

MIT Skills Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

14–17 March 2017

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study 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			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have a strong employer-focused approach to their provision and through good links with employers and subcontractors they effectively meet the needs of the local, regional and national communities that they serve.
- Strong subcontracting arrangements assure the quality of programmes provided by 18 'partners' throughout England.
- A good proportion of apprentices, study programme learners and trainees secure or sustain employment, or gain places on further education courses on completion of their programmes.
- Due to the significantly improved management focus, a significant proportion of current apprentices are making at least the expected progress and increasing numbers are making good progress.
- Employers say that apprentices improve their vocational skills and knowledge and that they are able to give many apprentices increased responsibilities at work.
- Study programme learners and trainees benefit from good-quality work placements and good information, advice and guidance.
- Study programme learners rapidly develop good practical skills.
- Tutors' record-keeping in relation to target-setting, reviews and feedback does not always give apprentices and learners enough information to help them make better progress.
- The detail and accuracy of the feedback and guidance that tutors provide on marked work require improvement so that learners know what they need to do to improve.
- Learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons requires improvement.

Full report

Information about the provider

- MIT Skills Limited (MIT Skills) is a privately owned, large national provider that works with 18 subcontracted 'partners' to provide apprenticeships, a smaller number of 16 to 19 study programmes and a smaller number of traineeships. The main subject areas include engineering and manufacturing, business management and administration, and sports studies. A significant proportion of the MIT Skills directly delivered provision focuses on meeting local and regional employment and skills needs.
- Due to factors outside the control of MIT Skills leaders and managers, overall apprenticeship achievement rates in 2015/16 were depressed due to the employment uncertainties in the manufacturing sector in north-west England in particular. Also, at the request of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), a cohort of 20 improving operational performance apprentices were transferred to MIT Skills. Their company subsequently changed ownership and terminated its involvement in apprenticeships and the full cohort became early leavers.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers must ensure that feedback from training staff on assessed work enables all learners to excel, through:
 - learners receiving detailed feedback that specifies what they (individual learners) should do to improve the standard of their work
 - managers providing effective training for all training staff to enable them to identify and correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' work.
- Meet the needs of all learners so that they make the progress of which they are capable by ensuring that all learning sessions and reviews take into account and build on learners' individual starting points and include targets which support their broader development.
- Ensure that learners' attendance at English and mathematics lessons improves so that more learners make rapid progress in being able to understand and use these essential skills, with confidence, in the workplace.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have set an ambitious vision for the organisation. They are committed to ensuring that there is a strong employer-focused approach to the provision of high-quality training, education, work experience and support for employers, employed apprentices and non-employed learners. They set clear strategic objectives through a process of consultation with staff, learners, employers, subcontractors and other stakeholders to ensure that the provision continues to meet the needs of the local, regional and national communities which the company serves.
- Leaders and managers monitor the progress and performance of apprentices and learners effectively through a range of processes. They are beginning to implement a system that should standardise this monitoring across all of the direct and subcontracted provision. The current processes are effective but too time consuming and rely heavily on the effectiveness of the individual subcontractor's systems. Early indications from the pilot of the new system show that once it is fully implemented it will be far more efficient in effectively monitoring a range of current data and performance indicators.
- Managers monitor the quality of the subcontracted provision thoroughly and this ensures full compliance with a range of performance indicators and expectations. They also ensure that the standard of provision and the experience for learners and apprentices are good. Managers hold regular contract meetings to review progress against these performance indicators and they support and challenge the subcontractors very effectively to manage and improve the provision.
- The self-assessment report is largely accurate. Although it identifies the key areas for improvement, too much of the report is descriptive and insufficiently evaluative. The quality improvement plan links to the self-assessment's long-term goals but it lacks detail about the success criteria by which managers will monitor the achievement of these goals. Senior leaders include much of the improvement activity in staff appraisals as key performance indicators but recognise that greater detail in the quality improvement plan would enable more rigorous monitoring of key milestones.
- The appraisal system, which supports and challenges staff, consists of an individualised set of key performance indicators, and is effective in identifying strengths and areas for development for each member of MIT Skills staff. Leaders and managers support their own and partners' staff very successfully to develop their practice through the provision of extensive mandatory and optional staff development activities. These staff development activities support improvements in the quality of provision and outcomes for learners across the provision. Managers, however, need to improve the sharing of best practice to provide even greater benefit to all staff. Effective processes are in place to support teaching staff to maintain current industrial skills and knowledge through placements and shadowing in industry. These opportunities are highly valued by staff.
- Managers observe teaching, learning and assessment regularly, both within the direct provision and within the subcontracted provision in conjunction with their partners. Areas for improvement are generally accurately identified. However, the recording of the areas for improvement and the subsequent actions do not yet focus sufficiently on the progress that learners are making in developing and applying their skills and knowledge, but focus

the attention for improvement on the teaching strategies implemented by the tutor.

