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1 February 2017

Darren Bunting
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Dear Mr Bunting

Short inspection of Intec Business Colleges Limited

Following the short inspection on 18 and 19 January 2017, 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 April 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You have maintained apprentices' high levels of achievement. The number of apprentices aged 16 to 18 has steadily grown due to the concerted efforts of the recruitment team. To help young learners succeed, you have increased the amount of contact time, refined the screening of learners and placed them with carefully vetted employers. Learners stay on their programme and make good progress, and the majority gain permanent employment.

Partnerships with employers, most of whom are small and medium-sized employers from across the country, remain strong. You have widened the sectors from which employers are recruited and increased the numbers since the previous inspection. Employers are mostly well prepared for the impending changes in the sector such as making a financial contribution to the training of their apprentices. Employers value learners' vocational, interpersonal and essential skills such as team working, problem-solving, English and mathematics. Apprentices quickly become valued members of the workforce.

Learners' and employers' feedback remains positive. Inspectors found a good level of awareness of British values and the risks of extremism and radicalisation among learners and employers.

Programmes match the needs of learners and employers very well. Tutors/assessors work closely with the learners and employers to provide a careful

match of on-the-job learning to the apprentices' workplace. Tutors/assessors provide good coaching and other off-the-job training in engaging and interactive sessions. The tutor/assessor teams work well together; they know their learners and employers well and deal with any problems promptly.

You hold all staff to account and measure their performance rigorously against a range of key performance indicators for their job and caseload of learners.

Governance is not yet fully effective. You do not currently seek external scrutiny, support and challenge to benchmark yourself against the best in the sector. The chief executive officer supports you well by mentoring and coaching. He is well aware of what he needs to do to further improve governance.

You have successfully dealt with all but one area for improvement from the previous inspection. You do not make full use of available data and management information to give a full account of the performance of the company and its impact on learners' progress, progression and life chances. However, you know your provision well.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have strengthened the safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection. Senior managers and staff ensure that learners are taught in a safe environment. As a result, learners feel safe and are safe.

Tutors/assessors provide good support to learners to develop a sound understanding of British values and the 'Prevent' duty. As a result learners, particularly those who are newly arrived in the country, talk confidently about these topics.

Learners gain an appropriate understanding of health and safety and e-safety at their induction to the programme. This is further reinforced mainly at subsequent reviews with learners; however, at times staff revert back to a compliance checklist instead of making the topic meaningful to learners by asking them to relate it to their job roles.

Staff have high levels of awareness of safeguarding and are vigilant about potential risks to learners, particularly the increased number of learners aged 16 to 18 and vulnerable learners referred from Jobcentre Plus. All safeguarding incidents are managed appropriately. Staff keep clear records of the incidents and referrals made where appropriate to the relevant bodies.

You conduct thorough checks on the backgrounds of all staff. Staff gain good knowledge of safeguarding matters through attending thought-provoking training.

Designated officers have established productive relationships with local authorities including the police force and use these strong links to seek advice and guidance, access training and make referrals.

Learners and staff work in an inclusive learning and work environment that fosters mutual respect. They demonstrate tolerance and respect for the views of others.

Inspection findings

- Qualification achievement rates are good and compare favourably with national averages. An increasing number of apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieve their qualifications in the planned period. The rates of achievement of qualifications in the planned period continue to rise for all apprentices. Intermediate, advanced and higher apprentices respectively constitute 53%, 41% and 6% of the provision. Apprentices aged 16 to 18 make up some 7% of the total of apprentices.
- Learners' achievements of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) functional skills at level 1 are particularly high, well in excess of national averages; however, their achievement rates are slightly lower at level 2. Most learners on entry do not have the required level of qualifications in English and mathematics and they achieve these qualifications alongside their main framework. Expectations of learners are high. Staff stress the importance of English and mathematics to their careers. For example, just over half of level 2 apprentices undertake a level 2 in functional skills. This is over and above the framework requirements.
- Unemployed learners referred by Jobcentre Plus make up some 10% of the total provision. They achieve a range of employability and ICT qualifications to improve their chances of obtaining employment. These adults face a range of barriers, including long-term unemployment, health issues and poor previous learning experiences. They develop their CVs and improve their presentation and interview skills well. Job outcomes for learners are good. At present, leaders and managers measure their outcomes by aggregating the completion of various short qualifications rather than the achievement of qualifications by individuals. This makes it difficult to measure and demonstrate the impact of the provision on individuals.
- Higher apprentices' qualification achievement rates are too low, although an increased number of learners have achieved their qualifications in the planned time frame. These make up some 6% of the total number of apprentices.
- Apprentices develop good, vocationally relevant skills that their employers value. For example, team-leading apprentices become more confident when dealing with conflict within their teams and more skilful in having difficult conversations with challenging employees. Adults on employability courses achieve well and gain good rates of employment following training. Attendance is good and learners enjoy their learning. Support for learners is good. Where a need is identified, staff signpost learners to a range of support services, such as debt management and counselling services. This helps learners to overcome their often significant barriers to employment.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Tutors/assessors give constructive feedback to learners and reinforce the importance of spelling and

grammar and skills development in written English. Achievement of qualifications in English and ongoing development of skills is strong.

