

Gordon Franks Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

16–17 August and 12–13 September 2017

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders have taken very effective action to reverse a decline in the number of apprentices achieving their qualification in 2015/16.
- Learners benefit from highly effective support, which helps them make good progress and achieve.
- Learners and apprentices develop their self-confidence, resilience and social skills well to prepare them for employment.
- Most learners on study programmes move into further training, employment or an apprenticeship on completion.
- Learners on study programmes are very well prepared for the extended work experience which is well planned, closely monitored and often leads smoothly to an apprenticeship with the same employer.
- Most apprentices and learners improve their skills in English and mathematics.
- Learners who were previously receiving free school meals achieve particularly well.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their qualification within the planned time.
- Too few learners who are required to retake a GCSE in mathematics or English achieve the qualification at grade C/3 or better.
- A minority of apprentices who are on fixed-term contracts are unsure about what progression opportunities are available to them when they achieve.
- Not all apprentices complete induction activities in a timely way so that a small minority do not quickly develop a good enough understanding of radicalisation, extremism or British values.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Gordon Franks Training was established in 1983. Provision consists of a short study programme to prepare young people for employment, traineeships and apprenticeships, mainly in childcare, administration and customer service. At the time of the inspection there were too few trainees in learning to report separately.
- Most learners are recruited from central Birmingham and neighbouring areas with significant levels of deprivation and high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the availability and effectiveness of teaching, coaching and mentoring in mathematics for those learners who already have a grade D or grade 3 at GCSE when they start their courses so that they are able to achieve a higher grade before they leave.
- Improve the advice and guidance for apprentices who are on fixed-term contracts so that they are better prepared and can make an informed decision earlier in their programme about progression opportunities.
- Ensure that all apprentices successfully complete induction activities within the set time so that they rapidly develop their understanding of British values and how these are incompatible with radicalisation and extremism in all forms.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers are ambitious for their learners and set high expectations. They have created a culture and learning environment in which learners feel welcome and valued for what they can do and achieve. They are inspired to aim high. Staff lead by example to ensure that learners develop respect for one another, which contributes to the safe and supportive learning environment. The very positive relationships between learners and staff support learners to make strong progress in developing their self-esteem, resilience and social skills.
- Leaders and managers have established effective and productive relationships with large and small employers across the region. As a result, they develop programmes which raise skills levels across the local community and provide the workforce for priority areas of employment such as childcare. The well-designed study programme provides learners with good-quality work placements and the support they need to progress rapidly into further study, or an apprenticeship in a priority occupation for the local area. The study programme closely matches the design of the traineeship. The traineeship caters for a much smaller number of learners who arrive more prepared for work.
- Managers have dealt effectively with the causes of the decline in apprenticeship achievement rates in 2015/16, so that 2016/17 achievement rates are high and well above the most recent national rates. The well-designed study programme closely mirrors the structure of their traineeships and meets the needs of the learners they recruit well so that most learners are successful in meeting their goals.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have continued to develop arrangements to provide an accurate evaluation of the quality and performance of their programmes, which has helped them to maintain the quality of provision to a high standard since the previous inspection. Managers make good use of learners' forums to gather and act upon feedback received. This feedback appropriately informs self-assessment judgements and leads to improvements, such as when learners are introduced to the importance of mathematics and English in their programmes.
- Staff are set improvement targets that are heavily based on learners' achievements, feedback from observations of their teaching, reports from awarding bodies and peer and learners' surveys. Staff who do not respond sufficiently well to improvement priorities are managed appropriately to leave the organisation.
- Staff development links well to supporting improvements. Teachers and assessors value this development. For example, all relevant staff have received appropriate training on how to improve the effectiveness of the feedback they give to their learners. Assessors are able to identify how they are improving the quality of their feedback as a result.

The governance of the provider

- A very experienced specialist in post-16 education provides informed strategic oversight as a 'governor' to support leaders in business planning and ensure that the range of programmes meets the needs of local employers and national priorities, such as in childcare or early years education. At the same time, the governor continuously

challenges leaders to be self-critical and to seek improvements for the benefit of learners.

