

# Woodspeen Training Limited

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates** 21–24 August 2017

Overall effectiveness Requires improvement							
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement				
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement				
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement						
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement						
Overall effectiveness at previous inspe	ction		Good				

# **Summary of key findings**

#### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Directors of the parent company, Progility PLC, have been slow to improve the quality of provision and respond to the decline in learners' achievements.
- Managers do not use data effectively to identify and evaluate trends in performance or to address concerns about the quality of provision and learners' outcomes.
- Performance management, including that of the subcontractor, is not effective in dealing with instances of poor performance.
- A minority of trainer assessors do not plan learning activities that enable learners to make the progress of which they are capable.

#### The provider has the following strengths

- The managing director has a well-considered strategic plan for the development of the provider and communicates this effectively to staff, learners and partners.
- Leaders have responded very well to the training needs of employers in the supply chain for the automotive and aerospace industries.
- Staff promote British values and diversity well; learners treat each other and staff with tolerance, and learners from different backgrounds and beliefs respect the views and opinions of their peers.

- Since Woodspeen Training started to close down its provision in the south of England, the proportion of apprentices who achieve has declined and is too low.
- Too many learners make slow progress in improving their English skills.
- A significant minority of manufacturing technologies apprentices make slow progress towards achieving their goals and, in particular, their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Too often, trainer assessors do not do enough to raise learners' awareness about the dangers and impact of radicalisation and extremism in modern society.
- Staff have extensive and relevant industrial experience and professional contacts that they use effectively to deliver training that reflects up-to-date industry practice.
- Achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes delivered in Yorkshire are high.
- As a result of the good occupational and workrelated skills they gain, a very high proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programmes remain in employment.



# **Full report**

#### Information about the provider

- At the time of the previous inspection in October 2014, Woodspeen Training delivered apprenticeships and adult learning programmes in Yorkshire and the south of England. In January 2015, Progility PLC acquired Woodspeen Training. In January 2016, Progility PLC appointed the current managing director who has carried out a review of the structure of the provider, the range of programmes provided, the quality of delivery and outcomes for learners.
- The managing director presented his findings to the board of Progility PLC in March 2016. As a result, a separate brand, ILX Skills, was established within Woodspeen Training to provide a range of apprenticeships for manufacturing businesses, many operating in the automotive and aerospace supply chain. Woodspeen Training has continued to deliver its core range of apprenticeship and adult learning provision in Yorkshire. Following the decision to cease operations in the south of England, from June 2016, no further apprentices were recruited in this region. At the time of the inspection, a small number of apprentices in the south were completing their programmes.

## What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Directors of the parent company, Progility PLC, must ensure that they receive sufficient information about the quality of provision and learners' outcomes so that they can hold leaders to account for making improvements.
- Leaders should improve the range, accuracy and timeliness of the data they produce and analyse it so that they can make accurate and timely evaluations about the quality of provision and outcomes achieved by different groups of learners; they should take swift action to make necessary improvements.
- Leaders and managers should strengthen performance management arrangements, including arrangements for managing the performance of the subcontractor, so that instances of underperformance and non-compliance are identified and dealt with promptly.
- Through the rigorous application of quality improvement and staff training, managers should ensure that trainer assessors have the skills and confidence to plan learning activities that meet the varied needs and abilities of learners.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that the small number of apprentices who are yet to complete their programmes in the south of England are provided with high-quality teaching, assessment and support so that they can achieve.
- Leaders and managers must increase the proportion of learners who make good progress in improving their English skills, by:
  - ensuring that trainer assessors have the skills and confidence to plan learning activities and provide feedback that challenges and supports learners to improve their verbal communication skills and written work
  - providing appropriate support for learners who speak English as an additional language so that they can develop the speaking and writing skills that they require to



participate fully in learning activities and achieve their planned learning goals.

- Leaders and managers must review and improve the delivery arrangements for apprentices' programmes in manufacturing technologies so that:
  - the proportion of apprentices who remain on target and complete within the planned time increases
  - English and mathematics functional-skills delivery is planned effectively to enable apprentices to make good progress in achieving qualifications in these subjects.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that staff are provided with training and support to improve their confidence, knowledge and ability to raise learners' awareness about the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.



