

# XTP International Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

10–11 January 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>	Apprenticeships	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Outcomes for learners	<b>Requires improvement</b>		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good	

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications and complete them in time is low.
- Vocational coaches do not deliver sufficiently high-quality training that develops apprentices' skills and knowledge. In particular, the most able learners do not achieve their potential and improve their employment prospects.
- Vocational coaches do not set clear targets for apprentices' personal and vocational skills development. Apprentices and employers do not have a clear overview of the progress that apprentices make.
- Leaders and managers have not tackled the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection quickly enough and the quality of the provision has declined.
- Vocational coaches do not ensure that apprentices take more responsibility for their own learning and develop independent learning skills.
- Apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.
- Managers have not developed effective arrangements to improve the quality of the provision.
- Staff do not use systems to monitor apprentices' progress effectively.
- The governing body does not provide senior managers with the support and challenge necessary to ensure improvements.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Managers have developed effective arrangements to adapt apprentices' programmes to meet the specific needs of employers.
- The new management team has improved significantly the retention of current apprentices. It has halted the sharp decline in the proportion of apprentices who do not achieve.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- XTP International Limited operates from Stockport, Greater Manchester. It recruits learners from a wide geographical area including Merseyside and the North West. The company offers apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced, and higher levels in education and training, customer services and administration and management.
- The managing director has overall responsibility for the strategic development of the company. He is supported by 12 staff including the operations director and four vocational coaches who are responsible for the delivery of all aspects of the provision.

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

- Increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes and the proportion who complete them on time, by:
  - ensuring that apprentices who start their programmes are supported well to stay on course and make progress
  - ensuring that vocational coaches monitor frequently and carefully apprentices' progress
  - ensuring that vocational coaches encourage and support apprentices to take more responsibility for their own learning and to develop independent learning skills.
- Raise the standard of teaching, training, learning and assessment, in particular:
  - focus leaders' monitoring more sharply on learning and apprentices' progress and implement effective staff development to improve vocational coaches' practice
  - monitor the quality and accuracy of the information held in the electronic portfolio system for individual apprentices so that apprentices can gain a clear and full understanding of their development and what they need to do to complete in time.
- Review fully the paper and computer-based systems used to monitor apprentices' progress to ensure that they are fit for purpose and are being used effectively by staff and apprentices.
- Ensure that vocational coaches are confident to reinforce with apprentices the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, so that apprentices are more aware of how to protect themselves.
- Identify, and put in place, arrangements for governance that provide challenge and support for senior management in order to improve the quality of provision.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- In the year following the previous inspection, the company experienced significant staffing issues that adversely affected the delivery of the provision. Many apprentices left their programmes due to insufficient support.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have focused too much on developing paper and computer-based monitoring systems without ensuring that these provide a clear and coherent view of apprentices' learning. Until recently, managers did not evaluate the impact of these systems on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices. Consequently, staff carry out too many activities that do not improve apprentices' experience. For example, vocational coaches upload apprentices' documents to the e-portfolio system because apprentices are not trained to use the e-portfolio system. The systems are often poorly thought-out and implemented. For example, the information held about apprentices' progress in the e-portfolio is not accurate and reliable. Managers have recognised these issues and are making changes. Until recently, the pace of change has not been fast enough.
- Leaders have not improved the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example, managers have introduced forms to record and monitor the number of hours that apprentices complete on- and off-the job training but the records are often incomplete and unreliable.
- Improvement processes are not sufficiently effective. Leaders and managers observe teaching, learning and assessment to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Managers' evaluation of the quality of the provision is accurate. However, managers have not been successful in implementing the improvement action plan effectively and swiftly.
- Managers now monitor apprentices' progress and achievements regularly and robustly. They ensure additional visits by vocational coaches to help apprentices to catch up and improve their progress. As a result, the proportion of current apprentices with slow progress has sharply reduced compared to the previous year. However, because the information that managers hold on apprentices' progress is too fragmented, extracting accurate information about apprentices often diverts managers' time and attention from implementing effective policies and procedures. Currently, much of managers' time is spent dealing with immediate issues rather than resolving the root cause of problems. For example, managers know that many apprentices do not pass their functional skills tests first time, but have not investigated the reasons behind this issue.
- Leaders and senior managers have recently taken effective action to halt the decline in apprentices' achievement rates. In mid-2016, having stabilised staffing, leaders reviewed fully the reasons for the low retention of apprentices and took decisive action to bring about improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. They restructured the management team, redefined roles and responsibilities and a new operations director took responsibility for the quality of the provision. Managers used performance management processes very effectively and most vocational coaches are new appointments. The new management team has implemented many changes. Although it is too early for all the changes to have had full impact on improvements for apprentices, a

number have been effective. For instance, apprentices' retention rates this year have improved significantly.

- The managing director and managers have developed good links with a wide range of employers and stakeholders. They work well with employers to promote the changes to apprenticeships funding in the near future. Recently managers have developed a good process to respond better to the employers' and apprentices' specific requirements. Staff now analyse well the skills that individual apprentices require in the context of their job roles. Using this information, and in discussions with employers, vocational coaches have started to include units in the apprentices' training to improve their productivity at work.
- Staff pay good attention to developing apprentices' understanding of democratic values, tolerance and respect for different beliefs and groups. The monthly newsletter to apprentices promotes relevant topics and helps apprentices to understand how these issues affect them in the workplace. Apprentices carry out specific projects and tasks to extend their knowledge of the values and principles that all those living in the United Kingdom should respect and support. For example, apprentices have completed projects, including in their functional skills courses in English, exploring democracy, mutual respect and the impact of recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Belgium and Germany.

