

Meadowhall Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

9–12 May 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	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

- Ambitious leaders and managers have successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers create a strong ethos of teamworking and place a collective focus on supporting learners to achieve.
- Leaders and managers have strong links with a range of good employers that provide apprentices with a rich vocational experience.
- Tutors provide very good support that enables learners to overcome personal difficulties and remain on their programmes.
- Apprentices are very keen to learn, highly motivated and capable of high-quality work.
- Learners benefit from a good standard of teaching and learning, including through group sessions in the training centre and individual coaching in the workplace.
- Staff are skilful in developing learners' understanding of British values, including an awareness of their rights and responsibilities as British citizens.
- Learners develop good vocational skills that equip them well to progress in their chosen careers.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has increased and is now high.
- Learners make good progress from their starting points and the vast majority are on target to achieve their qualifications on time.
- The strategy for developing functional skills provision is not yet fully effective. Learners' achievement in mathematics and reading at level 2 is low. Apprentices do not develop their English and mathematics skills beyond the minimum requirements for their programmes.
- Too few apprentices progress to higher-level qualifications on completion of their programmes.
- In a few cases, tutors do not assess learning effectively during sessions.
- A few employers are not sufficiently involved in their apprentices' programmes.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Meadowhall Training Limited (MTL) was established in 2002 and is part of British Land Limited. It delivers apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher levels, mainly in retail and commercial enterprise, and business, administration and law. MTL also has a small traineeship programme for learners who are preparing to work in the retail and business administration sectors. While MTL delivers provision in most of the English regions, the large majority of apprentices are employed in Sheffield. MTL has its headquarters and training facilities within its multi-purpose training and conference centre near the Meadowhall shopping centre in Sheffield, where many apprentices are employed in retail settings.
- The educational attainment of school leavers in Sheffield is lower than the national rate. Youth unemployment and the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training in Sheffield are high.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve English and mathematics provision by:
 - developing the skills of staff, and providing specific guidance to help staff to support learners who are working at higher levels
 - sharing good practice more extensively in the embedding of English and mathematics in vocational contexts
 - providing opportunities for all apprentices to develop their English and mathematics skills, including those who already hold qualifications at the level required by their apprenticeship frameworks, so that they become more effective in their careers and personal lives.
- Promote apprentices' progression to higher-level programmes more actively when progression is appropriate, given apprentices' work roles and employers' needs.
- Develop tutors' expertise in assessing learning during sessions so that learners are challenged fully.
- Work more effectively to engage the small minority of employers who are not sufficiently involved in the planning and delivery of programmes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Ambitious leaders and managers have focused very sharply on carrying out the recommendations from the previous inspection and securing improvements. They have been successful in doing so.
- Having completed a staffing restructuring, managers have instilled a very strong ethos of close teamworking to improve the provision. For example, recruitment staff collaborate with tutors to ensure that new recruits are placed on the right programme, based on their abilities, aspirations and circumstances. Staff share their expertise and good practice within and across teams to raise standards.
- Staff use a comprehensive suite of management information and monthly reports to monitor the progress of apprentices at individual, tutor and programme level very effectively. A relentless and shared focus on learners' progress and achievements enables staff to quickly identify and support those who are falling behind.
- Managers maintain excellent partnerships with employers and other stakeholders that they use well to match provision to regional and national priorities. Their links with the city council, the local enterprise partnership and the national retailing sector ensure that their provision is at the forefront of developments. For example, managers are currently recruiting and training new staff for a large multinational furniture retailer that is opening a new store in Sheffield. Strong employer links also enable managers to source suitable placements for learners on the traineeship programme that give trainees valuable work experience and good progression opportunities.
- Management of the performance of staff is very effective, with monthly individual meetings between tutors and their managers and comprehensive annual performance reviews. Managers use accurate information derived from the internal quality assurance arrangements to help improve staff performance.
- Managers conduct useful observations of sessions that focus very effectively on the impact that teaching has on the learning and progress of learners. An increased focus on the development of English and mathematics skills in observed sessions encourages staff to focus more on this aspect in their teaching, although their skills in doing so are not consistently good.
- Staff benefit from good professional development to help them keep up to date and to improve their practice. This includes fortnightly meetings and workshops, where good practice is shared, and the completion of teaching-related projects, where individual staff undertake research and then present their findings to their peers. For example, staff explore ways to include the promotion of equality and diversity in lessons, which has enhanced their confidence and abilities in doing so.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate and detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They gather and analyse a wide range of information, including learner surveys and feedback from tutors, to carry out self-assessment. Inspectors' findings concur with the self-assessment grades and most key judgements.
- The strategy developed by managers to improve English and mathematics provision is not yet fully effective. Action taken so far to improve the skills of staff, including the