# **Inspection judgements**

#### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

**Requires improvement** 

- Directors of the parent company that bought Woodspeen Training shortly after the last inspection were slow to address the decline in the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications and a deterioration in the quality of the provision in the south of England. Directors took over a year to appoint a new managing director and provide a brief to improve performance.
- The new managing director has well-considered and ambitious plans for the development of the company, and communicates this strategic direction effectively to staff, learners and partner organisations. However, the implementation of these plans has yet to be fully realised, with the result that the quality of the provision is not yet good.
- The managing director has started the complex process of merging different strands of training within the single company and withdrawing from delivery in the south of England. However, the establishment of new company-wide quality improvement arrangements has yet to result in consistent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning or the achievements of learners, particularly in manufacturing technologies.
- Managers at all levels of the organisation do not use data effectively to identify trends in performance, including attainment gaps between groups of learners and the progress of current learners. Reports at senior management meetings focus too heavily on financial, staffing and resource issues and pay insufficient attention to the impact of teaching on the progress of learners.
- Until very recently, managers have not had a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. The latest self-assessment report was overgenerous in its evaluation and failed to diagnose the link between the decline in learner achievements and weaknesses in leadership and management. As a result of external support, managers now have a more realistic view of the balance between the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and the improvements that they need to make.
- The quality improvement plan to address self-assessed weaknesses, although updated frequently by operational managers, focuses too much on the implementation of processes and procedures at the expense of improving teaching and learners' progress. The current plan identifies few actions to tackle the current weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Although the managing director has improved the skills and expertise of staff through a major organisational restructure, the routine management of staff has not been effective in dealing with poor performance. As a result, managers have allowed a significant minority of poor-quality teaching and assessment to persist for too long.
- The management of the subcontractor that delivers a programme for unemployed adults, and accounts for a very small proportion of the overall provision, is weak. Managers have only recently put in place staffing resources to oversee the contract sufficiently. As a result, the majority of adult learners who participated in the first few programmes delivered did not complete their qualifications within their planned timescales. Managers do not have reliable data about the employment destinations of learners on courses run by the subcontractor.



- Managers support the professional development of their staff well. They provide staff with financial assistance and time at work to achieve their teaching qualifications and to access specific courses related to their personal development. The company's professional development programme has enabled trainers and assessors to promote British values and equality and diversity to learners with skill and confidence.
- Directors and managers have been highly effective in rebalancing the company's curriculum in response to the needs of employers working in the supply chain for the automotive and aerospace industries. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of apprentices taking manufacturing qualifications.

### The governance of the provider

■ Directors of the parent company give strong support to the managing director's strategic vision and his plans to bring the different strands of the provider's delivery together. However, they do not have a good understanding or show sufficient interest in how well learners achieve or in the quality of the teaching and assessment they receive. As a result, they do not provide the necessary challenge to senior managers to improve performance.

#### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers check thoroughly the previous employment history and qualifications of staff before they teach or assess learners. All staff receive extensive training on how to keep their learners safe, with regular updates on issues such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Staff have strong working relationships with local safeguarding agencies, including local authority 'Prevent' coordinators, which enable them to refer any learners who are at risk quickly and appropriately so that any concerns are dealt with swiftly.

# Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Requires improvement** 

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the regions where Woodspeen Training operates and in the subjects that they provide. Across much of the provision, particularly in Yorkshire, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, achievement rates are high, and learners make good progress. However, too much teaching, learning and assessment in manufacturing technologies and for the few remaining apprentices in the south of England is less effective. As a result, a significant minority of learners make slow progress.
- A minority of trainer assessors do not plan learning activities to enable all learners to make the progress of which they are capable. For example, in a few lessons they provide large amounts of information without checking sufficiently whether learners understand how to use it to make progress with their learning.
- Staff do not provide teaching and support promptly enough to enable apprentices to complete their functional skills qualifications within planned timescales in manufacturing technologies. Many apprentices on intermediate-level manufacturing and business



