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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Trevor Hopkins
Director of Training
JBC Skills Training Limited
62–64 Moor Street
Earlsdon
Coventry
West Midlands
CV5 6EU

Dear Mr Hopkins

Short inspection of JBC Skills Training Limited

Following the short inspection on 13 and 14 February 2018, 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 September 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

After the previous inspection, you and your governors identified the need to strengthen JBC's leadership capacity for creating a vision and a strategy that would secure the growth of the provision. The appointment of a new managing director has delivered a clear and well-informed strategy on how JBC should continue developing, based on its strengths and the business opportunities presented by the regional economy.

Your governors have made a substantial investment in learning resources, support teams and the professional development of tutors. This has allowed you and your team to implement successfully the renewed development plan for the business. The two learning venues now present a well-equipped learning environment that welcomes learners and reproduces the professional standards found in the information and communication technology (ICT) companies they are based at. The newly created employer engagement team has already had a significant impact; the number of employers that you work with has more than doubled in the last year. In addition, the number of learners on programme is, similarly, much increased.

You and your governors took the brave decision to embrace the delivery of the new apprenticeship standards very early on, in 2016, and ahead of many providers, because you firmly believed in the benefits apprenticeship standards would bring to your learners. In having done so at such an early stage, you have faced the challenges often associated with the early implementation of change, such as lack

of detail and clarity on new processes related to end-point assessment. As a result of this, you and your teaching teams are making good use of the extensive knowledge you have gathered about the new standards. You have informed the awarding bodies' development and supported other providers and employers to adopt these.

You and your governors have tackled with varying degrees of success the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. This means that a few aspects still need further work to have a positive impact on the learning experience. A new area has been identified as part of this short inspection that you will need to address.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that the safeguarding arrangements meet the government requirements and are appropriate to safeguard JBC's learners.

Your comprehensive safeguarding policies have been appropriately informed by the most up-to-date relevant government guidance, including the 'Prevent' duty. You have been vigilant in ensuring that all teaching staff and managers, including the safeguarding designated officers, undertake regular and frequent safeguarding training that is commensurate with their roles and responsibilities towards protecting all learners. This has enabled you and your team to investigate safeguarding concerns promptly and appropriately.

You and your managers have placed good emphasis on ensuring that e-safety is well established in your provision. For example, appropriate filters are in place on the computers that learners have access to in the classrooms to make sure that they cannot access inappropriate content or materials on the internet. Learners demonstrate a thorough understanding of the importance of protecting personal data when using social media.

You and your managers have raised your staff's awareness of mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, particularly well, enabling them to identify any signs of these conditions affecting your learners and to direct learners towards specialist support.

Your teaching team have undertaken effective training on the identification of the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation. Subsequently, they have confidently increased to a very good standard the learners' understanding of these topics and how they apply to their workplace.

Inspection findings

- In the last three years since the previous inspection, the proportion of learners achieving their apprenticeship has been maintained and further increased last year, where almost all learners achieved their apprenticeship and did so within the planned time. Achievement rates at JBC are considerably above the latest

national average rates. However, four out of the 16 learners on a pilot qualification left immediately before undertaking their end-point assessment due to issues with their employer. This means that the predicted achievement rate for this year will be lower than last year's. Leaders and managers have applied well their learning from this experience to prevent similar withdrawals. You have supported employers with their performance management processes and have made the selection process for this specific qualification more rigorous, to ensure that prospective learners have the aptitude and suitability to undertake the apprenticeship. Current learners are making expected or better progress in preparation for the gateway stage of their apprenticeship. In addition, the majority of learners have undertaken additional qualifications, such as the vendor qualification, which are highly regarded in the industry and of benefit to apprentices' further progression.

- The curriculum for apprentices provides plenty of opportunities for them to develop further their mathematics skills. Learners' work demonstrates that they are improving the use of algorithms and binary arithmetic, for example. However, leaders have acknowledged that learning opportunities are not equally available for apprentices to build on their English skills. After the previous inspection, the extensive work required to introduce the apprenticeship standards distracted the reduced senior team from placing sufficient emphasis on agreeing a formal strategy to improve the development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills. This has been recently rectified, but it is too early to assess its impact.
- You and your team of assessors work very effectively now to ensure that learners are well prepared to meet the criteria for their apprenticeship standards at the point of assessment towards the end of their learning programme. Apprentices have clear individual plans containing assessments and progress milestones which afford them the opportunities to obtain evidence that demonstrates their gained competence. Assessors monitor learners' progress appropriately, and learners receive encouragement to gather broader evidence to increase their chances of gaining a merit or distinction. Learners have a good awareness of the progress they are making and what they still have to do to complete their apprenticeship successfully.
- One of the key outcomes in the implementation of the new business strategy is that the number of apprentices on programme has increased from 16 to 38 over the last year. Similarly, you have now extended the range and level of apprenticeships offered to meet the ICT needs of the employers based in Coventry and in Birmingham, where you are about to open a new site. You have set your employer engagement team challenging recruitment targets that aspire to have 100 apprenticeships on programme by the end of the year. You and your managers have taken many actions since the previous inspection to increase the participation of under-represented groups of learners. You have successfully increased the number of apprentices that attend learning at JBC from an ethnic minority background. However, despite your best efforts, recruiting female learners into the apprenticeship programmes remains a stubborn challenge, which is not atypical in ICT provision. A thorough action plan has been devised recently to rectify this, but it is too early to ascertain whether it has had an impact.

- You and your managers make good use of your quality assurance processes to monitor and sustain the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment found at the previous inspection. Leaders and managers use the feedback obtained from learners and employers to evaluate and improve aspects of the learning experience. For example, they have supported tutors to introduce a greater variety of activities in lessons to maintain learners' interest. However, leaders' and managers' evaluation of their provision is not sufficiently comprehensive. For example, the wider outcomes obtained by learners, such as their personal and social development or their further gains in English and mathematics skills, are not reflected sufficiently in your self-assessment report. In addition, you and your leadership team fail to communicate sufficiently well in the report the impact of your actions. This impedes you from formally identifying and rectifying those remaining weaknesses that are likely to play a critical part in securing provision of the highest quality.
- You and your assessor team promote very well the benefits of doing an apprenticeship in ICT in the schools, career fairs and job centres in the communities where you operate. Furthermore, you provide very effective support to prospective learners wishing to become apprentices. They receive extensive advice and preparation from your team, increasing their employability and enabling them to become more aware of the industry sector they are joining. During that stage, prospective learners value the help you offer them with compiling their CVs, completing online job applications and successfully undertaking job interviews. However, once on programme, apprentices – and in particular those who are aged 16 to 18, which account for half of your provision – do not benefit from the same good level of careers guidance throughout their programme and, more critically, towards the end of their apprenticeship to ensure that they can work towards realising their employment and career aspirations.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers and tutors fully implement the newly devised English and mathematics strategy to ensure that learners continue to develop these skills, and in particular their written English
- managers strengthen the provision of careers information, advice and guidance throughout the apprenticeship programmes, so that apprentices are fully informed about the job and career opportunities they can pursue after having completed their learning programme
- their evaluation of the provision is sufficiently comprehensive and that it measures the impact of their actions, enabling them to address the required areas for improvement and to deliver a learning experience of the highest standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Maria Navarro
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Inspectors were assisted by the director of training as nominee. They met governors, leaders, managers, tutors and learners. Inspectors carried out observations of teaching, learning and assessment. They scrutinised learners' work and portfolios of evidence and key documents relating to the provider's strategy and development plans, self-assessment and improvement processes and safeguarding records. Inspectors considered the views of employers through the responses received via Ofsted's online questionnaire.