- Managers work collaboratively with employers to ensure that programmes provide the training that their apprentices need. Their frequent contact with these employers ensures that programmes stay current and meet current industrial requirements and business needs. For example, a regional project with a local authority supports unemployed young people on a traineeship programme to undertake work placements that are carefully linked to their career aspirations.
- Managers collect the views of learners regularly and use them to inform the staff appraisal system and the quality improvement plan. Learners' views also contribute to the review of the quality of provision which informs self-assessment. Managers encourage employers to provide regular feedback through the funding body survey and they make good use of this information to develop and improve the provision.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are effective. The managing director and directors provide clear strategic direction for MIT Skills, setting out objectives that take into account market intelligence, learners' and employers' feedback, and local, regional and national priorities. They provide effective challenge and support to managers to ensure that there is continued focus on improvement and sustainability.
- The directors know their business intimately and remain responsive and optimistic in a changing landscape. They have good subject-sector links and they use them effectively to inform their plans and expectations for the future.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Apprentices and learners feel and are safe in the workplace, on work placements and with the provider. Training staff make apprentices and learners aware of the safeguarding arrangements and risks during induction and there is good coverage of these in the learners' handbook. The large majority of apprentices and learners also understand the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, and know how to protect themselves. Managers recognise that they need to take effective action to extend and broaden this awareness.
- Managers have ensured that the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty are met and that all MIT Skills and subcontractors' staff are appropriately trained. A detailed risk assessment and action plan cover all the provision including that which is located in 'Prevent' duty priority areas.
- Managers carry out appropriate and thorough pre-employment checks on all staff. Subcontractors are contractually obliged to undertake effective checks on their tutors and scrutiny of their records by MIT Skills managers is thorough and effective. Health and safety processes are in place and effective, and managers always carry out risk assessments on internal and external activities, including those for work placements and external visits.
- The safeguarding manager and deputies have good links with external agencies to ensure that any welfare or safeguarding concerns are investigated appropriately. They keep detailed records of the actions taken. The safeguarding manager also provides the main

point of contact for all subcontracted provision and, where safeguarding concerns arise, ensures that they dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In the large majority of learning sessions, well-planned teaching and relevant activities motivate learners. As a result, learners are engaged in, and enthusiastic about, their studies and this helps them to make at least the expected progress. For example, trainees appreciate being treated as adults in lessons and they enjoy having small classes where they benefit from considerable individual attention.
- Tutors and tutor assessors use high-quality resources to support most learners and apprentices during and between learning sessions. These help apprentices and learners to make good progress and to develop independent learning skills. For example, learners on the personal trainer and fitness instructing course benefit from interactive blended learning resources in anatomy and physiology which enable them to study effectively at home, between classroom sessions. Apprentices benefit from the availability of good online support for the development of their skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). These resources help to challenge the most able learners and provide extra support for those who are less able.
- Teaching staff are well-qualified. They have appropriate training, extensive vocational experience and strong connections with local employers. This informs their planning and teaching and ensures that they support apprentices and learners fully to develop up-to-date, industry-standard skills.
- Most learners develop good work-related skills as a result of a strong focus on these skills throughout their courses. For example, hairdressing students on study programmes develop very good customer-service skills. Learners and apprentices also benefit from good peer support and cooperation in learning sessions. They enjoy solving problems together and can explain how this collaborative approach is useful in their employment as well as in their studies.
- Apprentices enjoy developing their practical skills and are adept at underpinning these with good theoretical knowledge. For example, motor vehicle apprentices used their knowledge of emissions and chemicals to diagnose faults in the vehicles they were working on.
- Tutors' record-keeping in relation to target-setting, reviews and feedback does not always give learners enough information to help them to make better progress. Managers are currently changing their online system for managing records and this period of transition has made it difficult for some tutors to keep comprehensive records. As a result, written progress records and targets are not always available to learners and the development of workplace skills is not always fully documented. This limits learners' capacity to refer to recorded feedback when planning their own learning and work.
- In a minority of sessions, tutors do not meet the needs of all learners well. These sessions have a uniform pace and structure, regardless of the starting points and individual needs of learners. In a few sessions for apprentices, tutor assessors do not always have a firm understanding of apprentices' prior skills and experience. As a result, these sessions neither challenge the most-able learners nor support the less able. This means that a