- improvement programmes are only now receiving their first input from trainers in mathematics and English at a time when their programmes are due to end.
- Many apprentices receive poor initial guidance about the functional skills requirements of their apprenticeships and receive insufficient assessment to determine their support needs. For example, apprentices who speak English as an additional language receive no specialist support to complete the functional English element of their programme and many of these apprentices struggle to achieve.
- A minority of trainer assessors' presentations include errors of punctuation and grammar. This provides a poor example to learners, and limits their ability to improve their own English skills. Many trainer assessors do not provide learners with sufficiently helpful feedback on how to improve their writing skills; as a result, learners continue to make the same mistakes. However, trainer assessors in adult learning and in mathematics functional skills lessons provide useful feedback on marked work that helps learners to improve.
- The quality of progress reviews is too variable, with a significant minority requiring improvement. In the best examples, reviews are planned effectively, involve workplace managers, ensure that apprentices understand their progress, and are used to set clear targets. However, in the weaker reviews employers are not involved and the records are not reflective of individual apprentices' circumstances or progress, with the same comments made for all members of a group.
- Trainer assessors take effective steps to inform employers about the progress that apprentices are making. Employers value the contributions that their apprentices make to their business as a result of the skills and knowledge that they gain through their training; they appreciate the support provide by Woodspeen staff. The majority of trainer assessors work closely with employers to help apprentices to set clear targets, plan their learning and make progress.
- In the majority of programmes in health and social care, hairdressing and barbering, information and communication technology (ICT) and business administration, which accounts for the majority of the apprentices and adult learners in Yorkshire, trainer assessors plan learning activities carefully to cater for the diverse needs of learners. On these programmes, supportive trainer assessors provide well-designed activities and resources that motivate learners who, as a result, make good progress and are prepared well for their next steps.
- Trainer assessors in barbering and in health and social care ensure that learners have many opportunities to develop their learning between sessions. This helps learners to develop strong independent learning skills and promotes rapid progress. For example, trainer assessors provide access to documentaries, films, music, news reports and articles.
- Staff have relevant and extensive industrial experience and professional contacts that help them to plan and deliver training and assessment activities that reflect up-to-date industry practice. As a result, learners are well prepared to meet the needs of their employers.
- In the majority of sessions, trainer assessors provide topical and vocationally relevant opportunities to explore issues connected with equality and diversity and life in modern British society. As a result, learners develop good skills in meeting the needs of clients from diverse social groups. For example, apprentices on health and social care



programmes discuss appropriate diets for clients from different backgrounds.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Requires improvement** 

- As a result of the poor planning of functional skills programmes and insufficient additional language support for the apprentices who need it, a significant minority of apprentices on manufacturing technologies programmes make slow progress in improving their skills in English and mathematics.
- Learners have a limited awareness of the dangers and risks of radicalisation and extremism. Most trainer assessors do not raise issues connected with extremism and radicalisation; they do not have the confidence to discuss these issues in sufficient depth or to challenge and correct learners' misconceptions.
- Leaders and managers do not collect or record sufficiently information about learning or work to which adult learners progress after they complete their programmes. They do not have sufficient information about adult learners who do not complete their programmes. As a result, they are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision in meeting adult learners' personal and professional development needs.
- Learners attend well in the majority of lessons and for individual learning and assessment activities. The cancellation of planned learning sessions in a few factories has had a detrimental effect on the progress of a few apprentices on the manufacturing technologies programme.
- Staff provide apprentices with a good range of appropriate advice and guidance. This enables apprentices to make well-informed decisions about their next steps in learning and work.
- Learners enjoy training and develop valuable skills that they apply in the workplace. The large majority gain significantly in confidence through their learning and work.
- Learners know how to keep themselves safe in learning and work. They adopt safe working practices and have a good awareness of how their work activities could affect the safety of others.
- Learners are very well behaved and treat each other and staff with tolerance. Apprentices from different backgrounds and beliefs respect the different views and opinions of their peers.

#### **Outcomes for learners**

**Requires improvement** 

- Since Woodspeen Training started to close down its provision in the south of England, the proportion of apprentices who achieve has declined and is now too low. Inappropriate recruitment that aims to meet business targets rather than apprentices' needs and the delayed delivery of functional skills have resulted in many apprentices leaving their programmes after achieving only the vocational elements of their qualification. Trainer assessors are providing good support for the very few remaining apprentices who have not yet achieved.
- As a result of cancelled or delayed delivery of essential elements of training, a significant minority of apprentices on the manufacturing technologies programme are making slow



progress towards achieving their goals. They make particularly slow progress in achieving functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics.

