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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Neale McArdle
Poultec Training Ltd
South Green Park Enterprise Centre
48 South Green
Mattishall
Norfolk
NR20 3JY

Dear Mr McArdle

Short inspection of Poultec Training Ltd

Following the short inspection on 17 and 18 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 July 2011.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have maintained high standards. They have built effectively on first-class relationships with employers to ensure that learners develop relevant work-related skills to support their employment prospects through well-designed apprenticeship programmes. Recently introduced traineeships to engage young people not in education, training or employment, or lacking the confidence to return to learning, are working well. Tutors work with this group very effectively in areas such as catering and hospitality. Attendance is good, with young people quickly building confidence and developing skills. Most secure employment at the end of their programme. Managers have ensured that study programmes principles are met, following their introduction in 2015.

Learners achieve well. In the current year, tracking shows that nearly all apprentices are on, or ahead of, their targets. Managers monitor learners' and apprentices' progress well to make sure that they complete their programme within the expected period. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who achieve within the expected time frame is high. Leaders review the performance of different groups of learners carefully and take appropriate action when gaps are identified. Therefore, most groups achieve at a broadly equal rate. Retention on programmes is good. Strong partnerships with the local authority and relevant agencies help provide continuity for those young people requiring support when they have left Poultec.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains good. In classroom and workshop sessions, tutors build learners' confidence and strengthen learners' understanding of key concepts. Assessors draw well on their backgrounds in industry to help apprentices relate their learning to the workplace. Learners participate in sessions enthusiastically thanks to lively and effective teaching. Teachers and assessors are adept at integrating mathematics into activities, but less so with English.

Leaders and managers have a good grasp of those areas where further improvements are needed, but their self-assessment does not focus sufficiently on weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment, for example, in identifying weaknesses where a minority of tutors do not promote sufficiently high standards in English.

The fruitful links which leaders have with employers help create new apprenticeship opportunities. In conjunction with industry partners, initiatives such as the 'Poultry academy' enable apprentices to attend monthly topical work-related workshops at venues across the country. These events help extend learners' workplace knowledge and understanding of the industry they work in.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers take effective action to keep learners safe and make employers aware of their responsibilities. Assessors link well with Poultec's safeguarding lead officer and communicate any concerns to her. Staff have a good level of knowledge about learners who may be vulnerable. Learners' progress records include any safeguarding issues, should they arise. Disclosure and Barring Service checks are carried out and updated for all relevant staff. Managers check that partner organisations have the necessary safeguarding systems in place. All staff have undertaken 'Prevent' duty training but managers recognise the need to further improve teachers' and assessors' skills in developing learners' understanding of topics such as British values and the risks of radicalisation. A very good culture of health and safety exists, and learners understand at an early stage in their programmes the need for vigilance in the workplace.

Inspection findings

- Vulnerable learners aged 16 to 18 undertaking traineeship programmes quickly build their confidence in returning to classroom learning, sometimes after long periods away from formal education. Learners' attendance is good and, for those enrolled with other providers previously, considerably better than in their recent past. Skilled vocational tutors create a safe space for these learners in which they are free to focus on their studies and make good progress. For example, learners in business administration complete useful visual display unit and workstation assessments to meet health and safety requirements. Learners preparing to enter the care sector explore how their skills match the requirements of care occupations. In the hairdressing salon, more experienced learners give guidance on techniques to others who are new to the course. This helps develop the

vocational competence of the more experienced learners.