small minority of learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- A minority of tutors do not routinely provide accurate feedback to study programme learners. The work in learners' files has very brief feedback and the small number of English errors are not corrected. This does not help learners to remember and reflect on what they need to do to improve.
- In a few instances, tutors do not provide opportunities for learners to discuss issues relating to the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in vocational sessions. As a result, a small minority of learners have only a basic understanding of these issues.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Tutors are very successful in developing learners' self-confidence in their learning and at work. One learner was very reluctant to read stories aloud when she began her childcare apprenticeship but has become much more confident and is now greatly in demand by the children in her care as their story-teller.
- Learners become proficient in using online and paper-based resources for learning in between visits from their tutors. They develop productive and beneficial working relationships with their colleagues and peers. Employers value the increasingly positive contribution that learners are able to make at work as their confidence increases and skills develop.
- Staff arrange good-quality work experience for learners on study programmes and traineeships. Their placements help learners to make decisions about their future careers, for example in football coaching or working in education, and they inculcate good work skills and practices. Learners on study programmes also take part in a variety of vocationally relevant visits and community activities to help develop their skills in teamwork and communication. Tutor assessors use group work and projects very successfully to improve apprentices' team-working and problem-solving skills.
- Apprentices and learners are articulate and their standard of spoken English is generally high. On apprenticeships, the standard of learners' written work is also high. Many join the programme with a good standard of English and they make at least the expected progress in improving their English, mathematics and ICT skills. However, learners on the study programmes make slower progress in developing their English, mathematics and ICT skills because tutors do not always focus well enough on these subjects in reviews and do not always identify mistakes in written work. Learners, therefore, do not know what they need to do to improve.
- Learners feel safe and well-cared for by their tutors. Tutors take prompt action if they are concerned about a learner's welfare and learners value this support. Most learners understand how to keep themselves safe at work and online. Learners studying vocational subjects such as childcare, sports studies or learning support that require them to safeguard others have a good understanding of safeguarding and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, although the large majority of the other learners and apprentices are aware of these topics, teaching staff have not taken sufficient action to ensure that this awareness is broadened and improved.
- Learners interact well with their colleagues at work and their peers on the programme. Their behaviour is good and they are respectful towards one another and towards their

tutors. Most are keen to learn and work diligently in classes, in individual sessions with their tutors and between tutor visits in order to make good progress in their studies. They enjoy their learning and using the skills and knowledge they acquire during their training. Many are ambitious and keen to progress to higher levels of study or to gain promotion at work.

- Learners' attendance at vocational classes on study programmes is good. However, their attendance at English and mathematics classes requires improvement. The attendance of a small minority of trainees who have multiple barriers to learning also requires improvement. Managers monitor current apprentices' participation and progress carefully and take action if they miss learning sessions or start to fall behind.
- Tutors give trainees and learners on study programmes good information and advice on the career opportunities or further learning that are available to them. However, tutor assessors give apprentices insufficient information and advice on the range of career options or further education and training available to them. Those who, for example, are ambitious for their futures and who are looking beyond their current employer for progression, or who wish to gain qualifications at a higher level, have not had sufficient opportunities to discuss these matters with an impartial adviser.
- Most learners acknowledge the importance of British values but their understanding of these is quite basic. For example, they do not always make links between the concept of mutual respect and tolerance with the work they have done on equality and diversity or employment rights and responsibilities. Tutor assessors ask apprentices questions about these topics during their reviews but do not explore their understanding in sufficient depth by asking them, for example, to relate the concepts to subjects in the news or to their employers' codes or values.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Overall apprentice achievement rates for 2015/16, when adjusted for factors outside the provider's control, are very close to those achieved by similar providers and nationally. The majority of current apprentices are making at least the expected progress.
- A very large majority of trainees are successful in gaining apprenticeships, employment or places on further education courses on completion of their programmes.
- A high proportion of study programme learners secure apprenticeships, employment or further education courses. A small number also gain places on higher-education courses, including a learner who gained a scholarship at a university in the United States.
- A high proportion of apprentices progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships and a small number progress further to higher apprenticeships. The very large majority of apprentices retain or secure employment and a small number enter further or higher education on completion of their apprenticeships.
- A very large majority of learners and apprentices take pride in their learning and rapidly gain new skills and knowledge. Thus, learners are prepared very successfully for their work placements and apprentices improve their performance at work.
- Learners and apprentices who complete their programmes successfully gain functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT. Managers monitor functional skills first-time pass rates and for the majority of subjects and levels these rates are high; the

