previous inspection. You revised the off-the-job training, which gives greater flexibility in how learners attend, for example on day release, in evenings or on Saturdays.

You introduced a successful traineeship programme in health and social care, childcare and business administration since the previous inspection. This is offered to small groups of learners in Reading and through your subcontractor, Riverside Training (Spalding) Limited, in Lincolnshire.

Although the number of apprentices is lower than at the previous inspection, a higher proportion of those aged 16 to 18 now learn with Chiltern Training Limited, which meets the priorities of funders and local employment needs well. The programme for school pupils aged 14 to 16 is no longer offered.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and action is taken to safeguard learners. Safeguarding is very well managed; all policies and procedures are up to date and staff are suitably checked before they work with learners. Training coordinators make good use of their training and current knowledge to update employers and teach learners how to apply safeguarding requirements at work. Staff, subcontractors and employers share information relating to learners productively to identify at an early stage those potentially at risk of harm. These learners receive extensive help and support, including being referred to external specialists, such as counsellors, a women's refuge and mental health professionals. Generally, learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and how to stay safe, including when using the internet and social media. You are making steady progress in implementing the 'Prevent' duty. Managers make diligent checks before inviting external speakers and visitors on-site. All staff have had 'Prevent' duty training. This has yet to have full impact in ensuring that all learners understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Inspection findings

- Partnerships are excellent, particularly with employers, ensuring that learners have access to high-quality work experience and employment opportunities. Employers speak highly of Chiltern Training's support and training. You share best practice and learning resources very effectively with the subcontractor, strengthening further the quality of teaching and assessment resources.
- Managers maintain very strong links with regional organisations, including the local enterprise partnership, local authority and provider groups, which they use well to align the curriculum to local and sector priorities. They use labour market information to good effect when making decisions about developing the provision. In response to predicted skills gaps in childcare settings, you introduced the traineeship programme to help increase the number of young people who start apprenticeships.
- Managers introduced a high-quality traineeship programme. They plan and evolve the content and structure of this programme carefully, taking account of learners' and employers' feedback. Learners benefit from a good combination of work experience, vocational training and English and mathematics learning, through which they gain valuable experience and knowledge within their chosen sector.
- Traineeship learners demonstrate an impressive understanding of British values. They benefit from a good range of enrichment activities, including visits to Reading prison and a recycling centre, and working in a foodbank. This enhances their social skills and confidence while gaining an appreciation of life in modern Britain.

- Training coordinators set learners a wide range of challenging vocational learning activities, which they make very relevant to the workplace. This helps learners apply their learning competently and confidently at work. Advanced-level childcare learners reflect on, and apply, their learning to good effect, particularly when mentoring less-experienced apprentices at work.
- Learners acquire excellent workplace skills. They benefit from working with good role models at work who set, and expect, high standards. Many learners take on extra responsibilities at work, such as being key workers for a group of children and liaising with their parents.
- Learners develop good English skills because training coordinators link their lessons well with vocational subjects and real work scenarios. Learners use English confidently and produce good-quality assignment work. They communicate very effectively with parents about their children, including through conversation and electronic journals.
- Learners' development of mathematical skills is less effective. Not all training coordinators use suitable teaching strategies or learning activities to meet the wide range of abilities within classroom groups. A few learners struggle to apply concepts and knowledge as the activities they are set do not give them sufficient opportunities to practise their skills.
- Assessment is of a good standard. Training coordinators plan assessment very carefully around workplace priorities and commitments. They involve employers productively during assessment and progress reviews, which helps all involved in the programme to plan coherent vocational learning and assessment.
- Most training coordinators set learners suitable targets that help them improve the quality of their work and effectiveness. A few learners do not have sufficiently detailed or focused actions, particularly for their personal or career development. As their programme progresses, training coordinators do not challenge traineeship learners to extend their working hours or increase attendance to prepare them for typical working patterns in the sector.
- Apprentices' achievement of qualifications is consistently good, and has been for the last four years. Learners aged 16 to 18, those with the subcontractor and learners taking direct learning support and business management qualifications achieve exceptionally well.
- The small number of traineeship learners who decide this is not the right occupation for them receive good support to find alternative careers. Trainees who progress onto the apprenticeship are equally successful as their peers. However, the number of trainees who progress onto the apprenticeship, employment or further education has declined and now requires improvement, particularly in Reading.
- Too many learners exceed their planned deadline for achieving all the qualifications within the apprenticeship framework. They make good progress towards achieving vocational qualifications, but a minority do not pass mathematics and ICT qualifications. This delays their completion of the apprenticeship while they wait to resit tests.
- Managers do not use reliable data to identify trends in learners' achievement and their rate of progress. They do not routinely evaluate whether actions they take are successfully improving overall and timely achievement or functional skills test pass rates.

Next steps for the provider

You should ensure that:

- managers use accurate data more incisively to identify any underperforming groups earlier and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken for improvement, including timely achievement and in functional skills test pass rates
- training coordinators plan mathematics teaching more effectively and use strategies that ensure that learning is sufficiently individual to each learner's level of ability, helps them apply their understanding of mathematical concepts and prepares them to take tests
- you identify why progression by traineeship learners onto apprenticeships, employment or further education is declining and take suitable action to ensure that most learners progress to a positive destination.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Rodgers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted inspectors, assisted by you, the Managing Director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors met with managers, subcontractor staff, training coordinators, learners and employers. They observed lessons, assessments and learners' progress reviews. Inspectors reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, quality improvement plans, safeguarding and learners' achievements and progression.