- Too many adult learners, particularly those taking functional skills qualifications and those on employability programmes with the subcontractor, make slow progress. The proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualification and learning goals within the planned timescale, which was already low in 2015/16, continued to decline during 2016/17.
- The proportion of adult learners who achieve functional skills qualifications in English at levels 1 and 2 is too low. The proportion declined in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- According to published data and Woodspeen Training's own data for 2016/17, a number of differences exist in the achievement rates of different groups of learners. These differences have fluctuated significantly in recent years. For example, in 2015/16 there was no difference between the achievement rates of male and female apprentices but, in 2016/17, males achieved less well than females. In 2015/16, apprentices with a learning difficulty and/or disability achieved at a higher rate than their peers but this reversed in 2016/17. Other than citing the change in learner cohorts due to the closure of the southern operation and the establishment of the ILX Skills provision, leaders are unable to provide an explanation for these differences.
- The large majority of apprentices across all levels in Yorkshire develop a good range of vocational and personal skills, make good progress and achieve well. The achievement rates of apprentices following programmes in health and social care, ICT, barbering, hairdressing, and business administration are high, and the large majority of apprentices complete within the planned time.
- A high proportion of adult learners following vocational qualifications at levels 2 and 3 achieve their qualifications.
- An improving, and now high, proportion of adult learners achieve functional skills qualifications in mathematics. However, a significant minority take longer than the planned time to achieve.
- A very high proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their programmes remain in employment, the majority with their existing employer. A significant minority achieve promotion at work and gain greater responsibility as a result of the good occupational and work-related skills that they gain.

# **Types of provision**

## **Adult learning programmes**

**Requires improvement** 

- There are currently 129 adult learners on programmes with Woodspeen Training, of whom 66 are studying qualifications at level 1 and below, with the vast majority on courses to develop their employability skills. Many of these learners are enrolled with the subcontractor. A total of 51 adult learners are on courses at level 2, with almost half taking qualifications in mathematics and English. The remainder are following vocational programmes at level 3 in customer services, hairdressing, and barbering.
- A significant minority of adult learners make slow progress, including those on courses delivered by the subcontractor. Although the proportion of adult learners who achieve is



high, too few learners achieve their qualifications in mathematics and English, customer services, and personal development within the planned time. Managers have not identified the reasons for this slow progress or put actions in place to resolve it.

- Reviews of progress of adult learners taking mathematics and English qualifications do not effectively support them to achieve their qualifications within the planned time. Targets set for learners by trainer assessors do not focus sufficiently on how learners can improve their skills; targets are often too general, such as 'attend final exams'.
- Trainer assessors' feedback on work for English qualifications too often fails to identify spelling errors, which prevents adult learners understanding precisely the errors they make and what they need to do to make improvements.
- Managers do not routinely collect and analyse information to enable them to evaluate the impact of the training they provide for adult learners. They do not identify whether courses that develop skills for employment lead to learners finding sustained employment, or whether the courses taken by learners at work meet their training, personal and professional development needs.
- The majority of trainer assessors plan learning that effectively meets the needs of individual learners. Adult learners studying courses in mathematics and English and programmes to prepare them for employment value the support they receive from their trainer assessors when they find the work difficult.
- Adult learners enjoy their training. They recognise that they gain skills that they can use at work. Those following programmes to prepare them for employment gain confidence in using ICT to search for job vacancies.
- Managers work effectively with employers and partners including Jobcentre Plus to deliver training that is relevant, meets local priorities, and improves the employability skills of adult learners. Employers value the training provided by trainer assessors to improve the mathematics and English skills of their employees. The training successfully supports employers' strategies for upskilling their workforce. Employees are better able to apply for job roles with greater levels of responsibility as a result of their increased levels of skill and confidence.
- Trainer assessors effectively integrate topics relating to life in modern Britain and equality and fairness into sessions to improve adult learners' understanding and confidence to discuss issues that affect them. For example, learners in an ICT session discussed the impact of age discrimination in modern workplaces.