remainder show signs of improvement.

- In 2015/16 just over half of the apprentices completed their frameworks within planned timescales. In-year data shows that managers' closer monitoring and management of apprentices' progress have increased the proportion of learners making expected or better progress.
- There are no significant differences in achievement rates between different groups of learners.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- There are 186 learners on study programmes, which are provided through subcontracted partners in the south of England and in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Learners follow study programmes in sports studies and in hair and beauty.
- Tutors plan lessons skilfully, taking full account of learners' starting points. They use a good range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies, and make good use of vocational examples and role models. For example, on the sports study programme a tutor discussed his personal experience of addressing anxiety and stress when competing in professional competitions. In hairdressing, tutors fed back on techniques demonstrated by a celebrity hairdresser, which also provided opportunities to discuss equality and diversity.
- Learners make good progress in developing their skills and knowledge. Tutors evaluate learners' progress on vocational courses thoroughly through regular assessments and reviews. Learners are respectful to each other, for example during activities involving fitness testing, and are confident in reviewing and making suggestions for improvement.
- Tutors integrate mathematics skilfully into their lessons. For example, they use charts and tables to determine fitness levels, and calculate the cost of treatment and selection of materials in hairdressing to ensure appropriate levels of income. This helps learners to improve significantly their mathematical skills in the context of their vocational work. However, learners' attendance and punctuality at English and mathematics sessions require improvement. Learners who attend regularly develop their skills more rapidly and many pass their functional skills qualifications at their first attempts.
- Tutors have high expectations of their learners. They support their aspirations and work hard to help them achieve their ambitions. Sports learners regularly train and play competition matches with their host sports teams which include professional football and rugby league teams.
- Tutors have a good knowledge of their learners and use this information very effectively to plan lessons to meet learners' individual needs. In most lessons this planning is implemented skilfully. However, in a small minority of lessons where it is not, the more able learners dominate the sessions. This slows the potential progress of weaker or quieter learners who may be learning, but their tutors do not check their progress and understanding often enough.
- Learners use ICT appropriately to gain knowledge and skills around their subjects.

Additionally, they use ICT very effectively to present aspects of their work.

- Standards of learners' practical work in hair and beauty, and sports coaching, are good. The majority of learners benefit from relevant work experience, which they use very effectively to enhance their learning further. For example, learners provide coaching and support in primary schools which gives them excellent experience of working with young children.
- Learners participate in regular progress reviews and are aware of what they need to do to improve vocationally. However, tutors do not review learners' progress in English and mathematics regularly. Tutors do not always check learners' written work closely enough to identify mistakes so that learners know what they need to do to improve.
- Sports tutors have a keen focus on learners' progression and, as a result, the large majority of learners are focused on their next steps, either into work, apprenticeships or further training. Tutors provide good advice that learners value and which enables them to plan their careers. Many learners on sports programmes participate in high-level competitions and progress to professional contracts.
- Learners feel safe and are safe. They wear the correct clothing and protective equipment, and observe good health and safety practices. For example, learners in fitness sessions are aware of the need to ensure that muscles are warmed up prior to any activity and hair and beauty learners are aware of the need to be cautious when using a range of chemicals for treatment.
- Learners' understanding of aspects of equality and diversity and British values is good. For example, in a tutorial session learners discussed bullying and disability discrimination and the importance of everyone having equal opportunities whatever their disabilities. They demonstrated compassion and tolerance, and the tutor made good links to British values.