appointment of a specialist tutor, have had a positive impact on functional skills achievements, particularly at level 1. However, further work is needed to equip staff with more advanced skills, to provide more staff resources to support learners working at a higher level and to ensure that all apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills beyond the minimum requirement of their programmes.

The governance of the provider

- The board of trustees brings a good range of expertise and knowledge of the wider learning and skills and business sectors and uses it to support managers effectively. Communication between trustees and managers is frequent and productive.
- Board members scrutinise detailed reports on the quality of provision and learners' achievements and provide a good level of challenge to senior managers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff implement clear policies and actions to ensure that learners are safe, including background checks on new and established staff.
- Safeguarding incidents are recorded appropriately and acted upon promptly. Records of safeguarding incidents are reported to the board of trustees.
- Staff undertake appropriate professional development that equips them well for their roles. They are confident in explaining safeguarding topics to learners, including online safety and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe at work and in their everyday lives.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Tutors plan learning effectively. They ensure that programmes meet apprenticeship requirements fully and take into account employers' business patterns, such as the busy December trading period in retailing. Tutors record and monitor appropriately the volume of learning activities that apprentices carry out.
- Apprentices are eager to learn and actively seek out opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, including through independent learning. Tutors have high expectations that they share with learners so that learners make good progress.
- Tutors use a good range of coaching strategies and are adept at contextualising learning to make it relevant to individual learners' roles and work settings. Individual workplace sessions are productive and make full use of the available time when apprentices are away from their jobs. In addition to the frequent scheduled meetings, tutors provide support by telephone and email.
- Tutors plan and deliver off-the-job group training sessions very effectively so that apprentices are fully engaged and learn well. They use an interesting range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), well to illustrate learning

points and help learners progress. Tutors provide a high level of individual guidance for learners, as group sizes are small.

- Tutors provide highly effective support to help apprentices overcome personal difficulties that may hinder their progress or put them at risk of leaving their programmes, such as accommodation difficulties, domestic problems, pregnancy or financial difficulties.
- Learners on the traineeship programme benefit from a blend of theory and practical activities that energise and motivate them. For example, in one lesson, they learned about customer service by watching and discussing a light-hearted video clip that illustrated very poor practice, before visiting the local shopping centre to evaluate the quality of customer service provided by the retail staff.
- Staff use their considerable vocational knowledge and experience to help learners understand the full range of work settings and job roles within their chosen vocational sector and the differing demands of each. For example, learners working in a shop selling confectionery were helped to gain a broader understanding of health and safety issues in other types of retail settings, such as those involving mannequins.
- Apprentices work with high-quality employers that provide rich learning opportunities and promote high professional standards. In the vast majority of cases, tutors work with workplace supervisors well and cooperatively. However, in a few instances, employers are not sufficiently aware of their employees' programmes and have too little involvement.
- Staff plan and carry out assessments effectively and thoroughly. Apprentices are prepared well and demonstrate their skills and knowledge through a wide variety of assessment methods, including voice recordings. Tutors provide very detailed and helpful oral feedback. However, a small minority of written feedback is too brief and does not explain fully what apprentices need to do to improve.
- The majority of tutors and apprentices use an electronic evidence portfolio well to record learning and progress over time. As a result, they have an accurate and shared understanding of what has been completed and what remains to be done. In a few cases, agreed actions and targets are not sufficiently detailed.
- Tutors' ongoing assessment of learning in a minority of sessions is insufficient. On occasions, learners complete activities and worksheets but tutors do not evaluate how well learners have performed or identify the aspects where further learning is needed. A minority of tutors' questioning techniques are not sufficiently probing to challenge learners and assess their abilities fully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices take pride in their work and enjoy the challenge of their roles. Jobs are matched well to their career aspirations and abilities, and apprentices gain a broad understanding of and technical skills in areas such as stock rotation and customer service. This prepares them effectively to work in their chosen sectors.
- Apprentices develop very good employability skills. They are punctual and attend well. They contribute enthusiastically to team activities, use their initiative and complete tasks without supervision from an early stage in their programmes.
- Apprentices develop good personal and social skills, such as increased confidence when

