

Consortium of Vocational and Educational Trainers Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

12–15 December 2017

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	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

- During off-the-job training 'blocks' at the Peugeot/Citroen, Volvo and London Electric Vehicle Company training facilities, apprentices benefit from high quality teaching learning and assessment, supported by excellent quality up-to-date training resources.
- Apprentices develop a very good range of technical skills that prepare them well for working in prestige car dealerships.
- Apprentices develop very good personal, social and business skills during their training; they are courteous, respectful of each other and their trainers, and quickly become valuable assets to their employers' businesses.
- Leaders and managers work very closely with employers to develop apprenticeship provision that meets the skills needs of the retail automotive sector very well.
- Apprentices benefit from supportive and effective on-the-job training. Most also benefit from completing additional manufacturer qualifications.
- Adult learners make good progress and swiftly achieve their qualifications in English for speakers of other languages and on plant operations diploma courses.
- The apprentice recruitment team provide excellent information, advice and guidance to those who become apprentices, but they do not signpost unsuccessful applicants toward other appropriate opportunities.
- During reviews, assessors do not set sufficiently useful targets and actions to help apprentices improve their mathematics and English skills or prepare them more effectively for training activities on study blocks.
- A minority of apprentices have an underdeveloped understanding of the dangers they might face from those who hold extremist views.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Consortium of Vocational and Education Trainers Limited (COVET) was formed in 2011 by three companies: Calex UK; Genius Solutions (trading as Languages Training and Development (LTD)); and National Plant Vocational Skills Limited (NPVSL). Calex UK provides apprenticeships to the retail automotive industry; LTD provides courses to adult learners in the Oxford area, in English for speakers of other languages; and NPVSL trains adults on plant operations for employment in the construction industry.
- Because of funding changes within adult education, NPVSL and LTD are on run-down contracts with the Education and Skills Funding Agency. NPVSL is moving increasingly to commercially funded provision and LTD has started to offer apprenticeships in learning and development. All of the ongoing COVET Limited provision will be apprenticeships, the very large majority being provided by Calex UK. Despite these changes, consortium, leaders and managers continue to work well together and support one another.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Train assessors to use all the information they have about apprentices, including about their prior knowledge and skills in English and mathematics, to set relevant targets and actions that will allow apprentices, particularly the most able, to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Support trainers and assessors to improve apprentices' understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, particularly by discussing dangers related to areas in which they live, and to the motor vehicle industry.
- Make sure that the recruiting team are trained to provide appropriate information, advice and guidance to help unsuccessful apprenticeship applicants find other suitable opportunities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- COVET leaders and managers have worked successfully to deal with areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have increased levels of cooperation between the consortium members, leading to improved self-assessment of consortium provision. Joint meetings between senior leaders have been more frequent, and as a result, monitoring of success rates across the consortium has improved. Greater sharing of good practice in assessment has helped to boost learners' progress on a number of courses. Leaders have made sure that over the past five years COVET has functioned well to meet skills needs of employers and sectors, and to respond effectively to changes in the further education and skills landscape.
- Leaders and managers at Calex UK have worked extremely successfully to respond to changes in apprenticeship funding and structures. They have supported senior staff in major car dealerships to identify their skills needs and prepare for new apprenticeship arrangements. As a result, the new standards-based apprenticeships for technical and commercial aspects of the retail motor industry provision meet sector needs very well and employers have a very good understanding of apprenticeships.
- Since the launch of the new standards, leaders and managers monitored the effectiveness of provision very closely, and made beneficial adjustments to training and assessment where necessary. Leaders reacted quickly to a decline in apprenticeship achievements, identified the cause in poor retention of dealership staff, and took successful action with partners to decrease numbers of early leavers. As a result, achievements are now good. The manufacturers and dealers with whom Calex works value very highly the guidance and support they have received during the changes to apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations for staff and apprentices. They set and model high standards for behaviour. Apprentices strive successfully to meet leaders' and managers' expectations. As a result, apprentices behave well, and develop the good customer-service skills and high standards of professional behaviour that are important in prestige dealerships.
- Through highly effective partnership working, leaders and managers provide outstanding quality training facilities where motor vehicle apprentices have their off-the-job training blocks. All training facilities are in premises owned by major motor manufacturers. This means that apprentices benefit from close contact with the latest vehicle models and repair technologies. They also meet with and learn to behave confidently around senior staff, including national and international leaders.
- Managers carry out effective quality assurance and improvement activities. Observations of classroom and workshop teaching and learning are frequent. Because of good-quality feedback, staff fully understand what they do well and what they need to improve. Managers make sure that the outcomes of teaching and learning observations link well to annual appraisals and to carefully planned staff development activities. However, managers do not yet routinely observe progress reviews and on-the-job assessments so do not always know how well assessors carry these out.
- Leaders and managers have put in place an effective strategy to develop apprentices'

English and mathematics skills. The vast majority of apprentices enjoy their functional skills classes and the large majority of apprentices who need to pass functional skills tests in English and mathematics do so. However, not all apprentices who already have level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics receive sufficiently stretching activities to develop their skills and knowledge further.

