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Mr Mark Currie  
Managing Director  
Mantra Learning Limited  
Greengate  
Middleton  
M24 1RU

Dear Mr Currie

### **Short inspection of Mantra Learning Limited**

Following the short inspection on 7–9 June 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 March 2014.

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

You are very determined to ensure that the provision that your staff develop and offer improves the future employment prospects of your apprentices and learners. You and your staff have ensured that most adult learners and the large majority of apprentices continue to achieve well. Your managers have been successful in maintaining the strengths identified at your previous inspection and have made good progress in improving most of the weaknesses. You and your team have good capacity to make further improvements and are resolute to do so.

Adult learners, most of whom are unemployed, continue to receive good-quality education and training and improve their likelihood of finding employment or moving to other courses. Most apprentices find permanent employment or gain more responsibility at work. You have recognised that, in 2015/16, too many trainees did not complete their qualifications, although many progressed to apprenticeships, further training or jobs. Having reviewed fully your traineeship programme, your managers have developed and implemented a programme that trainees enjoy and benefit from.

In your most recent self-assessment, your managers have identified accurately most areas for improvements. However, they have not paid sufficient attention to ensuring more-rapid improvement. For example, not all teaching and training staff expect high standards of written work from apprentices and learners. The standard of engineering drawings produced by too many apprentices on motor vehicle courses is not good enough.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

You and your staff have ensured that policies and procedures to keep apprentices and learners safe, including from the risks associated with holding illegal extreme views or taking radical actions, are fit for purpose. Managers with the responsibility for the oversight of safeguarding, increase staff's, apprentices', learners' and trainees' awareness of issues such as counter-terrorism and female genital mutilation through regular training, team meetings and the company's monthly information sheet 'Update'.

The staff with teaching and training responsibilities have undergone Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. They promote good practices in health and safety. For example, all staff, apprentices, learners and trainees wear high-visibility vests when on site. They wear appropriate personal protective equipment in workshops and work areas. Apprentices feel protected and safe at the centre.

Most learners and apprentices understand about safe and appropriate use of the internet and social media. However, a small minority of training staff do not review and develop apprentices' and learners' understanding of extremism and radicalisation well enough. This is because they are not sufficiently confident or secure in their own understanding about these issues.

## **Inspection findings**

- Your managers monitor apprentices' and learners' progress well. They identify quickly any who are making slow progress and take effective actions to get them back on track, such as arranging additional visits or telephone conversations. As a result, the large majority of apprentices complete their courses within their planned, expected time. In 2015/16, although all groups of apprentices achieved well, the proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18 and 24 and older who completed their courses was lower than the apprentices aged 19 to 23. A high proportion of adult learners, who are mostly on short courses, completed their courses.
- Managers discuss their evaluation of the quality of lessons, off-the-job coaching and apprentices' and learners' progress reviews in monthly meetings to identify common issues and plan for improvements, such as organising staff training. The large majority of managers identify accurately most of the strengths and areas for improvements in teaching and assessment practices. These managers support training advisers and tutors effectively to improve. However, a few managers in their evaluations do not pay sufficient attention to learners' and apprentices' learning and the quality of their written work. Consequently, they do not identify training advisers' and tutors' weak practices and are not able to put effective measures in place to improve their teaching, learning and assessment methods.
- Following the full review of traineeship provision offered in 2015/16, managers have successfully developed and implemented a well-structured provision to improve outcomes for trainees. Trainees now benefit from effective lessons in improving their readiness for jobs, such as lessons in oral and written communications and the use of mathematics at work. They attend lessons to learn

about their chosen career options, such as working in warehouses, garages and offices. They learn about managing their finances and the risks of using illegal drugs. Staff regularly review trainees' progress, including when they are ready to move to work placements. They support and motivate well the trainees who require additional support to develop the skills that employers seek, for example by discussing with them the importance of wearing suitable clothes for work.

