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Ms Jan Richardson-Wilde
Director of Quality and Curriculum
Interserve Learning and Employment (Services) Limited
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Dear Ms Richardson-Wilde

Short inspection of Interserve Learning and Employment (Services) Limited

Following the short inspection on 26 and 27 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 December 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You and other leaders at Interserve Learning and Employment (Services) Limited (ILE) have a clear vision that informs the culture of the organisation and draws on the organisation's core values related to the empowerment of learners, pride in achievement, high levels of ambition and a strong ethical framework. You and your colleagues have planned carefully to ensure that the organisation develops in a controlled and sustainable manner. For example, you pilot new aspects of the already strong curriculum offer and ensure that these are done well before extending into new qualifications and types of provision. Your meticulous approach to quality assurance and improvement has enabled you to maintain high standards and high achievement rates throughout most of the provision during a period of considerable change within the organisation. You have done this in an atmosphere of strong support and utmost commitment to your learners and apprentices.

You have maintained and built on the strengths identified at the previous inspection and made good progress in addressing areas for improvement. For example, as a result of your considerable investment in training and resources, the large majority of learners now pass their functional skills examinations at their first attempt. Assessments of their starting points are now used very effectively to plan and inform learning. The decision to focus on completion of functional skills targets within the first eight months of an apprenticeship has had a very positive impact. A few areas for improvement remain and you and other leaders are well aware that these need to be addressed. For example, improvements in outcomes in functional

skills are more marked in apprenticeships than in adult learning programmes. Traineeships, which have been introduced since the previous inspection, require further development in order for them to reach the same high standards as the majority of your provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Directors and managers prioritise effective safeguarding arrangements throughout the organisation. The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and action is taken to safeguard learners. Mechanisms for reporting safeguarding incidents are effective and well known throughout ILE. Records of incidents are thorough and show that appropriate actions are taken in response to the rare incidents that occur. Managers have high expectations of safeguarding in subcontracted provision and in other partners; they exercise robust due diligence procedures.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has had extensive training and works closely with other local safeguarding organisations, including the local authority. She is well supported by deputy safeguarding officers throughout the provision. Managers use a range of support organisations to guide and safeguard learners in relation to a range of issues, including female genital mutilation, radicalisation and extremism. The DSL is very active in developing safeguarding expertise within the organisation and is developing innovative training modules on issues related to radicalisation and extremism. However, regional action plans in relation to the 'Prevent' duty do not always give enough consideration to particular risks to learners and apprentices in different localities.

All staff have had appropriate training in connection with safeguarding that includes the 'Prevent' duty and online safety. As a result, trainers routinely initiate discussions of relevant safeguarding issues in sessions with learners. For example, trainers discuss with learners how to stay safe when using social media.

Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of key safeguarding issues and practices and know how to keep themselves safe, including in relation to the risks of radicalisation and extremism. They know how to stay safe at work and have a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities at work.

Inspection findings

- As a result of effective governance structures, directors provide well-focused support and challenge to managers to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is high and outcomes for apprentices and learners are positive.
- Provision is well designed to meet the needs of those who are hoping to access employment opportunities as well as those who are already employed and are seeking greater responsibilities and promotion in the workplace.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from clear advice and guidance about their future employment and ambitions before they join their programme. They

receive good support and advice during their programme about their next steps.

- Directors and managers ensure that ILE meets the needs of employers in different localities very well. Extensive knowledge of local and national workforce needs, often identified by ILE's own innovative and sophisticated analytical tools, underpins ILE's comprehensive and insightful labour market solutions. ILE acts very effectively as a lynchpin between employers and employees, matching potential employees with good careers and ensuring that companies of all sizes can meet their labour needs.
- Directors and managers respond very effectively to the requirements of partners such as Jobcentre Plus and community rehabilitation companies. The teams that are responsible for employer and partner engagement, marketing, and curriculum development and delivery work effectively together. They deliver programmes that provide unemployed adults with the skills and confidence they need to obtain work and improve their economic and career progression prospects. A high proportion of unemployed adults who participate in programmes with ILE obtain employment. Many of these learners have complex needs and are served very well by ILE's programmes and ethos.
- The large majority of apprentices make very good progress within planned timescales, despite a small drop in achievement rates at the end of the last academic year. They develop skills and knowledge which are greatly valued by their employers. As a result of their apprenticeships, most apprentices gain secure employment, promotion and increased responsibilities at work.
- Leaders and managers have taken effective action to ensure that learners and apprentices who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve at similar rates to their peers. Forensic reporting, analysis and action relate to different needs and disabilities and ensure that learners and apprentices receive the appropriate support for their particular circumstances.
- Female apprentices do better than male apprentices, and male adult learners do better than female adult learners. Leaders and managers are well informed about these differences in progress and outcomes but it is too early to see the impact of actions taken to address the differences.
- Learners and apprentices demonstrate excellent standards of behaviour. They treat each other with respect and consideration and are well aware that these are essential attitudes and behaviours for success at work. Leaders and managers have ensured that all staff have had effective training to help them to manage learners' behaviour. As a result, staff respond quickly and appropriately to the rare instances of poor behaviour. The large majority of staff are confident in providing relevant and well-contextualised opportunities for learners and apprentices to extend their understanding of issues related to life in modern Britain. Consequently, learners and apprentices appreciate the diversity that characterises modern life, and they understand the need to promote equality in the workplace. Learners and apprentices also understand the importance of British values as employees and as citizens, and they are able to link these, unprompted, with the values they find at ILE.
- Trainees develop positive attitudes towards work that support them in moving into apprenticeships and employment. Leaders and managers are aware that

although the number of trainees who progress into apprenticeships, further learning and employment is increasing, it is not yet high enough. It is too early to see the impact of actions taken to remedy this situation.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they reverse the slight drop in apprentices' achievement rates so that all apprentices, whether male or female, make the progress of which they are capable
- they extend the successful functional skills strategy evident in the apprenticeship provision to the provision for trainees and adult learners, so that all learners are able to maximise their potential for employment
- provision for trainees is developed to enable all trainees to reach their potential and gain access to further education, apprenticeships and employment.

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

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Clare
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors were assisted by the director of quality and curriculum. We met with senior leaders and observed lessons. We held meetings with, or spoke to, managers, trainers and learners, and we scrutinised learners' assessment records. We scrutinised key documents relating to the provider's strategy and implementation plans, self-assessment and improvement planning and safeguarding. We considered the views of employers through the responses received through Ofsted's online questionnaire and through case studies. We considered the views of learners through discussions during learning sessions and through the responses received through Ofsted's online questionnaire.