

System Group Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

20–23 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- A high proportion of adult learners on short employability courses progress into employment.
- Apprentices and learners develop good work-related knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Apprentices and learners gain additional qualifications that increase their chances of obtaining employment.
- Learners have good opportunities to learn in realistic working environments which prepare them for the world of work.
- A large majority of apprentices contribute to their employers' businesses very successfully.
- All apprentices benefit from the very regular contact, one-to-one coaching and support they receive from their trainer/assessors.
- Apprentices and learners have extremely good knowledge of safe working practices which they apply correctly.
- Most trainer/assessors have good technical ability and subject knowledge that they use skilfully to coach and develop apprentices' and learners' practical skills.
- Apprentices and learners display high standards of behaviour, professionalism and mutual respect for each other and their trainer/assessors.
- Apprentices and learners are very positive about their learning experiences; they take considerable pride in their work.
- Senior leaders and managers have successfully improved the quality of training and achievement rates by implementing staff accountability at all levels.
- Subcontractors are now monitored very closely and this is also improving achievement rates and the quality of apprentices' and learners' training.
- Trainer/assessors do not use initial assessment results routinely to plan apprentices' learning.
- Trainer/assessors do not challenge the most able apprentices sufficiently to make the best use of their learning potential.
- Trainer/assessors do not give all apprentices and learners sufficient help to enable them to improve their writing skills and correct their spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Apprentices' knowledge and learners' awareness of radicalisation, extremism and British values are not sufficiently developed.
- The process for observing teaching, learning and assessment is not yet rigorous enough.

Full report

Information about the provider

- System Group Limited trades as System Training. It is a national training provider that specialises in training for the logistics industry. The company provides government-funded apprenticeships to meet the needs of the industry and short employability training courses for unemployed adults. System Training and seven subcontractors deliver apprenticeships. Three subcontractors deliver the employability training in the Midlands and north of England. System Training also delivers commercial training courses designed to meet the needs of individual clients and learners.
- Bibby Line Group owned the company until January 2015. System Training Group Holdings Limited now owns it.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Trainer/assessors should make full use of the initial assessment results for functional skills and vocational subjects to plan learning for all apprentices to ensure that their starting points are appropriate.
- Challenge all apprentices, including the most able, to ensure that their learning potential is fully used and that they progress as quickly as possible and excel in their learning.
- Trainer/assessors should help all apprentices and learners to improve their writing skills as much as possible and draw their attention to, and ensure that they correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in their written work.
- Develop apprentices' knowledge and learners' awareness of radicalisation and extremism to enable them to protect themselves and others; acquaint them fully with British values.
- Develop the process for observing teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - focusing more intensively on learning and on apprentices' and learners' progress
 - writing reports that are judgemental, keeping description to the minimum
 - producing an action plan after each observation in which areas for improvement are identified and monitoring the action plans for progress and completion
 - developing a means of checking the accuracy of observers' judgements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- For the past two years, senior leaders and managers have been unremitting in their attempts to bring about sweeping changes to improve all aspects of the company's training and to eliminate identified weaknesses. As a result of their thorough appraisal of staffing requirements, new managers were appointed. The staff that remained in the company were successfully retrained to fill new or revised roles or to increase their efficiency in existing positions.
- Senior leaders and managers are fully committed to becoming a nationally recognised provider of high-quality training for the logistics industry. They acknowledge that apprentices' achievement rates for the past two years were unacceptably low, with too many apprentices failing to complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date. As a result of the changes that have been made, apprentices' achievement rates are improving significantly.
- The management of staff performance required improvement when the provision was inspected previously. Senior leaders and managers successfully changed the culture of the organisation by introducing key performance indicators and ensuring that staff at all levels are accountable for their performance. Their expectations for the performance of staff and learners are high. Communication within the company is good and staff have a greater awareness of the directors' vision for the company and the direction that senior leaders and managers are taking.
- Leaders and managers have a very good knowledge of the local, regional and national logistics industry and of the staff qualities and training that are needed. They are proactive in developing training programmes to train and upskill potential and serving employees for the industry.
- All staff are now responsible for the standard of their work and the contributions they make to the success of the apprentices and learners. Much closer monitoring of trainer/assessors' performance has had a beneficial impact on, for example, increasing the number of apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship by the planned end date and by increasing the number of assessors' visits that have been made by the due date.
- Subcontractors' performance and overall quality are now monitored very closely. Good support is provided when they fall below an acceptable level. If improvements are not rapid, further enrolments are suspended and the service level agreement is terminated. A very small number of apprentices from underperforming subcontractors have still to complete their apprenticeship.
- Since the previous inspection, the use of management information has improved and is now good. Managers make good use of online information to analyse trends and to monitor performance. They react quickly and implement the improvements that are needed.
- The systematic self-assessment process results in a judgemental and largely accurate self-assessment report. Managers, trainer/assessors, subcontractors and learners supply a wide range of relevant information that informs the self-assessment report. However, employers are not closely involved enough in the process. The quality improvement plan

