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15 May 2017

Mr Matt Garvey  
West Berkshire Training Consortium  
Consortium House  
7 Cheap Street  
Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 5DD

Dear Mr Garvey

### **Short inspection of West Berkshire Training Consortium**

Following the short inspection on 27 and 28 April 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 May 2013.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Trustees and senior leaders have retained a good focus on sustaining and improving the quality of learning at West Berkshire Training Consortium (WBTC) and at their subcontractors and 'partner' colleges. They set high expectations and have ensured that managers and staff are well led and trained to enable them to maintain and enhance the quality of the provision. As a result, apprentices, 16 to 19 study programme learners and trainees make very good progress. A very good proportion of apprentices achieve their qualifications overall and within planned timescales and most rapidly gain extra responsibility or promotion in their workplaces. A good proportion of study programme learners and trainees secure apprenticeships, other employment or places on further education courses as a result of their programmes.

Senior managers have made good progress in addressing the areas for further improvement which inspectors identified at the previous inspection. They have ensured that:

- most tutors and training coordinators have an improved ability to stretch and challenge learners
- tutors and training coordinators focus well on developing learners' English and mathematical skills by helping them learn the skills needed in the workplace during progress reviews and by supporting learners well to prepare for functional skills examinations
- senior managers monitor the quality of the off-the-job training provided by their

'partner' colleges much more effectively

- their self-assessment report is evaluative and largely accurate in identifying the strengths of the provision and areas which need to improve further.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

- Trustees and leaders place a very high priority on safeguarding learners and have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. They ensure that there is a strong focus on safeguarding and health and safety in the selection of subcontractors and employers. All WBTC and subcontractor staff are appropriately checked and managers secure references for all new staff. In the rare instances where checks have not been received before a new staff member starts work, managers ensure that they are appropriately supervised.
- Training staff provide comprehensive coverage of safeguarding during learners' induction, which they reinforce during progress reviews. Learners feel and are safe and know what to do should they have any concerns. Tutors increase learners' understanding of safeguarding in realistic and meaningful ways. For example, written activities develop their understanding of social inclusion. A high-quality, monthly newsletter includes thoughtful and informative articles on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty, which help learners, and their employers, improve their awareness and understanding.
- The requirements of the 'Prevent' duty are met. Effective risk assessment and action plans are in place for WBTC and the subcontractors who support learners in other areas.

### **Inspection findings**

- Trustees know the strengths of the provision and areas for improvement well because they are very effectively and regularly briefed by leaders with just the right level of information. As a result they are able to challenge and support leaders and managers to sustain and continually improve the quality of the provision. Self-assessment is largely accurate, and a detailed quality improvement plan allocates clear individual responsibilities and sets appropriately challenging targets and timescales for action. Trustees and senior leaders monitor and manage progress against improvement targets very effectively.
- Managers closely monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in classroom learning sessions. They achieve this through good working relationships with subcontractors and the 'partner' colleges that deliver part of the WBTC direct provision. The close monitoring includes reviews of records of observations of teaching, learning and assessment and risk-assessed, joint observations of classroom-based learning. Managers now have a much better understanding of the quality of the teaching and learning provided by college staff, which was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They also secure good levels of feedback from apprentices, which helps identify any concerns about the support they are receiving from their college assessors. Managers do not, however, have first-hand knowledge of the quality of

assessment visits.

- Very effective 'horizon scanning' and planning for the future by leaders includes excellent preparation for the introduction of standards based apprenticeships. This has included working closely with an awarding body to develop a new level 2 award covering 'skills and behaviours in the working environment'. Leaders also work well with employers and recognise those that make an excellent commitment to working with WBTC to help apprentices make the maximum possible progress. Employers are recognised through awards at well attended annual celebrations of achievement, alongside apprentices and learners.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at the required level and a minority of intermediate apprentices achieve at a higher level than required. Tutors support apprentices well to improve wherever their initial and diagnostic assessment indicates areas of weaker skills and knowledge. This approach includes apprentices who have good passes at GCSE. Apprentices and employers value the flexible approach training coordinators take in ensuring that additional support for functional skills is fitted around the demands of their employment. Tutors provide learners with constructive feedback on their English coursework and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation errors appropriately.
- Recent improvements include training coordinators and assessors working even more closely with employers to identify the particular English and mathematics requirements of apprentices' jobs. This work has not yet led to targets which are sufficiently detailed to help apprentices progress even more quickly.
- A very small minority of the provision comprise 'Great Start' 16 to 19 study programmes and traineeships. Many of the learners on these programmes have poor levels of attainment prior to joining these programmes, and none were in employment, education or training. Both programmes focus well on the learners gaining employment-related skills and behaviours and include extensive, good-quality work placements.
- Staff ensure that all learners' starting points for English and mathematics are carefully identified through initial and diagnostic testing. Tutors support learners on study programmes and traineeships well to improve these skills, and recent improvements in target-setting have enabled tutors and learners to recognise the improvements they have made and need to make. This has improved the progress that learners make, but the improvement is not yet reflected in good qualification achievement rates.
- Tutors do not always check that study programme learners and trainees understand the key points they should have learned in each lesson. As a result, they cannot be sure of the progress that learners are making.
- Employers are very positive about the support their apprentices receive to develop new skills. They say that apprentices gain new knowledge, improve their skills and improve their levels of confidence and workplace behaviours.
- As a result of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices develop, a very high proportion gain extra responsibilities or promotion in their workplace. Apprentices and employers can identify a range of new skills that apprentices

have developed as a result of apprenticeships. For example, an electrical installation apprentice rapidly improved his skills in testing production line equipment, diagnosing and rectifying faults.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and managers should ensure that:

- qualification achievement rates for 16 to 19 study programme learners and trainees are improved
- the quality assurance of the provision is extended to include first-hand knowledge of the quality of assessments carried out by colleges and subcontractors, to ensure that assessment practice and the teaching and learning which takes place as part of assessment visits are good-quality
- training coordinators improve the quality of the targets they set with apprentices to help them make even better progress in developing the English and mathematics skills they need for their employment and to achieve qualifications
- tutors, training coordinators and assessors always challenge and support apprentices and learners to make the progress they are capable of making during on- and off-the-job training.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Shackleton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by you and the director of training. We met with you, trustees, members of your senior management team, managers, tutors and learners. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to quality assurance, safeguarding and the performance of WBTC learning programmes. We analysed data on learners' achievements and progress relative to their starting points. We also analysed feedback from learners.