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Mrs Dianne Brocklehurst  
General Manager  
Derby Skillbuild  
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Dear Mrs Brocklehurst

### **Short inspection of Derby Skillbuild**

Following the short inspection on 29 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 good in March 2015.

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

Leaders and managers have ensured that learners continue to receive good-quality education and training. You and your colleagues expend considerable effort to ensure that learners are supported and cared for well. Many learners have significant personal problems, which are potentially barriers to achievement. Tutors effectively address these needs, through careful planning and review, so all learners participate in an effective personalised learning programme.

Learner achievement is good. The proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 who achieve their main qualification is higher than at similar providers. The large majority of learners achieve within the planned timescale. No differences exist between the performance of different groups of learners. A high proportion of learners move to further training or employment upon leaving the study programme. Good partnership working with the local Connexions service has helped to minimise significantly the risk of learners becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training).

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have improved the quality and relevance of the learning experience. Actions to solve weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been successful. You have made good progress in enhancing the range and quality of the training offer. Managers have successfully introduced a land-based studies programme. This effectively exploits the training centre and community-based facilities to give learners a broad experience of the available occupational opportunities. Learners now attend a vocational studies

course that effectively helps them make more informed career choices. However, further work is needed so all elements of the 16 to 18 study programme are fully available to all learners.

Investment in building maintenance and security has enhanced the quality of the environment experienced by learners. External sponsorship has provided the establishment of a common room with food preparation facilities, which is well used by learners. As you recognise, the inadequate temperature and ventilation control in the training centre classrooms, identified at the previous inspection, are yet to be rectified.

Work with external partners is extensive and effectively promotes the opportunities available to learners who attend Derby Skillbuild. In addition, staff have used their expertise to enrich the curriculum of local providers. For example, through delivering health and safety, media studies and land-based courses for Year 11 school students. Partnership working has helped provide a good range of enrichment activities that effectively support learners' personal and social development. Tutors prepare learners well before they undertake activities so that they fully gain from their experience.

The board of trustees provides relevant challenge to test the effectiveness of management decision-making. Trustees appropriately monitor and evaluate staff and learners' performance. They identify areas for development and set measureable improvement actions that they systematically review. Trustees have used their professional experience well to support the development of the provision. They pay close attention to learners' progress. The board meets every three months and trustees receive up-to-date records of each learner's progress and achievement.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

You have successfully maintained the effective safeguarding arrangements identified at the previous inspection. Managers appropriately update safeguarding procedures to ensure that they are fit for purpose and safeguard learners. They suitably check all staff prior to them starting work with learners. You have given a high priority to staff attendance at a good range of safeguarding training. Regular staff updates and refresher training ensure that they have a sound understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty.

The designated safeguarding officer works well with external agencies to alert staff and learners to potential risks within the local and wider community. This ensures that learners are safe and feel protected. Tutors share information on learners to identify potential risks at an early stage. Managers quickly respond to any concerns raised and appropriately record incidents to allow for the identification of patterns and trends. They make good use of external organisations to refer learners to the most appropriate specialist help. Learners exhibit an appropriate understanding of safeguarding and staying safe, including when using the internet and social media. Learners understand whom to go to if they have any concerns.

## Inspection findings

- Managers very effectively use the closely aligned strategic and operational plan to drive improvements that benefit all learners. They also monitor and review the quality improvement plan well so they complete actions by the agreed deadline. Staff participate in regular consultation events and have a sound appreciation of their contribution to achieving the short- and long-term objectives. Managers use feedback from governance meetings very proficiently so all staff have a good understanding of relevant strategic and operational priorities. Performance management of both staff and learners is effective in raising expectations and aspirations.
- Subcontractor monitoring arrangements are robust and thorough. Complementary procedures used by Derby Skillbuild and the subcontractor support consistency in professional practice. Monthly learner progress reporting and reviews ensure that managers are able to act quickly where individual learners are not achieving their full potential. Since the previous inspection, managers have introduced a subcontractor agreement to define the expected standards of performance and reporting arrangements. Sufficiently detailed subcontractor responsibilities have yet to be included in the agreement to aid accountability. The agreement does not include appropriately challenging learner achievement targets.
- Following the previous inspection, managers have improved the self-assessment process so judgements make good use of stakeholders' views to inform the report. In addition, the formulation of the report's evaluative assessment benefits from the use of a wide range of valid and reliable evidence. The associated report is self-critical and accurately identifies the areas for improvement identified during this inspection.
- For current learners, entry-level English and mathematics pass rates are high and reflect a historical trend of success. However, the rates for level 1 and level 2 mathematics and level 1 English require improvement. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of improvement initiatives to raise standards at these levels.
- Your study programme ensures that learners' vocational and functional skills and personal and social development improve to a good standard. This opens up a wide range of further opportunities for learners that, in many cases, are life-changing. Learners receive good information, advice and guidance to help them plan their next steps on leaving Derby Skillbuild.
- Tutors are adept at using the assessment of learners' starting points to plan individual programmes for learners that include appropriately challenging activities. Once learners start their programme, tutors adjust the programme well, depending on learners' needs. Tutors add additional information to learners' records and effectively share these with colleagues at weekly meetings so all aspects of a learner's development are met. For example, tutors set a construction learner targets to achieve occupationally specific units, additional employment skills units as well as learning to enhance his awareness of British values.
- Learners make good progress. They have access to their own qualification unit