is detailed and it provides a good focus for developing the quality of the provision further.

- Since the previous inspection, the process for observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been strengthened. However, further developments are needed to ensure that the observations have a rapid and positive impact on the quality of apprentices' and learners' experiences. Although observers are focusing on the impact that teaching is having on learning, more evaluation of learning is required. Observers place too little importance on apprentices' and learners' progress. The reports are insufficiently judgemental. Trainer/assessors do not routinely receive an action plan following observations. Observers have carried out too few joint observations.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is now much stronger and more sharply focused on apprentices' and learners' achievements and the quality of provision. The board of directors meets monthly. There is a major drive to ensure that leaders and managers rigorously monitor the effectiveness of the provision and report their findings to governors monthly. Two committees, with clearly defined responsibilities for the quality of provision, outcomes for learners, and management and coordination of the company's resources, report regularly to the board of directors. Directors scrutinise all aspects of the provision and where concerns are raised they are pursued vigorously by board members.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is effective.
- The company places a very high priority on safeguarding its apprentices and learners and on ensuring that any safeguarding or safeguarding-related incidents are identified quickly and acted upon speedily. Safeguarding is a standard agenda item for all meetings up to and including the directors' meetings.
- A lead safeguarding officer and a deputy lead are responsible for ensuring that all safeguarding-related policies and procedures are implemented correctly. Staff are very vigilant in identifying indicators of abuse. Subcontractors' approaches to safeguarding are thoroughly investigated before appointment and checked carefully at quarterly quality-review meetings. All staff have been appropriately checked and their suitability for working with young and/or vulnerable people has been verified.
- Although all the provider's staff have been trained in the 'Prevent' duty, further training is needed in female genital mutilation (FGM). Checking is needed to ascertain if any subcontractor staff are awaiting 'Prevent' duty training and, if so, to ensure that it is implemented immediately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Trainer/assessors demonstrate high expectations of learners and apprentices. They pay good attention to health and safety issues and use their coaching skills very effectively to develop apprentices' and learners' knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, apprentices and learners demonstrate safe working practices and good practical skills in training sessions. For example, in a forklift truck training session, learners manoeuvred

and operated reach and counterbalance forklift trucks competently and safely to move goods in a warehouse setting.