- Leaders and managers do not make full enough use of the available data to inform self-assessment and do not plan actions precisely enough to improve the position. For example, data on the progression of apprentices into higher-level jobs and other destinations is not available. Although managers collect a vast amount of data on early leavers routinely, they do not conduct sufficient evaluation and analysis to present an accurate account of learners' performance and do not reflect on how outcomes and learning experiences for learners can improve.
- You evaluate the performance of staff, including their teaching, through regular observations. Your observers have refined the process of observations. Observers consider the progress tutors/assessors have made since their last observations, suggest areas for further improvement and provide useful guidance to improve further. As a result staff continue to provide good teaching, learning and assessment and support to the learners.
- Employers are clear about the progress their learners are making. Your account managers hold regular meetings with employers to review apprentices' progress, keeping employers fully informed. Where learners are falling behind, account managers put strategies in place to get learners back on track.
- You have made a substantial investment in time and money to improve staff knowledge, competence and learning resources. Staff development is good. For example, all staff are qualified to level 2 in English, mathematics and ICT functional skills and are currently undertaking a teacher training qualification. You create good opportunities for assessors to share good practice at team standardisation meetings, such as an active learning styles workshop and making effective use of the electronic portfolio. Since the previous inspection you have appointed five subject specialists who champion curriculum areas and provide valuable training and support to assessors. For example, they research and develop schemes of work for the new apprentice standards.
- By implementing electronic portfolios you have succeeded in providing a wealth of online learning resources that learners can access at their convenience. For example, learners receive a welcome email with links to the online site and a useful learner guide. Learners produce and upload their assignments and receive feedback promptly. They keep track of their learning and conduct further research on topics such as induction, e-safety and safeguarding. Tutors/assessors make good use of the smartphones that you provided to enable better links to online systems. This makes it far more efficient to provide assessment on demand, feedback and progress reviews.
- Learners benefit from good advice and guidance to identify initial training needs, manage personal issues and agree progression and destination targets. Since the previous inspection, you have introduced 'well-being' reviews which identify any personal issues that may impact on learners' ability to complete their learning. Staff identify problems and resolve them quickly to the satisfaction of learners and their employers. Learners have easy access to the websites of a range of support agencies from their learning portal. Guidance for leavers is not

systematic enough, particularly for those who leave early. During progress reviews, a few assessors do not check learners' knowledge of British values and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism sufficiently in the context of their work or the wider world to make this meaningful to them.

- After careful consideration of all aspects of traineeship programmes, you developed and implemented the programme with 12 learners in September 2016. All these learners remain on programme and enjoy their learning. Working closely with employers, you have successfully identified niche markets such as retail, which is experiencing recruitment difficulties locally, and have developed a comprehensive programme to support learners into a retail career. Nine of the 12 current learners are undertaking a retail level 1 qualification alongside meaningful work experience for a substantial number of hours and are developing skills in English and mathematics. Their pace of learning is fast and staff set high standards for learners.
- You have not included a very few areas, such as an analysis of leavers' destinations and reasons for poor performance by the higher apprentices in the self-assessment report. Consequently, you have not included these areas in the quality improvement plan. Although your staff continue to improve aspects of your provision in many parts of the company, you do not conduct a thorough enough strategic analysis of performance against each of your areas for improvement. This results in a less precise focus and slower progress in improvements in a very few areas.

Next steps for the provider

- Senior leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they seek external scrutiny of the company and benchmark themselves against the best in the sector to help the company achieve its objectives to become an outstanding provider of learning.
- Senior leaders should:
 - rapidly improve the qualification achievement rates within the planned time frame for higher-level apprentices by ensuring that they receive detailed advice and guidance on the requirements of their programme, including the necessary study skills and the time commitment required from them to undertake independent learning both at work and in their own time; ensure that employers are committed to release apprentices for learning; and swiftly identify any barriers to learning and put in place appropriate support measures
 - conduct a more detailed analysis of available data and use it strategically to help them to demonstrate the impact of the organisation on the learners' progress and progression
 - ensure that the self-assessment report more precisely reflects the performance of the company. Set more specific, sharper and more measurable targets for improvement in the quality improvement plan so that the company maintains and builds on its strong performance.

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

Harmesh Manghra
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection the team was assisted by the managing director as nominee. We held meetings with you, your senior leaders, and managers, teaching staff, employers and learners. We visited 10 apprentices and eight employers with members of your staff to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at learners' work. We spoke with learners at all sites, from across most apprenticeship programmes, including learners on traineeship programmes. We reviewed key documents including those relating to safeguarding, the self-assessment report, the quality improvement plan, staff development records, observations of teaching, and learning and assessment. We considered the views of learners and employers and reviewed the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires.