

Start Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

29 November–1 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- The proportion of apprentices who gain their qualifications is low and too many do not complete within the agreed timescale.
- Assessors do not collect and use information about apprentices' existing vocational skills and knowledge to plan for their individual training and development.
- Assessors do not provide useful feedback on apprentices' work and the vocational skills that they develop as a result of their training.
- Managers do not have reliable arrangements to monitor apprentices' progress; consequently, they cannot take swift action to ensure apprentices' successful completion.
- Assessors do not review and record accurately the progress of individual apprentices throughout their training; they do not involve employers in reviewing apprentices' development in a meaningful way.
- Senior managers have not been successful in ensuring that staffing issues do not affect apprentices' progress adversely.
- Managers have not developed effective methods for evaluating and improving apprentices' training; actions taken have not led to swift improvements.
- Governance is ineffective; governors do not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The provider has the following strengths

- Dental nursing apprentices achieve well.
- Managers have enabled a high number of apprentices who had not completed their qualifications when they acquired Start Training to do so.
- Managers have responded well to the training requirements for dental nursing in the North West.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Start Training Limited (Start Training) was acquired in December 2015. The company operates from its head office in Swinton, Greater Manchester.
- Start Training provides apprenticeships at intermediate, advanced and higher levels in health and social care, dental nursing, administration and business management. Around 8% of apprentices are advanced dental nursing apprentices. The majority of apprentices are located in companies across the North West.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of apprentices who achieve, and do so by their planned completion date.
- Ensure that each apprentice has clear learning targets, that their progress towards achieving these is monitored closely, and take effective action to ensure that those who are making slow progress catch up quickly.
- Ensure that assessors use apprentices' starting points in their vocational and employability skills to plan their individual training and development.
- Ensure that managers have accurate information about apprentices' progress and skill development, and use this well to ensure that apprentices achieve their potential.
- Ensure that assessors evaluate reliably the knowledge and skills that apprentices develop, and provide them with useful feedback on how to improve.
- Ensure that assessors review apprentices' progress well and involve employers in a meaningful way in setting challenging tasks that extend apprentices' skills and knowledge.
- Improve the stability of staffing and ensure that staffing issues do not affect apprentices' development and achievements.
- Strengthen the self-assessment process to ensure that leaders, managers and staff have an accurate understanding of the areas for improvement so that effective action is taken swiftly to improve the quality of teaching, training and assessment.
- Ensure that governors receive accurate information about the quality of teaching, training, learning and assessment so that they can support and challenge senior managers to bring about swift improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and managers encountered a period of significant staffing and financial turbulence following the purchase of Start Training Limited. They have not been successful in making the changes that they had planned. Senior managers have not been effective in improving or maintaining the previously good quality of teaching, learning and assessment that apprentices receive. Consequently, outcomes for apprentices have declined sharply.
- Senior managers have not yet been successful in ensuring that staffing is stable and the work of all assessors is of a high standard. Since the previous inspection, a high turnover in assessors has contributed significantly to the decline in the quality of teaching, training and assessment that many apprentices receive. For example, many apprentices have not received regular visits from assessors and their progress is slow.
- Managers do not have reliable information to monitor and improve the progress of apprentices towards completion. Consequently, managers are not able to ensure that apprentices make at least expected progress. Too many apprentices are not developing their vocational skills to support them in their job roles.
- Managers do not have effective arrangements to improve the quality of teaching, training, learning and assessment. They check regularly on the quality of teaching through observations. However, they do not identify accurately the strengths and areas for improvement in assessors' practices. Managers do not have an overview of the quality of apprentices' work or their assessments. As a result, managers do not have accurate information to bring about swift improvements.
- The self-assessment report is not sufficiently accurate or founded on robust enough evidence. It has recognised a number of weaknesses identified during the inspection. However, managers have underestimated the impact of weaknesses on apprentices' experiences.
- Managers have provided regular staff development on teaching and training practices, but have not ensured that assessors use their new knowledge to improve their training and assessment practices. A minority of assessors do not have sufficient experience or qualifications in the topics that they teach.
- Managers recognise the importance of promoting British values to apprentices. They have encouraged assessors to develop a good set of relevant resources to use in their teaching and training. For example, resources include materials that help apprentices gain a better understanding of discussions around the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. Apprentices have a good understanding of fair treatment and respect. As a result, they apply good attitudes in their working environments in dealing with dental patients and individuals who require care.
- Managers respond well to the priorities of the care and dental health sectors in the North West. They work well with around 200 small- to medium-sized care providers and dental health surgeries.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are ineffective.
- Governors have not focused sufficiently on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that the company provides. Until very recently, they have neither sought nor received reliable information about the quality of the training and assessment that apprentices receive.
- Governors recognise that the company has much to improve, and are developing new measures to improve their governance arrangements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers ensure that all staff are appropriately checked for criminal records and safeguarding concerns. Staff receive regular training on their safeguarding responsibilities and on how to report any concerns identified. As a result, staff act swiftly when apprentices are at risk, for example when they disclose domestic violence. Managers keep a detailed record of any safeguarding concerns and their responses.
- All staff have received appropriate training to develop their awareness of their responsibility in preventing extremism and radicalisation. Most tutors raise appropriately learners' awareness of how to stay safe, including when working online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Assessors do not collect and use a sufficient range of information about apprentices' starting points, for example in relation to their existing vocational skills, in order to plan their individual learning and development. They do not set sufficiently specific learning targets for apprentices to help them make incremental progress. Too often, assessors set learning targets focused on the level required for achieving the unit of the qualification, without ensuring that apprentices understand how they should complete their tasks. Consequently, apprentices fall behind or do not produce work to the standard that matches their ability.
- Assessors do not match their teaching and training practice to the needs of individual apprentices, to enable them to achieve their potential. They do not use effective learning activities and resources that challenge apprentices fully and capture their interests. For example, in too many sessions, they just give apprentices copies of the specifications of their qualification units as a discussion guide. These are not sufficiently stimulating; too often, teaching and training sessions lack pace and apprentices quickly become disengaged or distracted.
- Assessors' reviews of apprentices' progress are weak. Progress review meetings and the related documentation do not help apprentices to gain a clear understanding of their progress towards achieving their qualifications. Too often during progress review meetings, assessors do not evaluate and record clearly and accurately the tasks that apprentices have completed and what they need to complete for the next visit. Assessors do not review and discuss the skills that apprentices have developed. They do not include employers in a meaningful way. As a result, most apprentices, especially health and social

care apprentices, do not develop skills in line with their ability or job role. Apprentices are not developing the necessary employment values and behaviours that should accompany their vocational skills.

- Assessors do not routinely provide effective feedback to apprentices to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work. When assessors give apprentices verbal feedback, they do not ensure that apprentices record this feedback so that they can use it to improve their subsequent work. A minority of assessors do not assess apprentices' work accurately; they record that apprentices' work is correct when it is not.
- Assessment of apprentices' knowledge, skills and development requires improvement. In training and teaching sessions, assessors do not check apprentices' depth of understanding. This is because some assessors have low expectations of apprentices, while others do not have an in-depth knowledge of the topics that they teach. Too often, assessors answer their own questions without giving sufficient time to apprentices to think about the question and respond. Consequently, assessors do not have enough information about how well apprentices can apply their learning to their job or to issues in their work.
- Tutors and assessors do not develop apprentices' use of English or their mathematical skills well. They do not routinely guide apprentices to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors or improve the quality of their writing to a professional standard. Tutors and assessors do not promote the importance of using good English. For example, they produce learning materials that contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- Too many apprentices do not routinely apply the knowledge that they gain as part of their apprenticeships in their work practice. This is because assessors are not effective in helping apprentices to link what they learn with what they do in the workplace. For example, apprentices do not develop good skills in using mathematics in their work settings.
- Assessors do not encourage apprentices to take responsibility for their own learning and develop the skills that help them to learn better. For example, assessors do not do enough to persuade apprentices who do not submit their assignments to do so on time. On too many occasions, apprentices attend sessions without being prepared sufficiently for the learning tasks; they do not bring with them pens, paper, or evidence of prior learning. As a result, apprentices make slower progress than they are capable of making.
- Assessors do not routinely link apprentices' current learning to their possible future career paths. Consequently, a minority of apprentices do not see the value of their apprenticeships.
- Not all apprentices have a good enough understanding of the risks of radicalisation or extremism. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are clear about how to report any concerns they have about safety both professionally and personally.
- The majority of dental nurse apprentices are professional and confident in their job roles. They use their learning well to adapt their practice to meet the needs of their patients and clients. For example, dental nurse apprentices use the knowledge gained from their

apprenticeships well to take x-rays of disabled patients' teeth.

- Most assessors successfully expand apprentices' knowledge about British values. As a result, apprentices apply confidently in discussions and everyday work their understanding of democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty; they show mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and those without faith, in their work settings. For example, health and social care apprentices recognise the need to meet patients' religious food requirements by offering Jewish people a kosher diet.
- The majority of apprentices contribute to their employers' businesses and are valued by employers. Apprentices' attendance and punctuality are good.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- Overall, the information that managers hold in relation to the progress of apprentices towards gaining their qualifications is not sufficiently reliable. This is because the data that assessors provide about apprentices' progress is not always accurate.
- In 2016/17, the proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualifications was low and the proportion who completed within the expected timescale was very low.
- In 2016/17, too many apprentices aged 19 to 24 did not complete their apprenticeships. The proportion of apprentices aged 25 and older who achieved and did so on time was low. Most of the small number of apprentices aged 16 to 18 achieved their apprenticeships, and did so within the planned timescale.
- Many apprentices who have existing vocational skills when they start their programme, for example because they have worked in care settings for a significant number of years, do not develop new skills that support them to do their job better or gain a promotion. The most able apprentices do not achieve their potential.
- Despite a decline in the achievement rates of advanced dental nursing apprentices in 2016/17 compared with the previous year, the majority of these apprentices achieved and did so on time.
- Before Start Training Limited changed ownership in December 2015, a significant number of apprentices had not completed their programme within the planned timescale. After acquiring the company, managers supported these apprentices well. As a result, most of this group of apprentices have completed their apprenticeships in the last two years.
- The large majority of apprentices who complete their apprenticeships continue with their employers. Several apprentices gain additional responsibility and seek a promotion.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58187
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	500
Managing director	Esu Hill
Telephone number	0161 728 2438
Website	www.starttraining.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+
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	12	53	77	82	0	7		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality manager, 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

Shahram Safavi, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Suzanne Wainwright	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Cameron-Brandwood	Her Majesty's Inspector

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