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Ms Julie Piergianni
John Laing Training Ltd
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Dear Ms Piergianni

Short inspection of John Laing Training Ltd

Following the short inspection on 28–29 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 to be good in June 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

The company director, leaders and managers have continued to ensure that training is of good quality for the majority of apprentices. Since the previous inspection, the company director, along with leaders and managers, has taken robust actions to improve the quality of the provision. As a result, the management team has put in place effective processes to ensure high-quality staff performance. You and your management team have also ceased to run a minority of curriculum subjects that were underperforming.

Since the recent restructure, the company director and leaders have set a strong and clear strategic direction by utilising a range of external information regarding skills shortages from the local enterprise partnership and business advisory groups. Consequently, the qualifications you offer meet well the skills priorities in the south-east, London and Hertfordshire. These include recruitment, business administration and management, and property lettings apprenticeships programmes at intermediate, advanced and higher level.

You and your management team work very effectively with employers to ensure that the apprenticeships programmes are well coordinated. The vast majority of employers value the support you and your team provide with the recruitment and selection of apprentices, and the way in which your team reviews, in collaboration with employers, the added benefits of apprentices' contributions. A high proportion of apprentices gain enhanced roles and promotions at work. However, you accept that a few employers do not provide some apprentices with their protected time for study at work.

Accountability is strong. Leaders effectively hold trainers to account to ensure that current apprentices make good progress. Your management team makes use of comprehensive online information to set targets for trainers to ensure that they take swift action to support apprentices who fall behind with their work. As a result, your team has reduced significantly the number of apprentices who were previously making slow progress. However, you acknowledge that there are still a small proportion of apprentices who are behind with their work or who have left their apprenticeship due to the lack of continuity of support during the restructure.

The company director and newly appointed quality managers have put in place quality assurance processes to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is of a high standard, to observe trainers' performance regularly, and to provide more extensive training and development for your staff. However, you recognise that these processes require further development to enable you to take swift action to ensure that trainers improve their performance. For example, the actions you set for trainers are not suitably revisited to ensure that trainers have addressed them sufficiently. You also acknowledge that the quality of targets that trainers set for apprentices requires further development because the targets focus too heavily on units and assessments and not enough on apprentices' skills development.

Along with the company director, managers and trainers, you have ensured that apprentices' on-the-job training is of high quality. The vast majority of apprentices make good progress in developing occupational standards of work as a result of effective coaching and mentoring from employers and trainers. For example, higher-level management apprentices benefit from well-coordinated on- and off-the-job training through a series of joint workshops developed by trainers and employers. As a result, the quality of apprentices' practical work and theoretical competence is of a high standard. Trainers who work with advanced recruitment apprentices effectively provide well-planned approaches such as role play, video discussions and coaching to enable apprentices to understand networking skills in the sector, such as positive body language and interpersonal skills. Apprentices make good progress in developing personal and work-related skills.

You have recently appointed new staff with the responsibility for improving apprentices' English and mathematics skills. Your staff assess apprentices' starting points effectively using a broad range of assessments to ensure that apprentices follow the right programmes at the right level. You and your management team have invested in online resources for apprentices enrolled on English and mathematics functional skills qualifications, which apprentices value highly. Your trainers now use effective approaches to enhance apprentices' English and mathematics skills in order to complete their qualifications. Your in-year data indicates that a high proportion of apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications at their first attempt compared with the previous year. However, you recognise that trainers do not enhance these skills for apprentices exempt from taking functional skills qualifications sufficiently.

Safeguarding is effective.

The company director, leaders and managers have ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and managers ensure that their commitment to the safety and well-being of all apprentices follows statutory requirements. Leaders responsible for recruitment make necessary checks on staff suitability, and review their records regularly.

Designated safeguarding staff are fully trained and attend training updates regularly. The safeguarding team ensures that all referrals, including to external agencies, are completed to full resolution. Leaders and designated safeguarding staff work closely with 'Prevent' duty coordinators and have put in place a comprehensive action plan and risk assessment.