- A senior manager supplements this external view with regular and challenging scrutiny of the achievements and progress of learners and holds staff to account for areas requiring improvement. As a result, the number of apprentices who now achieve their qualification within the planned time has improved rapidly, and is now high.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The positive culture of safeguarding is exemplified by a wide range of activities and arrangements. These have included the proactive preparation for the introduction of the 'Prevent' duty, the regular staff update training, the meticulous recording and handling of child protection cases and the thorough introduction to safeguarding for learners during induction. New applicants for teaching posts are appropriately checked to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people.
- Teachers place a high priority on raising learners' awareness of key aspects of work and life in modern Britain. For example, they use news articles on recent events such as the Manchester bombing to explore and further develop learning and understanding. Apprentices enjoy using the associated mobile phone 'apps' to check and extend their understanding through participation in quizzes. Plans to introduce this initiative to study programme learners are well advanced.
- Apprentices are expected to complete a comprehensive induction workbook within the first four months of their programme, to ensure that they understand the relevance of safeguarding to their work. Those who do so further develop their understanding through the training they receive at work and with their assessors. A small minority of apprentices are not sufficiently challenged to complete their induction booklet in a timely way. As a result, they do not all have sufficient understanding early in their course and employment of important aspects of British values or the risks associated with radicalisation or extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Learners enjoy their learning. Teachers and assessors know their learners well. They carefully assess learners' knowledge, skills and understanding at the start of their course and use this information effectively to plan learning and set individual targets.
- Teachers make it clear why they are challenging learners. They provide them with the confidence to attempt new tasks. Learners respond positively. For example, learners in the first week of their course readily revealed to the group the people that they admired and the qualities that those people demonstrated.
- Teachers create interesting and varied learning materials. They motivate learners and enable them to progress rapidly. For example, on the mathematics functional skills level 1 course, the production of sweets is used as the context for understanding the concepts of proportion and range.
- Teachers frequently check that learning is taking place, explain technical terms and summarise the key learning points well. They use questioning effectively to develop

learners' understanding. They rephrase explanations and questions in order to support learners. Where learners do not understand, teachers are quick to provide individual support. For example, in functional skills mathematics the teacher skilfully rephrased questions about converting millimetres to centimetres, to enable the learners to understand conversion rates. In a minority of cases, assessors do not provide sufficient challenge in their questioning of apprentices. They are too quick to provide apprentices with answers, rather than encouraging them to think for themselves.

- The assessment of learners' work is frequent to ensure that they make at least the expected progress. Teachers and assessors continue to monitor learners' progress effectively during time spent on work experience. In the majority of cases, staff give learners feedback that explains what they need to do to improve; most learners are keen to learn and act on feedback successfully. In a very small minority of cases, learners do not receive feedback soon enough after work has been submitted or a task completed, which reduces its effectiveness.
- Reviews by assessors, teachers and engagement officers are frequent and useful. Staff use the information from these well to celebrate achievements and plan activities which are demanding, to enable learners to make strong progress. Learners have a clear idea of how well they are doing. Staff identify effectively those learners who start to fall behind and provide appropriate support to rectify this. Managers identified a small group of male apprentices who were making slow progress. As a result of the additional visits, extra work set and closer involvement of their employers, these learners are now catching up.
- Staff set work that builds on previous learning, and in the majority of cases refine tasks to meet the career aspirations of each learner.
- Parents and employers are informed about learners' progress both when there is a reason for celebration and where there are concerns; this has a positive impact on learners' progress.
- From the start of the study programme, staff involve the learners effectively in agreeing expected codes of behaviour. Staff challenge stereotypes and any use of inappropriate language. Teachers and assessors promote equality of opportunity and mutual respect. Teachers ensure that different perspectives are encouraged in classroom debate and that learners consider the diversity of the different communities within which they will be working.
- Assessors and teachers do not improve learners' mathematical skills well enough for those learners with a GCSE grade D or grade 3 in mathematics. Recent changes to the study programme mean that these learners now receive more high-quality mathematical support from the start of their course, but it is too soon to know whether this is having the required impact on their achievements.
- Teachers do not develop learners' information technology (IT) skills effectively, and this can limit progress in some vocational tasks. In a minority of cases, learners' poor IT skills limit the quality of their work, for example in the production of their curriculum vitae and job applications.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners' attendance is high. Staff monitor their punctuality closely and challenge lateness consistently.
- Learners value highly the opportunities presented through small class sizes and individual attention provided by teachers that enables them to become more self-assured. Learners quickly develop positive relationships based on mutual respect for others' views and opinions.
- Teachers routinely give praise and helpful practical support to learners to overcome many of their individual barriers to learning, often stemming from a lack of confidence because of their previous lack of success at school. Learners quickly gain confidence and increasing levels of self-belief in their abilities to participate in and benefit from learning opportunities.
- Staff are good role models who set clear boundaries and expectations for learners' behaviour, such as challenging the use of inappropriate language or the use of mobile phones in lessons. Learners quickly replicate the positive behaviours displayed by tutors so that they become more confident and professional in their personal conduct. For example, learners recognise the importance of good punctuality, time-keeping and demonstrating a positive attitude to learning when arriving at lessons, or while on placement with an employer.
- Learners make strong progress in developing their social skills and are prepared well for the challenges and opportunities provided through work experience and employment. For learners on the 16 to 19 study programme, external work placements are carefully matched to their interests and abilities. This enables them to recognise quickly the importance of the skills they are developing and how they relate to employment. In the workplace, apprentices are keen and talk confidently about their vocational work. They display professional values and behaviours such as good punctuality and attendance, and being courteous to both peers and employers.
- Most apprentices and learners improve their skills in English and mathematics. For example, apprentices working with young children use technical language well when speaking to other childcare professionals. Learners on study programmes confidently use ratios and percentages when communicating numerical information in a range of vocational contexts to prepare them for employment.
- Learners on study programmes benefit from effective careers advice and guidance that increase their understanding of the different vocational choices available, enabling them to make informed decisions about their future. A small minority of apprentices who are nearing the end of their programme and do not have guaranteed employment status do not receive sufficiently timely advice and guidance about alternative opportunities in education, training or employment.
- Learners on study programmes have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and take practical steps to assure their own and each other's safety from risks including radicalisation, extremism, use of the internet and risks posed by other people. In the workplace, learners closely adhere to and follow essential elements of health and safety, such as complying with instructions, wearing protective equipment in designated areas and being vigilant to, and reporting promptly, any potential health and safety or safeguarding concerns they may have. Apprentices' awareness of matters such as lone working, sexual health, harassment and bullying is reinforced regularly by tutors through