- Most training advisers and tutors ensure that apprentices and learners improve their understanding of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for those with different faiths and beliefs. They make these values meaningful so that learners and apprentices can apply them in their life and work. For example, they link the 'the rule of law' to motor vehicles requiring to have a ministry of transport test certificate. Apprentices, learners and trainees are made aware of their responsibilities and the need for tolerance and respect of others, which is reflected in their high standard of behaviour, both in the centre and in the workplace. However, a very small number of training advisers and tutors do not help apprentices and learners to develop their understanding of British values, because they are not confident. Consequently, their discussions with apprentices and learners are superficial. Too often, they do not record accurately apprentices' and learners' understanding of British values in progress review forms.
- Trainees develop further their personal, social and work-related skills through a good range of group activities and meaningful discussions, which prepare them well for the workplace. They develop technical skills, such as changing light bulbs on cars and checking the tightness of basic fittings. Trainees are encouraged to gain qualifications relevant to the work area that they choose, such as gaining tyre-fitting qualifications or manual handling certificates to work in warehouses. Tutors and training advisers ensure that trainees have a good understanding of their level of performance and the skills that they develop.
- Apprentices and learners benefit significantly from good resources. These include a fully equipped warehouse and a number of large goods vehicles used to train them to obtain their driving licences to work in the haulage industry.
- Training advisers coach apprentices well to understand how the theories that they learn relate to workplace practices. They are particularly successful in providing 'real-life' examples, based on their experiences, to help apprentices recognise the value of their training.
- Staff use information about apprentices' and learners' starting points well to ensure that they follow qualifications that reflect their interests and future employment plans. Most tutors use this information successfully to plan learners' activities. However, training advisers, especially on warehousing qualifications, do not routinely use apprentices' previous learning to set them clear learning targets that match their abilities and aspirations. They set them very broad learning targets to meet the minimum standards of the qualifications rather than to develop apprentices' knowledge to high standards. For example, training advisers set apprentices targets for completing national vocational qualification units without sufficient training.
- A small minority of training advisers set apprentices tasks without sufficient guidance. For example, they ask apprentices to find information about topics on

the internet with insufficient guidance about how they should assess the reliability of information on different websites. Consequently, apprentices do not develop good skills in using the internet to find credible information. In reviewing apprentices' progress, not all employers are involved in a meaningful way.

- Motor vehicle apprentices benefit from regular taught sessions. Apprentices in warehousing and customer services receive regular on- and off-the-job training and individual coaching from training advisers and employers, meeting the framework requirements. However, managers do not have a reliable arrangement to monitor and ensure that all apprentices receive their full on- and off-the-job training requirement.
- A small minority of training advisers and tutors do not place enough importance on the development of apprentices' and learners' skills in writing and keeping their written work well organised and professional. They do not check apprentices' and learners' work thoroughly to ensure that they do not repeat spelling mistakes. As a result, their apprentices and learners do not produce a high standard of written work. A few training advisers encourage apprentices to complete their qualifications mostly by audio recording as evidence of the skills that they develop. Consequently, their apprentices do not improve their writing skills well enough, hampering their progress in their places of employment.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- all managers have the skills to evaluate and improve the impact of teaching, training and assessment practices, so that training advisers and tutors develop the necessary skills to extend apprentices' and learners' knowledge beyond that required by the qualifications
- all training advisers and tutors are skilful in extending apprentices', learners' and trainees' knowledge of the values that prepare them better for life in modern Britain and guard them against the risks of radicalisation
- training advisers set apprentices clear learning targets that reflect their abilities and potential, review their progress in meaningful discussions with employers and record this accurately, so that apprentices have a precise understanding of their progress and development
- training advisers and tutors ensure that apprentices and learners have the skills to produce a high standard of written work and keep their work well organised
- managers ensure that all apprentices receive their on- and off-the-job training entitlements.

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

Yours sincerely

Shahram Safavi  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you assisted the inspection team as nominee. We met with your managers and a number of training advisers and tutors. We visited employers and observed sessions to collect information about the quality of teaching, training, learning and assessments that you offer. We spoke to apprentices, learners and trainees to collect their views. We reviewed a number of your important documents, including your self-assessment report.