

Norfolk Training Services Limited

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first re-inspection monitoring visit following publication of the inspection report on 15 May 2017 which found the provider to be inadequate for: overall effectiveness; leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; outcomes for learners and 16 to 19 study programmes. Personal development, behaviour and welfare and the provider's adult learning and apprenticeships provision were judged as requiring improvement.

Themes

What actions have been taken to ensure that company board members and managers determine clear and prioritised actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rapidly?

Since the inspection of the provider in February 2017, leaders have established a quality improvement plan (QIP) that features a comprehensive range of actions to rectify all the weaknesses identified at inspection. Leaders demonstrate a good level of self-critical analysis and candour in seeking to improve the quality of provision. The large majority of planned actions that focus on improving teaching, learning and assessment are appropriate and fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that most actions are specific and their impact is measured effectively. Quality improvement meetings document clearly the restorative actions that leaders and managers are taking to raise standards and measure their subsequent impact. However, a few actions that have taken place do not have any recorded impact and it is not clear if any improvement has been made. A minority of actions chronicled in the QIP are yet to be established, and in these instances leaders' planning to improve teaching, learning and assessment has been too slow. Leaders do not identify sufficiently the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment to monitor and help ensure that specific aspects of tutors' and assessors' practice improve. Leaders have plans in place to ensure that all staff contribute fully to the self-assessment and quality improvement processes by the end of July.

Priorities for improvement

- Identify all the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment and ensure that managers take actions that address weaknesses in tutors' and assessors' practice.
- Ensure that leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of all actions taken to improve teaching, learning and assessment.
- Urgently put in place all outstanding planned actions designed to improve the quality of provision.

What actions have been taken to ensure that all managers and staff are held accountable for improving learners' and apprentices' outcomes and that actions arising from observations of lessons are specific and detailed, and lead to improvement?

Since the recent inspection, leaders and managers have intensified their actions to support and challenge tutors and assessors whose practice is judged to not meet expectations. As a result, the large majority of these staff have either improved their teaching, learning and assessment to leaders' required standards or have left the company. Managers continue to provide further intensive support and challenge to a minority of staff. The manager for quality assurance now has lead responsibility for ensuring that the observation process is robust. However, too many observations of teaching, learning and assessment focus on the actions of staff and their adherence to processes rather than the progress that apprentices and learners make and why. Too many observations include contradictory judgements. A minority of observations record standard teaching and assessment practice as strengths. Consequently, leaders and managers do not have a robust understanding of the quality of their tutors' and assessors' practice. Weaknesses identified at observation do not effectively inform any subsequent re-observations of practice or staff training. While managers give tutors and assessors responsibility to rectify any identified weaknesses in their practice, they do not monitor the achievement of these actions effectively.

The QIP and quality improvement meetings identify named, accountable managers for the outcomes of different groups of learners and apprentices. These managers are fully aware of their responsibilities. However, leaders acknowledge that more emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that all tutors and assessors understand their accountability for their learners' and apprentices' outcomes. They have set plans in place to further reinforce accountability at forthcoming staff training and events aimed at promoting staff involvement in the provider's self-assessment process.

Priorities for improvement

- Urgently ensure that observations of teaching, learning and assessment lead to improvement by:
 - focusing on the impact of tutors' and assessors' practice on the learning and outcomes of apprentices and learners
 - ensuring that records of observations are evaluative, avoid contradictory judgements and specifically identify clear strengths and weaknesses
 - ensuring that resulting action plans inform subsequent re-observations, culminating in all identified weaknesses being monitored effectively by managers to full resolution
 - ensuring that all planned staff training is informed by the findings from observations.

What actions have been taken to reinforce the need for staff at all levels to take personal responsibility for health and safety practices in workshops?

The QIP includes planned actions to ensure that further safety training for staff and quality assurance of health and safety takes place throughout the year. However, pre-placement health and safety risk assessments of apprentices lack sufficient rigour in both the assessment of workplace practice and adherence to safety procedures. There is an absence of any planned actions to support small employers to develop their safety processes and procedures and ensure that their apprentices are safe. Managers' monitoring of health and safety risk assessments and tracking that all employers have up-to-date employers' liability insurance require improvement.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that thorough pre-placement health and safety risk assessments of apprentices are conducted.
- Support all employers to make sure that their safety processes and procedures ensure that their apprentices are safe.
- Ensure that managers' monitoring of health and safety risk assessments of all apprentices are comprehensive and ensure that all apprentices are safe.