Apprenticeships

Good

- There are almost 2,200 apprentices, with the majority aged 19 or over. Just over half of the apprentices are on intermediate apprenticeships with most of the remainder on advanced apprenticeships. A small number of learners are on higher-level apprenticeships. The main apprenticeship subject areas include engineering and manufacturing, business management and administration, and sports studies. There are smaller numbers on warehousing, hair and beauty, training, and marketing and sales apprenticeships.
- The large majority of current apprentices make the progress expected of them and a small proportion make good progress. Most are aware of their progress on the course through regular meetings with assessors and simple visual-tracking documents. The recent implementation of a new online system for recording and monitoring apprentices' progress allows even swifter identification of apprentices who fall behind or those who could make faster progress.
- Apprentices are motivated and articulate and they enjoy their learning. Apprentices develop a range of good personal and employability skills, including team working, leadership, problem-solving and solution-finding/implementation, peer supporting and communication skills.

- Apprentices recognise the value of their learning to their employers' businesses and on their own performance, gaining confidence and a better understanding of how their role contributes to business success. For example, business improvement apprentices recognise that applying waste elimination techniques to their own work practices not only improves the financial viability of the company but also improves their own efficiency, reducing stress at busy times.
- Knowledgeable and experienced tutor assessors support apprentices to meet apprenticeship standards and requirements throughout their programme. Tutor assessors are flexible and adapt programmes effectively to enable older apprentices to fit their studies around their employment commitments and home life.
- Most apprentices have a good level of English and mathematics before beginning their apprenticeship. The large majority of apprentices demonstrate good oral communication skills and produce written work of a good standard. Apprentices' portfolios are suitably constructed, neatly presented and demonstrate competence across awarding organisations' criteria. Most apprentices can use appropriate mathematical calculations to analyse data effectively and can create graphical representation electronically. In one excellent numeracy class, the tutor made very good use of simple, everyday objects to give the apprentices practical tasks on calculating perimeters, areas and volumes, thus making the calculations more meaningful. However, where initial assessment of English and mathematics skills has identified weaknesses, tutor assessors do not always ensure that apprentices receive the specific help they need to make better progress.
- Most tutor assessors plan carefully structured practical activities for apprentices to enable them to apply their vocational skills and knowledge and to develop their social and work-related skills. Apprentices are aware of how learning activities contribute to their qualification success. For example, business improvement apprentices speak enthusiastically about how a practical problem-solving activity involving toy bricks allowed them to apply the theoretical principles of team working, leadership and implementing solutions to workplace problems. Trainers produce well-designed and helpful resources which are used appropriately by learners between sessions and to help them develop new skills. Apprentices value the encouraging oral feedback provided by trainers and assessors during training sessions and reviews.
- Good collaborative working between assessors, employers and apprentices helps with the development of programmes that assist apprentices to improve rapidly, perform better in their roles and contribute to meeting business requirements. Managers are fully informed about apprentices' progress and they make good use of this information to inform succession planning. For example, one business-improvement employer offers financial incentives to apprentices who design and implement cost-saving processes to the business.
- Tutor assessors provide generic training activities for apprentices who are in the same or very similar roles and have similar levels of experience and ability. This approach is successful for many but fails to support those who have different starting points, for example those who speak English as an additional language. Tutor assessors do not routinely use appropriate teaching and learning strategies to challenge the most able apprentices.
- A few tutor assessors do not use questioning effectively to support learning. For example, having asked a good question they provide the answers too quickly and fail to probe

apprentices' understanding and extend their learning.

- Tutor assessors provide accurate feedback to apprentices at the end of assessments. However, feedback and targets focus on unit completion. They do not routinely include targets to support and further develop apprentices' wider personal and social skills and learning beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and know what to do if they feel unsafe. However, not all apprentices have sufficient understanding of the broader risks associated with radicalisation and extremism to enable them to debate the topics or identify potential risks. Most apprentices have a reasonable understanding of British values and the importance of ensuring equality of opportunity and valuing diversity.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53429
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,182
Principal/CEO	Mr Hisham Zubeidi
Telephone number	0845 430 9009
Website	www.mitskills.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+
	-	-	18	16	169	1	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	321	944	92	748	-	66		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	19		1		20			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	6							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	All About Hair Best Practice Development Essential Sports Training HAHA Training Minerva Training Personal Track Safety Professional Training Solutions Qommunicate Training							

Vista Training
Wish Training Limited
Youth Force

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of business development and partnerships, 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 and a webinar 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

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Penelope Horner	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Pickering	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca Clare	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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