- Tutors provide good access for learners on study programmes to work-related activities appropriate to their programme. Learners also participate in work experience and industry-related visits. These activities help prepare them for their next steps after leaving the programme.
- Learners have clear goals for their future careers. They are very positive about traineeship programmes enabling them to progress. Staff provide learners with good information, advice and guidance to support them in making informed decisions about their future plans. As a result, most progress to work or further training.
- The majority of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices takes place on the job and is effective in developing apprentices' practical skills and understanding. As a consequence, most apprentices develop relevant vocational skills to support their employment prospects and meet local needs. They produce work of a high standard, make valuable contributions in a wide range of businesses and settings and demonstrate professional behaviour and a keen awareness of health and safety in the workplace.
- Staff plan assessment and reviews flexibly to meet employers' and apprentices' needs and, as a result, apprentices make good progress and have a good awareness of what they need to do to complete their programmes. Apprentices enjoy their training and value the support they receive from their well-qualified and competent teachers and assessors.
- Employers and assessors ensure that relevant activities are available for apprentices to develop the right workplace skills to achieve their overall unit and programme goals. However, targets set by assessors for apprentices do not focus sufficiently on their personal behaviour and specific skills development to help them have a better understanding of their individual progress.
- Assessors and tutors develop learners' and apprentices' mathematics skills well; for example, butchery apprentices learn how to convert metric weights and measures to imperial for their customers, and agricultural apprentices learn how to calculate the percentages of chicks reared from the batches they receive. Tutors develop study programme learners' English and mathematics skills well through the use of relevant work-related examples. A minority of tutors and assessors do not identify opportunities to promote English skills, which inhibits learners' and apprentices' confidence in spoken and written language.
- Leaders, managers and tutors do not focus sufficiently on promoting or recording the progress of learners' personal development skills and attributes.
- Managers, staff and learners do not have a consistent and unified view of the content of traineeships and the arrangements for meeting programme requirements. For example, a traineeship programme jointly provided by a partner agency is not sufficiently aligned and requirements in relation to the provision of English and mathematics are not always clear. In a few cases, this leads to confusion for learners and employers and limits learners' progress.
- Assessors do not ensure that induction is fully effective for the small minority of apprentices who do not have English as a first language. As a result, a few

learners are not gaining access to all of the information they should at the outset of their programme.

- Learners make good use of the online records to chart their progress and present their portfolios.
- Apprentices of all ages have achieved consistently well over time, particularly those following programmes in engineering, agriculture and animal care. A higher proportion of apprentices achieve well than nationally. Leaders' in-year data indicates that very few apprentices drop out of their programme; retention rates are high.
- Through a programme of regular observations, managers record accurately that most teaching is of good quality but have identified appropriately the need for improvements, such as ensuring tutors' use of questioning techniques checks and extends all learners' and apprentices' understanding. However, managers do not identify weaknesses of a minority of tutors who do not promote sufficiently high standards of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Employers speak highly of managers' long-standing sector experience within agriculture and of Poultec's leadership role in the poultry industry in particular. They are confident in the organisation and its staff. As a result, apprentices and learners benefit from good, consistent and relevant work preparation. The large majority gain employment following their programmes.
- In conjunction with industry partners, Poultec managers have developed five 'vocational academies' across the country which allow otherwise dispersed learners and employers to attend monthly events. The workshops provide an update on industry-specific issues such as farm poultry health, cleaning and disinfection. These activities enable learners to increase their work-related knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders and managers have a good grasp of where further improvements are needed. Staff and partners play a key part in the process of continuous improvement through meetings and consultation. However, their self-assessment of the quality of provision and the impact on learners, trainees and apprentices is inhibited by managers' planning not including clear, quantifiable actions and targets to enable them to measure progress made over time.
- A minority of learners lack knowledge of British values and struggle to explain how these relate to their everyday life or how to recognise and respond to possible issues of radicalisation. Moreover, tutors are not sufficiently confident in developing learners' understanding of these issues.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers build upon their approach to continuous improvement by sharpening the self-assessment process, specifically the inclusion of quantitative targets and areas for improvement arising out of managers' observations of assessors' and teachers' practice

- tutors and assessors develop the skills needed to incorporate the risks of extremism and radicalisation more overtly within the curriculum in order that apprentices better understand the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation
- leaders and managers improve their approach to promoting and recording personal development in order that learners recognise and apply these skills more effectively in the workplace
- managers monitor more critically the effectiveness of tutors and assessors in promoting and integrating the development of spoken and written English skills
- in conjunction with partner agencies, managers ensure that there is a clear and shared understanding about the requirements of traineeship programmes
- managers review the extent to which apprentices with English as an additional language are benefiting fully at induction and from reviews.

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

Tony Gallagher

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors, assisted by the training director as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors met with managers, staff, employers and learners and looked at learner e-portfolios. They observed lessons and reviewed key documents including those related to management, quality improvement, learners' achievements and safeguarding.