The governance of the provider

- Directors provide effective governance and oversight of leaders' and managers' work. Directors know the quality of provision well, and they monitor apprentices' and learners' progress and achievements closely. They have the knowledge and skills to challenge leaders and managers and help them to improve provision.
- Directors work very closely with industry partners and they make sure that training meets sector needs. They have a very good knowledge of developments in automotive technologies, and they make sure that apprentices benefit from up-to-date training and resources that make them valuable assets to their employers' businesses.

Safeguarding

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive frequent training and updating of their knowledge and skills. Apprentices and learners know who the designated safeguarding officers of their organisations are, and have confidence to contact them should they need to.
- Apprentices and learners are confident to report unacceptable behaviours or risks. Managers check frequently that apprentices and learners understand how to keep themselves safe, and that they are safe. Managers put good measures in place to safeguard apprentices when they attend residential training. For example, they provide transport between hotels and training facilities and closely monitor hotel safeguarding arrangements.
- Leaders and managers make sure that apprentices understand the broad range of risks they might face from those with extremist views. However, apprentices do not receive enough encouragement to think about the types of risks they might face in the regions where they work, or about dangers specific to the industry in which they work. They also provide good levels of training and support for apprentices to understand and uphold fundamental British values.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Apprentices benefit from training and coaching from highly skilled assessors who have considerable experience of working in the motor vehicle industry. Assessors use this experience very well to motivate, inspire and train apprentices to a high standard. Employers value highly the expertise that assessors bring to the training that their apprentices receive.
- Apprentices are well motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their learning, both in their workplace and in the training facilities. They value and benefit from modern training

facilities that are equipped with up-to-date practical equipment and resources that reflect fully the vehicles and equipment that they are expected to use at work. Trainers are skilled in their roles and use their experience very effectively to plan and implement training. As a result, the programmes closely meet the needs of employers and the requirements of both framework and standards-based apprenticeships.

- Skilled tutors support adult learners who speak other languages to rapidly improve their English language skills from carefully identified starting points. Employers say that these skills help learners improve their communication skills rapidly and this enhances their performance in the workplace. Experienced instructors help construction workers learn rapidly and pass the plant operations diploma, which is essential to their employment.
- Apprentices benefit from effective reviews of their progress and supportive feedback on their achievements from their assessors, both during formal review meetings and between meetings. Assessors use the electronic portfolio system very diligently to monitor apprentices' progress and they intervene swiftly when apprentices fall behind their expected rate of progress or when they miss agreed deadlines for the submission of work.
- Assessors are not yet skilled enough at linking all elements of apprentices' training to set them clear, comprehensive and challenging targets for their learning and development. For example, those apprentices who do not have to achieve functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics or information and communication technology are rarely set targets to develop these skills further in the context of the tasks they carry out at work. As a consequence, the most able apprentices in particular do not always develop these skills to the level of which they are capable, and they do not always appreciate the relevance of English and/or mathematics skills in the workplace.
- Apprentices receive very good careers advice and guidance from trainers, assessors and employers. They use this information thoroughly to consider their career development options and to identify further training needs with their employers. Most apprentices also benefit from completing manufacturer-specific training, which enhances their employment potential and options further.
- Instructors and tutors use a good variety of teaching methods and this helps motivate and inspire apprentices and learners. For example, in early instructional sessions during their first block training week, apprentices benefit from instructors setting very high expectations and coaching them on a range of key hand-skills. This includes demonstration, close monitoring and good coaching on the use of Vernier callipers to measure a metal rod accurately and then good filing techniques to create a metal rod of exactly the right length and with smooth, properly squared ends.
- The attitudes of instructors and assessors, and the training resources and materials they use, reflect a good focus on the importance of equality of opportunity in the workplace and the value of diversity in the workforce. For example, many of the training films and printed materials include female apprentices and apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds, who are under-represented in vehicle repair and maintenance in car dealerships.
- During their off-the-job training blocks, apprentices receive excellent group and one-to-one tuition from a specialist functional skills tutor; this helps them make very good progress in improving their mathematical, English and information and communications technology (ICT) skills. However, although the functional skills tutor is also working to

improve assessors' abilities to support their apprentices to develop these skills further during progress reviews, more work is needed. In a small minority of cases, for example, assessors give apprentices feedback on their work which is inaccurate and gives them praise for skills, such as spelling or grammar, when they have in fact made mistakes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- The quality of apprentices' and adult learners' work at least meets the required standards, and in many cases far exceeds these.
- Apprentices feel and are safe, including while staying in their hotel accommodation when attending off-the-job training weeks. They know whom to talk to if they have any concerns and appreciate the transport to and from their high-quality hotel accommodation. They also benefit from good levels of guidance on the importance of healthy living. In particular, instructors help them to develop a good awareness of the importance of mental health.
- Apprentices' and learners' attendance is good. Apprentices enjoy their off-the-job training and attend well. This is because they enjoy and take pride in their learning at very high-quality training facilities within manufacturer academies. Adult learners' attendance at English for speakers of other languages and plant operators' courses is also good; learners say that the courses are enjoyable and that they take place at convenient times.
- A relatively new, very thorough recruiting process helps match the right apprenticeship applicants with the right employers. The recruiting materials used by the team are engaging and, like the training materials used by instructors, have a good focus in improving the diversity of the workforce in vehicle repair and maintenance. Through good links with careers guidance bodies the team also ensure that their recruiting materials are promoted in a wide range of schools. Potential apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance and they are well prepared to meet the demands of their programmes. Recruiting staff are not, however, trained in providing information advice and guidance. They are therefore not able to signpost candidates who fail to secure an apprenticeship to other options as effectively as they might.
- Instructors weave British values and 'Prevent' duty themes very effectively through the block training weeks and augment this through 'bite-sized' learning packages hosted on a learning application. As a result, most apprentices have an appropriate awareness of British values and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, a small minority of apprentices have an underdeveloped understanding of the dangers they might face from those who hold extremist views.
- The recruitment of a specialist functional skills tutor has led to significant improvement in the support provided to apprentices, who need it to improve their English, mathematical or ICT skills. This has helped apprentices improve these key employment-related skills more rapidly and consistently. Assessors, however, do not always help apprentices improve their English skills because they miss errors in submitted work.
- Apprentices benefit from a range of additional units which meet employer's needs. For example, apprentices working for retailers of electronic taxis benefit from electrical and IOSH safety training.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Following a significant decline to overall and timely achievement rates between 2013/14 and 2015/16, provider data for 2016/17 shows very significant improvement. Overall achievement rates for apprentices in 2016/17 were significantly above rates achieved by other providers and nationally. A good proportion also achieved their apprenticeship within planned timescales. The large majority of current apprentices are making good progress.
- A high proportion of adult learners achieve their qualifications. Construction site workers are prepared quickly to pass their plant operator diploma and speakers of other languages make rapid progress in improving their English skills on ESOL courses.
- A high proportion of apprentices move on from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships. The large majority remain in employment at the end of their apprenticeships.
- Apprentices take pride in their learning and gain new skills and knowledge. They develop a good range of technical skills that prepare them well for working in prestige car dealerships. The new skills and knowledge also help them to improve their performance at work. As a result, many make good progress and gain extra responsibilities.
- Apprentices develop very good personal, social and business skills during their training; they are courteous, respectful of each other and their trainers, and quickly become a valuable asset to their employers' businesses.
- The five motor vehicle apprentices who have been on a standards-based apprenticeship for one year have all passed Gateway 1 on time, at their first attempt, and with high marks. They have been identified as being capable of achieving merit- or distinction-level apprenticeships.
- A rapidly improving proportion of apprentices pass their functional skills qualifications at their first attempts. This is a direct result of the introduction of a specialist functional skills tutor who is teaching apprentices and supporting assessors to improve their own skills.
- There are no significant achievement gaps between different groups of learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59079
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	549
Principal/CEO	Christopher Newton
Telephone number	01235 553296
Website	www.the-covet.com www.calexuk.com www.npysl.com www.ltd-oxford.com

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	28	0	10	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	130	32	36	63	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for whom the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Calex UK head of apprenticeships, 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

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Beynon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Pemble	Her Majesty's Inspector

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