- Apprentices and learners develop successfully the skills they need for their workplace. For example, motor vehicle apprentices learn how to diagnose engine and electrical faults. This means that they make valuable contributions in their workplace.
- Apprentices and learners who need extra help benefit from effective support for their learning needs. For example, trainer/assessors adjust written information, such as printing on coloured paper, using a larger font size and having wider line spacing, to enable learners and apprentices who have dyslexia to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Most trainer/assessors use questions very effectively to probe and check apprentices' and learners' understanding of how their learning is relevant to their workplace. For example, in an electrical installation session the trainer/assessor asked challenging questions to enable the apprentices to explain how to connect a cable safely in a real working environment.
- Apprentices benefit from regular reviews of their progress. Most employers contribute effectively to one-to-one reviews. As a result, apprentices have a good understanding of how well they are performing in their workplace and on their apprenticeship generally.
- The majority of trainer/assessors promote equality and diversity effectively. As a result, apprentices and learners demonstrate respect for each other and for their trainer/assessors. They work well together in training sessions.
- On short employability learning courses, most trainer/assessors successfully include the development of learners' mathematical skills in training sessions. For example, learners on a warehousing course used measurements and costings accurately to plan the design of a warehouse. However, on apprenticeship programmes, trainer/assessors do not routinely develop apprentices' mathematical skills sufficiently in training sessions. Consequently, a minority of apprentices do not improve their mathematical skills as quickly as they could.
- Trainer/assessors do not routinely develop apprentices' and learners' English skills in training sessions. In too many instances, trainer/assessors do not provide feedback that is helpful enough. They do not routinely help apprentices and learners to identify and correct the spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors they make. As a result, apprentices and learners are not aware of their mistakes and continue to make errors in their written work. A small number of apprentices do not start their functional skills training in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) early enough.
- On apprenticeship programmes, a minority of trainer/assessors do not take sufficient account of the results of initial testing when planning learning. Consequently, they do not challenge the most able apprentices to make the progress of which they are capable in training sessions.
- For a small minority of apprentices, target-setting and planning for assessment are not consistently effective. Too many targets are not challenging and specific enough and they do not focus on apprentices' wider development. As a result, a small minority of apprentices do not achieve their targets in the planned time and so do not progress as quickly as they could.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices and learners are very positive about their learning experiences. They take considerable pride in the work they produce. Apprentices and learners become increasingly self-confident and self-assured. Their oral communication and teamworking skills improve and they enhance their employment prospects as a result of completing the apprenticeships or short employability courses.
- Many adult learners on short employability courses have been unemployed for varying periods of time. The training makes a very strong contribution to their personal development as well as to the development of their vocational knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Many apprentices and learners take advantage of the additional opportunities they have to obtain driving goods vehicle and forklift truck licences for which the provider pays. Apprentices and learners who gain these licences are much more employable and this initiative goes some way towards addressing the national skills shortages in the UK.
- Apprentices make important contributions in their workplace, which employers value. For example, business administration apprentices develop the ability to deal effectively with customers on the telephone, including those who are making complaints.
- Apprentices and learners recognise the importance of attending training sessions regularly and promptly. Attendance is high in most training sessions. Most apprentices and learners arrive on time and are well prepared for learning.
- Apprentices and learners demonstrate professional standards of behaviour. They are respectful and adhere strictly to all relevant guidelines and codes of conduct. They work safely to industrial standards in practical training sessions. For example, in a motor vehicle training session an apprentice identified a potential damage hazard to a vehicle due to the car having a low side trim. He used additional safeguards to distance the ramp-arms from the car's undercarriage to avoid damage occurring.
- Apprentices and learners feel safe when attending training sessions and in their workplaces. Most of them are able to explain the procedures for reporting a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding and learner well-being issues are reported to the lead safeguarding officer and dealt with efficiently and in an appropriate manner.
- Apprentices' knowledge and learners' awareness of radicalisation and extremism are insufficiently developed. Their understanding of the hazards associated with social media and the internet has not been developed sufficiently. Consequently, they do not understand well enough how to protect themselves and others from these risks.
- Many apprentices and learners do not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of British values. As a result, they are unable to explain the relevance of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs in everyday life and in the workplace.
- A minority of apprentices do not receive enough advice and guidance to raise their awareness of job opportunities and career possibilities. This limits the extent to which they can plan their future development or consider their career options.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Achievement rates on short employability courses are high. For the past two years, most learners completed their courses successfully and gained their qualifications. Currently, these include certificates in warehousing and storage at levels 1 and 2, a certificate in the principles of customer service at level 1 and an award in forklift truck counterbalance operations at level 2. These qualifications provide a very good preparation for enabling learners to look for and obtain work in the logistics industry.
- For the past two years, achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes were low. The number of apprentices who completed their programme by the planned end date was also low. Directors, senior leaders and managers have implemented a number of changes, including strong performance management for staff, and early indicators suggest that these changes are having a very positive impact on achievement rates. Present indicators suggest that the overall achievement rate in the current year will be much higher than in previous years and is now good. A higher number of apprentices are also completing their programme by the planned end date.
- Functional skills English, mathematics and ICT achievement rates are good. Apprentices who require functional skills at level 1 receive good encouragement to work at level 2 if they are capable of doing so.
- Apprentices and learners demonstrate a strong commitment to learning. They develop a good range of vocational knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, learners on a short warehousing course gain an understanding of health and safety legislation and develop the skills needed to carry out risk assessments in the workplace. Apprentices become competent in driving heavy goods vehicles, customer service and business administration.
- Learners' and apprentices' prospects of gaining employment are very good. A high number of adult learners gain paid employment and most apprentices either remain with their apprenticeship employer or move to another employer to gain further experience or promotion.
- Additional learning opportunities are very good. Learners on short employability courses have very good opportunities to sit the forklift-truck licence test. Most learners realise that gaining the licence significantly increases their chances of obtaining long-term sustainable employment that meets local employability needs and addresses national skills shortages.
- Apprentices also have very good opportunities to obtain additional industry-based qualifications and licences. These include the safe and fuel-efficient driving certificate, the drivers' certificate in professional competence and a licence for the carriage of dangerous goods. Warehousing and storage apprentices gain very useful qualifications in manual handling and health and safety, and the pedestrian pallet truck licence.
- Apprentices' and learners' work is not of a consistently high standard. Trainer/assessors do not always tell learners what they can do to improve the standard of their written work. Trainer/assessors give insufficient attention to ensuring that all learners and apprentices correct their spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Apprentices' starting points are not routinely and clearly identified. Trainer/assessors make insufficient use of initial assessment results to clarify apprentices' existing