What actions have been taken to ensure that all staff promote the importance of British values to apprentices and learners and ensure that they have a good understanding of the dangers of extremism?

Since the previous inspection, leaders have refined the role of the part-time employed equality and diversity officer and increased the specific focus on leading the promotion of British values to apprentices and learners. The postholder has spent much time upskilling staff to enable them to ensure that their learners and apprentices have a good understanding of British values and the perils of extremism. Since the inspection, the postholder has conducted around 15 group workshops with learners and apprentices that seek to raise their awareness of the relevance of these issues to their work and everyday lives. Apprentices spoken with at the time of inspection were able to recall watching a video on the importance of British values, and most articulated a sound understanding of the dangers of radicalisation.

Priorities for improvement

- Continue to train staff so that they promote British values effectively with learners and apprentices and ensure that they have a good understanding of the rule of law, tolerance, importance of democracy and the dangers of extremism.

What actions have been taken to improve teaching, learning and assessment?

Since the recent inspection, leaders have appointed a new manager with responsibility for improving teaching, learning and assessment. The QIP places a clear priority on setting actions to ensure that tutors and assessors are trained to deploy effective techniques and approaches that challenge apprentices and learners to excel. The recently appointed manager has led a series of training events on improving the planning of teaching and learning involving all tutors. However, leaders acknowledge in the QIP that there has been little demonstrable impact to date of this training in raising the quality of tutors' and assessors' practice. Leaders have begun to work with the local authority and a logistics and automotive training provider to help them secure sustainable improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable across the subjects and too much is not good enough. Apprentices studying furniture manufacture and vehicle body building and repair develop good practical skills that bolster their contribution to their employers' businesses and add value in their workplaces. Apprentices following motor vehicle studies value their time with the provider and benefit from good technical skills assessment that is informed effectively by their employers. However, too many staff do not challenge apprentices to consolidate their understanding of how relevant theory underpins their practical skills development. Too much of apprentices' written work lacks sufficient demonstration that they grasp the importance of such theory. Too many apprentices are prevented from attending their off-the-job training and kept at work by their employers during busy business periods; as a result, these apprentices make slow progress. Leaders and managers do not ensure that all apprentices receive regular reviews of their progress. Too many reviews focus solely on achieving the minimum requirements of the qualifications; too often, staff fail to set challenging targets that motivate and enable apprentices to accelerate their knowledge and skills. Too many reviews of progress do not include sufficient promotion of health and safety and equality and diversity.

Priorities for improvement

- Urgently ensure that tutors and assessors are upskilled to deploy effective techniques and approaches that challenge apprentices and learners to excel.
- Ensure that tutors and assessors challenge their apprentices and learners to understand fully how theory links to their vocational skills development and demonstrate this in their written work.
- Secure the support of all employers to enable all apprentices to attend their off-the-job training at the agreed dates and times.
- Make sure that all apprentices benefit from regular reviews of progress and that staff set demanding targets that challenge apprentices to extend their knowledge and skills.

What actions have been taken to secure improvements in the management of English and mathematics to ensure that the teaching of these subjects is of high quality?

Since the recent inspection, leaders have appointed a new manager with responsibility for improving teaching, learning and assessment; this includes responsibility for improving the teaching, learning and assessment of English and mathematics. The manager line manages all tutors and, in turn, reports directly and regularly to the company board. Leaders prioritise the need to improve English and mathematics in their QIP; however, leaders state in the QIP that there has been 'early progress so little demonstrable impact to date'. They record low in-year achievement rates and acknowledge that there is much to improve to ensure that the teaching of English and mathematics is of high quality.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that there is sufficient tuition and support for apprentices and learners who fail their English and mathematics functional skills tests to enable them to improve their skills and achieve. As a consequence, too many apprentices and learners do not make good progress. A minority of apprentices do not receive an assessment of their English and mathematics skills to ensure that tutors plan and execute teaching, learning and assessment that meets their needs. A few apprentices who have been following their apprenticeship programmes for a considerable length of time have yet to commence their English and mathematics courses; this increases the likelihood of their failing to complete their programmes successfully within the agreed, planned timescales.

Priorities for improvement

- Urgently provide apprentices and learners with a good level of tuition and support to enable them to improve their English and mathematics skills and achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure that all apprentices' English and mathematics skills are assessed accurately and inform fully the teaching and assessment they receive.
- Ensure that all apprentices who need to improve their English and mathematics skills are provided with timely opportunities to study these essential skills.

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