dealing with customers face-to-face and by telephone. They develop maturity and a greater awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others, which helps to improve their personal lives.

- The vast majority of apprentices have a good understanding of British values. Through topical discussions with staff on local and national elections, apprentices developed their understanding of democracy and their rights and responsibilities as British citizens. Apprentices behave respectfully to staff, work colleagues and peers.
- Apprentices feel safe at work and adhere to health and safety guidance closely. Most have a good understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation and how to report a concern. Staff provide good guidance on how to stay safe online, with specific strategies to employ when, for example, using social media or online banking. Apprentices are confident about how to report bullying, harassment or personal safety concerns.
- Where apprentices already hold qualifications in English and mathematics at the required level, they do not have the opportunity to develop these skills further to enhance their career progression.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The vast majority of current apprentices are making good progress and are on target to complete their qualifications on time. Managers monitor the progress of apprentices rigorously and take timely and effective action to support those who are at risk of falling behind.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and take on challenging tasks and additional areas of responsibility at an early stage of their learning, often without close supervision. For example, apprentices who work in electrical distribution warehouses are able to manage the reception desk in the company's shop single-handedly. Employers value highly the skills that apprentices gain and the benefits they bring to their businesses.
- The overall achievement rate of apprentices has increased steadily over the last three years and, in 2015/16, was high. The proportion of apprentices who completed their qualifications by their planned end date was also high and well above that seen nationally. The provider's data for the current year so far indicates a similarly high level of achievement.
- In 2015/16, achievements in most subjects, including administration, business management, retailing and wholesaling and warehousing and distribution, were very high. Achievements were lower for the small number of apprentices in hospitality and catering and marketing and sales, although well above those seen nationally. In the current year, achievements in these programmes have increased.
- While intermediate- and advanced-level apprentices achieve at similarly high levels, achievements for the very small number of higher-level apprentices were low in 2015/16. Managers' actions to raise achievement rates for these apprentices have been successful.
- Male and female apprentices, and those from different ethnic backgrounds, achieve their qualifications at similarly high rates. Achievement by the small number of apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also high and slightly above that of their peers.

- Learners' achievement of functional skills awards in English, mathematics and ICT has increased and, in the current year, around three quarters have been successful. While achievements at level 1 are very high, level 2 achievements in mathematics and reading are low. Staff endeavour to ensure that learners are entered for their functional skills assessments only when they are ready, resulting in the large majority of learners passing at their first attempt.
- Progression to employment or further training for those leaving the traineeship programme is high, at over three quarters. However, too many learners do not complete their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics before leaving their programme to enter employment or further training.
- Too few apprentices progress on to higher-level programmes upon completion of their studies. However, most apprentices remain in employment and a few gain promotion or salary increases.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59216
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,083
Principal/CEO	Dianne Wainwright
Telephone number	0114 263 5601
Website	www.thesourceacademy.co.uk

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+
	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	215	362	29	251	1	48		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16–19		19+		Total			
	7		2		9			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

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 and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires 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

Pat Hornsby, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Townsley	Ofsted Inspector
Howard Browes	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Blowman	Ofsted Inspector
Jonny Wright	Ofsted Inspector
Derrick Baughan	Her Majesty's Inspector

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