### **The governance of the provider**

- The governance arrangement requires improvement. The managing director and the operations director support and challenge each other in relation to the quality of the provision. However, following the previous inspection and during a difficult two years in the company, the level of support and challenge to leaders was not sufficiently effective, leading to the decline in the quality of the provision.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff at all levels have received training on keeping apprentices safe and in identifying and supporting vulnerable apprentices. Managers have developed detailed policies and procedures to ensure that apprentices know how to report their concerns. Vocational coaches discuss well how apprentices can keep themselves safe when working online.
- Vocational coaches have received training on explaining the risks of holding extreme views and radicalisation. However, managers have not ensured that vocational coaches are confident enough to extend apprentices' knowledge and understanding about these risks.

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

### **Requires improvement**

- The progress of current apprentices is improving, but for a significant minority progress is still too slow. The planning and management of apprenticeship programmes do not ensure that there is sufficient challenge for apprentices of all abilities, particularly the most able. While staffing stability is improving, the frequent changes to vocational coaches mean that too many apprentices' workplace visits are cancelled and the time between visits is too long. Consequently, a minority of apprentices do not get the support that they require to achieve in the planned time.

- Assessment of apprentices' starting points does not routinely take into account the experience and prior qualifications of apprentices, so a number are placed on qualifications at too low a level for their capabilities. Vocational coaches do not use information from this assessment sufficiently well to plan and deliver learning programmes.
- Vocational coaches do not set high enough expectations for all their apprentices; they often focus on the minimum standards that apprentices are required to achieve. They do not challenge apprentices sufficiently when they fail to complete tasks and activities between visits. As a result, a minority of apprentices fall behind in their work and do not progress. Most vocational coaches do too much for their apprentices and fail to develop their independent learning skills. For example, vocational coaches too readily give answers when testing apprentices' theoretical knowledge.
- During workplace visits, vocational coaches set apprentices targets that focus on the completion of learning tasks or the work that they need to complete for the next visit. However, they do not consistently encourage their apprentices to develop the personal skills and attributes that will help them to improve their employment and promotion prospects.
- Vocational coaches do not use effective strategies to help apprentices to improve their practical English skills. They highlight errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar but fail to ensure that apprentices use this information to improve subsequent written work. Managers have not ensured that vocational coaches develop apprentices' use of mathematical skills well enough.
- Vocational coaches' use of questioning techniques is not probing enough to consolidate or develop further apprentices' depth of understanding of topics and concepts. Consequently, apprentices struggle to explain a significant number of key concepts or underlying principles, particularly advanced and higher-level apprentices.
- Employers engage well in planning apprentices' programmes. Managers now carry out a much more detailed analysis of the training needs of companies and tailor programmes to meet these needs. As a result, apprenticeship programmes add real value to the work of many companies.
- Vocational coaches have recent vocational experience and a good understanding of the commercial contexts of the industries and sectors where apprentices are employed. This enables them to make the learning relevant to the apprentices' job roles.
- Current vocational coaches maintain good levels of contact with their apprentices, and respond promptly to requests for support and advice. As a result, more of the current cohort of apprentices remain on programme than in previous years.
- The quality of written feedback to learners has improved recently. Vocational coaches now give more detailed and specific recommendations to apprentices about how they can improve their work. As a result, an increasing proportion of apprentices produce work of a good standard.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

### **Requires improvement**

- Vocational coaches do not set clear expectations or encourage sufficiently apprentices to apply themselves to completing assignments within agreed timescales. Consequently,

apprentices do not develop skills to plan their work and submit written work by the agreed time.

- Vocational coaches have not equipped apprentices with the study skills to become independent learners. Apprentices have become over-reliant on the resources provided by their vocational coaches, and therefore do not develop the curiosity they need to research topics on their own.
- Apprentices do not receive sufficient independent information, advice and guidance to help them make decisions about their next steps in training and employment. Managers and vocational coaches provide guidance about progression, but this is mostly within the narrow confines of the company's curriculum offer.
- Apprentices only have a shallow understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Too many apprentices think that the 'Prevent' duty has something to do with equality and diversity.
- Apprentices who complete their qualifications develop their self-confidence and are more competent in their performance at work. The majority of apprentices apply the theoretical knowledge they learn in off-the-job training back in the workplace; for example, how to give effective feedback to staff and conduct appraisals.
- Apprentices increase their chances of promotion by adding real value to their companies. For example, apprentices have used their problem-solving skills to analyse how to increase sales and to introduce new systems into their companies.
- The majority of apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety at work and know to whom they should report any concerns. Apprentices develop the appropriate behaviours and attitudes expected in the workplace. The majority show respect and tolerance to their colleagues and customers.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualifications declined sharply in 2014/15. Even with the improvements in achievement rates in 2015/16, the proportion of apprentices who completed their programme successfully was still low as too many apprentices left their programme early. Managers have reversed the drop-out rate and, since mid-2016, very few apprentices have left their programmes without achieving.
- The large majority of current apprentices are making the expected progress in relation to their starting points. A significant number of apprentices have caught up after making slow progress initially due to recent good management action and targeted visits by vocational coaches.
- Functional skills achievements have risen considerably in the last six months and are now high. However, too many apprentices do not pass their external assessments in English and mathematics on the first occasion of taking their tests.
- Progression to higher-level programmes after completing the advanced apprenticeship programme is not good enough. Apprentices who complete their programmes remain in full-time employment and many gain promotion or extra responsibilities at work.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	58273
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16 to 18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	340
Managing director	Mr Craig Shaw
Telephone number	0843 509 4020
Website	www.xtp-int.com/

## 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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	27	33	4	65	N/A	39		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of traineeships	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	N/A							
Funding received from:	Skills 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, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices 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

Shahram Safavi, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Bev Cross	Ofsted Inspector
Charles Searle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Ingle	Ofsted Inspector



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