The management team has high expectations of its trainers and employers to ensure that they take effective action to safeguard apprentices. For example, apprentices working for estate agents carry a tracking device with a panic button to ensure that they feel safe. Leaders ensure that employers receive regular guidance, such as lone working policies, to ensure that they are well informed of safeguarding procedures.

Most apprentices have a good understanding of working and living in modern Britain. For example, apprentices discuss the impact of far right extremism in local areas and how to manage such topics when dealing with customers. Most apprentices recall their online training regarding the risks of radicalisation and effective online safety, and relate topics confidently to their personal lives and at work.

Apprentices say that they feel safe and are aware of whom to contact should they have any concerns.

Inspection findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across the majority of apprenticeships training. This is as a result of well-planned and coordinated programmes.
- Senior leaders manage robustly the performance of their staff. Leaders have recently put in place rigorous performance management processes to enable them to hold staff to account effectively and tackle underperformance swiftly.
- Managers monitor effectively trainers' caseloads and hold weekly meetings with trainers to ensure that apprentices receive the support they require. They set actions that ensure that apprentices who may be at risk of falling behind make good progress. However, they do not ensure that the targets that trainers set for apprentices are sufficiently challenging to enable them to excel in their studies. The targets they set focus too much on unit and assessment deadlines and do not focus sufficiently on the development of skills.
- Most current apprentices make good progress in their subjects. Most trainers and

employers work closely to ensure that apprentices' on- and off-the-job training is of a high standard. However, with a minority of employers, a few apprentices make slow progress because of the lack of oversight and continuity in their assessment visits and reviews. Managers have recently taken action to resolve this, but a small proportion of apprentices have left their programmes early or exceeded the time allocated to them to complete.

- Most apprentices' practical work is of a high standard and a high proportion of apprentices have enhanced responsibilities in the workplace because their employers value the contributions they make. For example, a recruitment apprentice has growth targets for the company similar to well-established employees. An advanced-level business administration apprentice is responsible for the development and implementation of the company's new appraisal system.
- The majority of trainers deploy well-planned approaches to enhance apprentices' understanding of theoretical concepts, and a majority of apprentices demonstrate their understanding effectively. For example, trainers use well-developed questioning to ensure that apprentices following advanced property lettings demonstrate their understanding of legislation in relation to rental properties during professional discussions. However, a minority of trainers do not use questioning effectively to extend and challenge apprentices' understanding. In these cases, the questions are too easy.
- Most staff collect comprehensive information on apprentices' starting points and most trainers use this information to plan learning effectively. Almost all apprentices now receive helpful information to inform them of their progress and their next steps. For example, apprentices who progress from business administration intermediate to advanced are able to articulate their long-term career aspirations and how the apprenticeship programme will enable them to reach them. An apprentice on an advanced property sales programme, with an aspiration to manage their own estate agency, is set challenging work to consider the impact of activities on profits and business plans to enable them to understand what to consider when managing a business.
- Trainers address apprentices' written English and promote the importance of correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in business emails and documents read by the public. However, most trainers do not promote the importance of numeracy related to job roles, or do enough to improve apprentices' mathematics skills in their main subjects. Consequently, the majority of apprentices who do not take qualifications do not value the importance of these skills.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they put in place effective processes to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good or better by ensuring that staff responsible for the observation process follow up the action points from observations
- staffing is planned effectively to ensure continuity for assessment visits and

apprentice reviews

- all employers provide apprentices with their protected off-the-job training
- trainers set challenging targets for apprentices to enable them to accelerate their progress
- trainers routinely improve apprentices' mathematics skills in their subjects, provide regular feedback and promote the importance of good numeracy skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Harpreet Nagra
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted inspectors, assisted by the operations and quality manager, carried out the inspection. Inspectors met with the company director, managers and employers. They observed assessment visits, lessons and reviewed key documents, including those related to management, quality improvement, apprentices' work, online monitoring systems and safeguarding.