#### **Apprenticeships**

**Requires improvement** 

■ There are currently 1,107 apprentices on programmes with Woodspeen Training. Of these, 151 are aged 16 to 18, 177 are aged 19 to 23, and 779 are aged 24 or over. Around three quarters of apprentices are studying at intermediate level, a fifth at advanced level and the remainder are on higher-level programmes; 32 apprentices are on standards-based programmes. Almost half of apprentices are in manufacturing technologies. Of these apprentices, around two thirds are on programmes in business improvement techniques and most of the remainder are working towards performing manufacturing operations frameworks. Manufacturing technologies, health and social care, administration and business management account for four fifths of apprenticeships.



- Leaders and managers ensure that the programmes meet the principles and requirements of apprenticeships. In hairdressing, records of off-the-job training hours and the learning undertaken and outcomes achieved by apprentices are recorded in detail. However, this is not the case in all subjects. As a result, managers are not able to maintain an accurate overview of apprentices' progress and hours of study.
- The quality of functional skills provision requires improvement. Many apprentices, particularly those on manufacturing technologies programmes and health and social care programmes in the south, make slow progress in improving their English and mathematics skills. Too often, this learning is left until the end of apprentices' programmes. A few apprentices have failed their external assessments due to being insufficiently well prepared.
- In English and mathematics workshops, learning is not sufficiently individualised to take into account apprentices' varied levels of prior learning and their development needs. Apprentices with a wide range of abilities attend classes and all work on the same topics, at the same level. As a result, they do not make sufficiently rapid progress. Specialist support for apprentices who speak English as an additional language is not readily available.
- Employers in manufacturing do not consistently release apprentices from their work roles to attend training because of business priorities. As a result, attendance at workshops is often low. In addition, apprentices' shift patterns often make it difficult for them to attend planned training.
- Trainer assessors work closely with employers to develop programmes that meet local and regional priorities. For example, collaboration with a global manufacturer that produces components for the automotive sector has resulted in a large number of employees at the company following a business improvement techniques programme. Apprentices develop problem-solving and teamwork skills and make useful suggestions to improve their working practices.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills through individual coaching by trainer assessors and the training provided by their employers. Good one-to-one vocational training in areas such as performing manufacturing operations and contact centre operations programmes enables apprentices to make good progress towards achieving their vocational qualifications.
- Trainer assessors have a very good knowledge of their vocational sectors, gained through extensive industrial experience. They inspire the confidence of employers and support apprentices well to develop skills that reflect current industry practice.
- In health and social care and hairdressing and barbering, trainer assessors plan sessions carefully to cater for the diverse needs of all apprentices. They provide well-designed activities and resources that motivate apprentices. Consequently, these apprentices make good and timely progress.
- Employers value the increasing contributions of their apprentices to the workplace; many apprentices have taken on additional responsibilities as a result of completing the programme. For example, apprentices are able to cover key tasks while their line managers are on leave. Others are able to provide lunch and absence cover in the reception of a hospital department. Apprentices on the business improvement techniques programme have implemented improvements that have added considerable value to the



workplace and generated efficiencies; for example, they have improved the recording of ingredient storage in a dairy.

- Trainer assessors are adept at linking mathematics with vocational learning, which provides a relevant context for apprentices to see the value of good mathematics skills. For example, hairdressing apprentices calculate accurately the number of bottles of shampoo they need to order based on customer numbers booking into the salon each week.
- Apprentices feel safe and know what to do if they have a safeguarding concern. They demonstrate safe working practices and high professional standards in the workplace and training centres.



# **Provider details**

Unique reference number 50262

Type of provider Independent learning provider

2,727

Age range of learners 16+

Approximate number of all learners over the previous full

contract year

Principal/CEO Richard Grice

Telephone number 01484 429359

Website www.woodspeentraining.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		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16-18	3 19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	
	-	66	-	51	-	11	-	1	
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		te	Advanced			Higher		
	16–18	3 19	)+	16–18	19+	16-	-18	19+	
	112	69	97	39	208	_		51	
Number of traineeships	16–19			19+			Total		
	1			-			-		
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:	The Sq	uare M	etre Lt	d					



# Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the training director, 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.

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Inspection team**

Rachel Angus

Malcolm Fraser, lead inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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