knowledge and skills when planning individual programmes of learning. This adversely affects the progress of a small proportion of apprentices.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Good

- At the time of the inspection, 149 adult learners were attending short employability courses. The large majority of learners undertake short courses leading to vocational qualifications in warehousing and storage, and forklift truck driving. The largest of these areas is warehousing and storage. Three subcontractors deliver all of this provision.
- The provider has established very effective partnerships with local authorities, employers and Jobcentre Plus. Managers have a good understanding of their local communities and local labour markets. They ensure that adult learners have access to well-targeted employment-focused courses. Learners, including unemployed adults, develop good skills in vocational areas where skills shortages exist.
- Learners develop good work-related skills, such as working effectively in teams and paying close attention to safe ways of working. The majority of trainer/assessors use a good range of teaching and learning strategies to enable learners to make good progress.
- Most trainer/assessors support learners to develop their mathematical skills successfully in training sessions. For example, learners on a warehousing course used measurements and costings accurately to plan the design of a warehouse.
- Learners improve their self-confidence and communication skills. As a result, they are able to deal more effectively with people they have not previously met, and with colleagues and customers in the workplace. Learners feel safe.
- The majority of trainer/assessors promote equality and diversity well in lessons and successfully encourage learners to understand their rights and responsibilities. Learners enjoy learning and demonstrate good standards of behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. They arrive at lessons fully prepared for learning.
- The vast majority of trainer/assessors have good technical ability and subject knowledge that they use skilfully to coach learners and help them to develop their practical skills. For example, learners on forklift truck courses learn how to manoeuvre heavy loads safely and efficiently.
- Staff provide helpful information, advice and guidance, including impartial careers guidance, which ensures that learners are clear about their next steps in employment and learning. A high proportion of learners progress into jobs.
- Too many trainer/assessors do not always do enough to ensure that all learners receive the help they need to develop their English skills. For example, they do not routinely integrate English well enough into lessons. Consequently, learners do not always recognise the importance of using appropriate vocabulary and accurate spellings.
- Many learners do not have a sufficiently developed awareness of radicalisation, extremism and modern British values.