progress tracker that helps them gain a good understanding of their completed achievements. The internal quality assessor maintains a detailed electronic record of the planned and actual achievements of each learner. Managers use this to make a very effective evaluation of each learner's achievement. Where learners are not making the planned progress, the appropriate tutor is informed and speedy remedial action implemented.

- Learners receive useful verbal and written feedback so they are clear what actions they need to undertake to improve. The functional skills tutor marks errors in written work effectively and discusses with learners strategies to avoid these mistakes in the future. Learners find that the written and verbal feedback they receive motivates them to achieve further.
- Tutors use individual learning plans well to promote learners' success. They regularly review targets and anticipated completion dates to inspire learners to progress quickly. The functional skills tutor carefully ensures that learning activities match each learner's needs and interests. For example, tutors introduce learners in land-based to measuring, as it relates to the amount of grass seed needed for a stated surface area. Learners in construction explore how they can apply the concept of area to the volume of paint needed to complete a decorative task.
- Since the previous inspection, you have shortened the length of time that learners spend in taught sessions. This, along with a more targeted mix of practical and theory sessions, has promoted better engagement of learners in planned learning tasks.
- Tutors provide sensitive support for learners to meet their individual needs. Tutors know their learners well. The weekly staff meetings ensure that staff quickly address the identified personal problems of learners. Tutors routinely use suitably personalised learning resources so that all learners can engage fully in learning activities.
- Learners gain a good awareness of equality as it applies to them and others. Tutors make good use of a wide range of relevant learning resources and teaching strategies to promote learners' understanding of related topics. Learners significantly enhance their appreciation of diversity through engagement in classroom and progress review activities.
- The range and quantity of work experience available to learners requires further development. In the most recent year, around half of learners have participated in work-related activities. Managers have not completed the recruitment of a staff member with responsibility for improving the use of employer links. Despite the lack of sufficient work experience placements, tutors prepare many learners well for work through imaginative activities such as landscaping projects with a local nursery school's garden. A learner with a history of violence and aggression is now in sustainable employment with a national distribution company and has shed all his previous negative attitudes. Another learner with autism, and who had received no schooling since the age of 11, is now completing his final construction unit and intends to continue his training to gain a level 2 qualification.
- The training centre facilities do not allow you to provide learners with access to

GCSE English and mathematic examinations. Use of a local college has in part addressed this shortfall. However, as you have identified, the well-developed plans to offer GCSE study and examinations using your subcontractor's premises need to be urgently progressed.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the subcontractor agreement defines the expected standards of performance and reporting arrangements in relevant detail and includes appropriately challenging learner achievement targets
- the pass rates at level 1 and 2 mathematics and level 1 English significantly improve so all learners achieve to their full potential
- learners participate in work experience or work-related activity to meet their individual needs and aspirations
- learners have appropriate access to GCSE English and mathematic examinations.

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

Yours sincerely

Nigel Bragg  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, you assisted us as nominee. We met with managers, tutors and used individual interview, and online questionnaires, to gather the views of learners. These views are reflected within this letter. We reviewed learners' assessed work and progress reviews. We evaluated the effectiveness of key documents, including those relating to strategic planning, governance, lesson planning, quality assurance, performance monitoring and safeguarding. Inspectors took account of your organisation's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report.