tutorials and a monthly newsletter containing a range of useful 'health and safety tips'.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Most learners make good progress relative to their individual starting points. Learners, many of whom are from disadvantaged social groups and who have poor prior academic achievement and little confidence in their own abilities, make significant progress in their learning.
- A very high percentage of learners on the 16 to 19 study programme quickly develop a positive approach to learning that results in improvements to their personal confidence and self-esteem, enabling them confidently to work towards gaining valued qualifications and skills to prepare them for employment. They speak articulately about the progress they have made in presentations to their peers, staff and parents at the end of their induction. Most stay in learning to the end of their course.
- Most learners progress to further learning, training and/or employment, including those formerly in receipt of free school meals. Most study programme learners progress to a range of positive destinations in line with the targets outlined in their individual learning plans. The large majority of learners on traineeships progress well, with just over half progressing on to apprenticeship programmes or gaining paid work. A small minority progress to other learning.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their qualification within the planned time. Current apprentices are making good progress and employers value greatly the good range of vocational and personal skills that apprentices quickly acquire and demonstrate within the workplace.
- Pass rates for apprentices undertaking functional skills, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT), are good. A very small minority of apprentices undertake functional skills at a level above that required for the apprenticeship qualification.
- The number of learners aged 16 to 19 who achieved their main functional skills qualifications in English and/or mathematics improved in 2016/17 and is high, relative to most learners' very low starting points. The proportion of learners who successfully pass their functional skills mathematics qualification at the first attempt is low.
- Success rates for the few most-able learners taking the new GCSE English and mathematics at grade 3 or above are low. Managers identified weaknesses in the external support for learners retaking GCSE in both English and mathematics and took recent action to bring this support in-house, but it is too early to judge the impact of this move.
- Although both male and female apprentices achieve well, female apprentices' achievement rates are higher, and the gap has widened.
- The proportion of apprentices who progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is low. While the large majority of apprentices enter sustained employment at the completion of their apprenticeship, a minority are recruited on fixed-term contracts and not re-employed when they achieve.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- At the time of inspection there were 14 learners on study programmes divided between two cohorts of learners. Courses last for 20 weeks with the aim of having a new cohort each month once the academic year begins. The main purpose of the study programme is to prepare learners for employment and to enable them to progress into further training or an apprenticeship.
- The vast majority of learners on study programmes progress to employment, further training or an apprenticeship.
- Learners develop a range of skills that prepare them well for work and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. However, learners' achievements on GCSE English and mathematics are weak.
- Leaders plan and manage individualised study programmes that build well on prior attainment and meet the principles of 16 to 19 study programmes. All learners prepare for, and attend, an extended external work placement, and continue to develop English and mathematic skills. Managers allocate a large proportion of the study time to developing learners' confidence and self-awareness. Teachers display high levels of expertise and use interesting and motivating resources to help learners to develop their understanding of the expectations of employers and the skills needed, such as team working, communication skills and a strong work ethic.
- Staff work closely with learners to select work experience placements, which support their career aspirations well. They monitor their learners' progress closely. Most learners have a successful experience, which enables them to progress to further training, or employment.
- Leaders and managers ensure that all learners receive impartial and timely careers guidance, which enables learners to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Teachers develop a positive learning environment through the use of displays, music and well-planned activities. Teachers effectively improve learners' oral presentation skills. At the beginning of the course, many learners are unwilling to talk in public. After eight weeks, the large majority of learners can present what they have learned on the course with confidence and clarity. Learners develop team-working and problem-solving skills well. For example, learners have the opportunity to face the new challenge of rock climbing, which develops their confidence and their team-working skills very effectively.
- Teachers develop positive relationships with students, which are based on trust and mutual respect. As a result, learners are prepared to take risks and try new skills. Teachers are ambitious for the learners. They set tasks which require courage because of the level of difficulty or because they are in new settings. The clear focus on gaining employment in all the learning activities promotes a high level of learner motivation.
- Managers and teachers have clear expectations regarding study programme learners' behaviour and dress code. Staff enforce these expectations, and learners willingly comply. Learners develop self-awareness, confidence and communication skills well. They demonstrate positive attitudes and aim high.
- Leaders have high aspirations and seek to improve the quality of the programme in response to learners' feedback, the views of employers and their own assessment of the

quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, leaders have made modifications to the study programme for the new academic year. Leaders have allocated more time to the teaching of functional skills in English and mathematics from the start of the course. Early signs are that this is helping learners develop these skills, but it is too early to make a definitive judgement on the impact.

Apprenticeships

Good

- Apprenticeships are offered in nine frameworks across six subject areas. Currently, there are 120 apprentices, the greatest proportion studying childcare and business administration. Half of apprentices are aged 16 to 18 years and half are 19 to 23 years of age. Some 75% of all apprentices are studying for an intermediate apprenticeship. The company has recently introduced standards apprenticeships in customer service to two apprentices.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the apprenticeship provision meets the principles of apprenticeship frameworks. Managers work successfully with employers to plan the programmes. They ensure that the range of vocational units meets their needs well. Employers value the contribution made by apprentices to their business. For example, in business administration, apprentices take on extra responsibilities such as office management and report writing.
- Apprentices enjoy their training. They feel they are on the right programme to meet their career aspirations. They develop new skills and apply them to their work setting. For example, apprentices in childcare design and put in place activities for outdoor and indoor play. They design and dress display boards for their nursery on topics including mathematics.
- Apprentices develop good customer care skills. This helps them to deal with a wide range of work situations. They become more valued employees and apprentices receive promotions, for example to accounts managers.
- Assessors provide very good support to apprentices. They put in place individual support to help apprentices to catch up if they are falling behind. Through professional discussions, assessors encourage apprentices to relate their knowledge and skills to their practical settings. For example in childcare, apprentices discuss knowledgeably with their assessor the missing child policy of their nursery. Consequently, apprentices develop their confidence and understanding to a good standard.
- Apprentices receive frequent and thorough assessment that encourages them to progress. Assessors provide detailed feedback to apprentices that helps them improve their performance. Assessors challenge apprentices successfully to improve their technical skills and knowledge beyond that required by their programme. For example, one apprentice was able to use specialist computer software to deal with complex payroll calculations.
- Assessors do not effectively plan apprentices' off-the-job training. Apprentices receive effective training from their employers, which enhances their effectiveness in their job role. They log the training they receive but they and their employers do not sufficiently understand when and how much off-the-job training does or should take place. As a result, learners and employers are not clear how off-the-job training fits into their apprenticeship.

- Apprentices who attend the voluntary ICT workshops develop these skills well and achieve their ICT functional skills qualification. Leaders and managers do not know how well those apprentices who do not attend these workshops develop their skills.
- Assessors do not challenge apprentices effectively enough to improve their mathematics and English skills beyond those required by the framework. Managers have recognised that this is an area for improvement and have introduced initiatives to encourage and enable more apprentices to understand the value of these higher-level skills. However, it is too early to see the impact of these initiatives.
- Assessors do not provide enough timely advice and guidance about progression routes to apprentices on fixed-term contracts. Consequently too many of these apprentices do not secure employment following completion of their apprenticeship.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59227
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	369
Principal/CEO	Gordon Franks
Telephone number	01213 333001
Website	www.GordonFranksTraining.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	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	14	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	52	40	8	20	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	9		–		9			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	none							

Information about this inspection

This was a short inspection that converted into a full inspection. The initial inspection team was formed of four of Her Majesty's Inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee. The subsequent conversion phase of the inspection was carried out by two members of the short inspection team of Her Majesty's Inspectors, who were joined by two more of Her Majesty's Inspectors, again assisted by the provider's managing 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.

Inspection team

Nick Gadfield, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nigel Bragg	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynda Brown	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Ward	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Cameron-Brandwood	Her Majesty's Inspector

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