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Mr Ian Smith
Managing Director
Sysco Business Skills Academy Limited
The Threlfall Building
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Dear Mr Smith

Short inspection of Sysco Business Skills Academy Limited

Following the short inspection on 11 and 12 September 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 November 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection you, your senior leadership team and trustees have worked tirelessly to make sure that learners and apprentices benefit from high-quality education and training. Trustees are passionate and ambitious. They challenge you and your senior leadership team very well. You, your senior leadership team and trustees have a clear and determined focus on continuous improvement. Staff and trustees share your drive to become a provider of outstanding education and training.

You have recently and efficiently introduced the new apprenticeship standards. You are working closely with employers, particularly in the housing sector, to develop the curriculum to ensure that apprenticeships benefit both employers and apprentices.

You and your senior leadership team have successfully addressed all areas for improvement identified at your last inspection. You, trustees and all staff work closely with employers to involve them fully in reviewing learners' progress and in planning training and assessment. Most employers are involved in all areas of apprentices' training and development. Managers and training advisers plan highly personalised programmes for apprentices that meet the needs of employers and the requirements of the apprenticeship. Many apprentices are working on units at a higher level than required by their apprenticeship.

You have reviewed support for English and mathematics since the last inspection.

Achievement of functional skills in English and mathematics has increased because of the introduction of successful and innovative approaches for teaching English and mathematics. More apprentices now achieve their English and mathematics qualifications at their first attempt.

Training advisers' skills in reinforcing and promoting equality and diversity and safeguarding have improved significantly because of good staff training in these areas. The introduction of equality and diversity and safeguarding during apprentices' induction, and continued reinforcement and promotion throughout the apprenticeship programme, ensures that apprentices have a good understanding of equality and diversity and safeguarding themes. These themes include domestic violence, self-harm and the celebration of diversity in modern British society.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders, managers and trustees place a high priority on making sure that apprentices and staff are safe. You take swift and highly effective actions to ensure that apprentices feel safe and are kept safe. Apprentices know to whom they should report safeguarding concerns. The tracking and recording of safeguarding incidents are clear and concise. Safeguarding records are maintained efficiently. The designated safeguarding officers are experienced and appropriately qualified. They investigate all safeguarding concerns thoroughly. Referrals to external agencies and the local authority designated safeguarding officer are swift.

All staff, trustees and apprentices value the regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Safeguarding, including honour-based violence, modern slavery, forced marriage, the 'Prevent' duty, and values and beliefs of living in modern British society, is embedded into apprenticeship programmes and in enrichment activities. Apprentices have a good understanding of these themes and complete accredited training modules in the 'Prevent' duty, British values, safeguarding, and health and well-being. Apprentices can explain clearly the threats from radicalisation and extremism using recent regional terrorist events.

Inspection findings

- You, your senior leadership team and trustees identify underperformance quickly and accurately. Detailed analysis of a wide range of data enables you to track closely the performance of training advisers, training managers and apprentices. Identified weaknesses, such as too few health and social care apprentices completing their apprenticeship by the planned end date, led you to review this apprenticeship. As a result, the length of the apprenticeship was identified as being too short and subsequently extended. The progress of current health and social care apprentices is good and your internal data indicates that most apprentices will achieve by their planned end date.
- Self-assessment processes are thorough and you make good use of data to identify strengths and areas for improvement accurately, particularly in identifying underperformance in subject areas. However, the quality improvement plan does not identify focused and measurable outcomes to track

progress against actions.

- During the inspection of your sister company, Brighter Futures, teaching, learning and assessment were identified as areas for improvement. As the management of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is shared across Brighter Futures and Sysco, you identified that you also needed to improve these aspects. You have been quick to address this weakness. A rapid review of observation of teaching, learning and assessment processes has led to a newly formed observation team and the development of new observation documentation. The documentation focuses on the effect of teaching on learning and learners' progress. Action plans produced following observations are linked closely to staff performance and reviewed at monthly one-to-one meetings.
- Detailed quarterly reports of teaching, learning and assessment are scrutinised closely by trustees and improvement actions are set. Managers review the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly and effectively. Staff benefit from good continuing professional development activities to improve their teaching and assessment practices. Although training advisers share good practice in standardisation meetings, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not of a consistently high standard across all subject areas.
- The majority of apprentices make good or better progress and achieve their qualifications by the planned end date. The number of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeships is above that of similar providers. Apprentices' starting points are identified accurately using a range of diagnostic assessments to ensure that apprentices are placed on the appropriate programmes to meet their job roles and abilities. Highly personalised apprenticeship programmes help apprentices make good progress. Many apprentices complete apprenticeship units at a higher level than is required. Off-the-job training is planned carefully with employers to develop apprentices' vocational and work skills. Apprentices complete subject-specific competency-based assessments before they start their apprenticeship. However, individual targets set for apprentices at the beginning of and during their programmes are not specific or focused enough on the development of their personal and wider employability skills.
- The tracking and monitoring of apprentices' progress is thorough. Monthly reports highlight any apprentices causing concern and managers take swift action to help them to catch up. Actions include extra support for apprentices, extra visits to the workplace, support from English and mathematics champions and performance management of training advisers.
- The English and mathematics champions have strengthened the development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills. Training advisers are becoming increasingly confident in their own skills. They use the resources developed by the English and mathematics champions very effectively to support the development of English, literacy and mathematical skills during off-the-job training sessions. Achievement of English and mathematics functional skills qualifications is high. An increasing number of apprentices are achieving their English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2 on their first attempt.
- Arrangements for information, advice and guidance are effective in making sure

that apprentices are on the correct programme. Apprentices receive appropriate careers guidance that informs their next steps in learning and employment. 'Hot topics' on careers and progression are discussed with apprentices during off-the-job training and reviews. Near the end of the apprenticeship, employers, training advisers and apprentices attend a focused 'moving on' meeting to discuss what the apprentice's next steps will be. The 'after care' programme builds on the 'moving on' process, providing further careers advice and guidance for up to six months after apprentices have completed their apprenticeship.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders, managers and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the quality improvement plan clearly identifies focused and measurable outcomes to ensure that accurate monitoring of weaknesses to support continuous improvement across all areas of the organisation
- individual targets set for apprentices at the beginning of and during their apprenticeship are sufficiently focused and specific to inform the development of apprentices' personal and wider employability skills
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is of a consistently high standard across all subject areas to ensure that all apprentices make good or better progress and achieve their apprenticeships by the planned end date.

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

Yours sincerely

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the managing director, as nominee. We met with senior managers, trustees, managers, training advisers and apprentices. We reviewed apprentices' work and electronic tracking systems. With members of your staff, we observed teaching, learning and assessment. We reviewed key documents, including those relating to strategic planning, self-assessment, teaching, learning and assessment, performance data and safeguarding. We reviewed the Ofsted inspection report of your sister company, Brighter Futures, with whom you share common services such as quality and human resources. We considered the views of apprentices by reviewing their comments on Ofsted's online questionnaires, by inspecting your own apprenticeship surveys and by seeking the views of apprentices during on-site inspection activities. At the time of inspection, there were no learners on classroom-based learning programmes.