Apprenticeships

Good

- At the time of the inspection, 159 intermediate apprentices and 162 advanced apprentices were in training. Apprenticeships are offered in five subject areas, the largest of which are engineering and manufacturing, and construction and planning. System Training delivers approximately 20% of the apprenticeships. Seven subcontractors deliver the remainder.
- Trainer/assessors have high expectations of apprentices. Most apprentices make good progress and an increasing number now complete their apprenticeship successfully and by the planned end date.
- Managers and trainer/assessors plan on- and off-the-job training very effectively. The national requirements for apprenticeship provision are fulfilled, thus enabling apprentices to have their entitlement to on- and off-the-job learning.
- All apprentices benefit from the very regular contact, one-to-one coaching and support they receive from their trainer/assessors. This helps them to stay engaged with their training and it builds their confidence as well as developing their vocational knowledge, skills and understanding. They become increasingly more confident and competent apprentices.
- The majority of trainer/assessors use questioning techniques very effectively to probe and check apprentices' knowledge and understanding. Trainer/assessors also make very good use of their relevant industrial experience when questioning apprentices to illustrate the links between theory and practice, for example when questioning apprentices about safe and fuel-efficient driving or when apprentices are preparing for the drivers' certificate in professional competence.
- The majority of employers make a good contribution to apprentices' on-the-job training. Apprentices who are receiving high-quality, frequent and focused on-the-job training are making faster progress and stronger contributions to their employers' businesses. Most employers are very complimentary about the contributions that apprentices make to their businesses.
- Apprentices develop the vocational knowledge and skills they require to work within their chosen vocation particularly successfully. Many apprentices have very good opportunities for additional training, leading to relevant industry-related qualifications. Apprentices welcome the opportunities they have for gaining additional industry-related qualifications because they increase their vocational competence and improve their chances of promotion and progression.
- Apprentices have extremely good knowledge of safe working practices that they apply correctly. For example, one motor vehicle apprentice used his detailed knowledge of equipment and machinery to avoid damaging a customer's car. Apprentices feel safe. They are kept safe both during on- and off-the-job training. Engineering and manufacturing, and construction and planning apprentices have a keen awareness of the dangerous environments in which they work.
- Most apprentices make a good contribution to their employers' businesses. For example, a business administration apprentice was responsible for setting staff rotas and schedules for her team. She carried out these tasks efficiently and professionally. Most apprentices take on additional duties and responsibilities as their knowledge and skills develop.


- Apprentices' English and mathematical skills are not routinely developed in vocational training sessions and, consequently, apprentices do not improve their English and mathematics quickly enough. Apprentices' English errors are not routinely identified and repeated errors occur.
- For a small minority of apprentices, target-setting and planning for assessment require improvement. Too many targets are not challenging and specific enough and they do not focus on apprentices' wider development. These apprentices do not always make sufficient progress because targets are often not completed and rolled over to be reviewed at a later date. For example, one apprentice on a driving goods vehicle apprenticeship was halfway through his apprenticeship period but had only completed a fifth of his studies.
- A small number of apprentices do not start their functional skills English, mathematics and ICT training early enough. This results in apprentices losing valuable learning time. For example, a motor vehicle apprentice with six months left to complete his apprenticeship had not yet started his functional skills training.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54726
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,196
Principal/CEO	Mr Darren Cunningham
Telephone number	0151 541 9277
Website	www.system-group.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	149	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	21	138	45	117	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	All about Training Limited FLT Training (Birmingham and Tipton) Limited FLT Training (Liverpool) Limited Hybrid Technical Services Limited ITEC Limited Principal Skills Limited Safety Advisory Consultants Limited Skill Wise Training Limited							

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Solvo Vir Limited
Vista Training Solutions Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report, position statement, quality improvement plan and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gather the views of learners 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

Ken Fisher, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Brenda Clayton	Ofsted Inspector
Stella Owen	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Keenan	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Frear	Ofsted Inspector

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