

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Malcolm Armstrong
Managing Director
Access Training Limited
Kingsway
Team Valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
NE11 0JL

Dear Mr Armstrong

Short inspection of Access Training Limited

Following the short inspection on 24 and 25 April 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 June 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

Senior leaders, managers and staff have sustained the good quality of education and training provided for apprentices and adult learners. You and your team have strengthened further the focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, while maintaining your already strong assessment practices. Consequently, most apprentices and learners are making at least the progress expected of them.

You and your team have a clear strategic direction. You work well with local and regional partners to ensure that your provision is responsive to the needs of employers and to regional priorities and demands. For example, you have recently withdrawn from a small but underperforming area of provision. You have been very instrumental in the introduction of standards-based apprenticeships and in supporting your subcontractors to gain their own apprenticeship contracts so that more apprentices are recruited and gain employment.

Apprentices and learners benefit from good resources. These include English and mathematics workbooks, online diagnostic and training materials, the recently installed security systems training room, and qualified vocational trainers. You have ensured that your resources are used effectively and have a positive impact on enabling apprentices to gain the skills required and valued by employers.

You and your senior leaders provide critical challenge to managers and trainers by using data well to compare the outcomes for apprentices and learners with your targets. You are well informed about the performance and strengths of your

organisation as well as the areas that require further improvement.

Since the previous inspection, you have increased the number of apprentices slightly and have introduced standards-based apprenticeships in conjunction with your employer partners. You have ensured that appropriate progression routes onto higher qualifications and sustainable employment are part of your provision. Additionally, you have a good focus on ensuring that apprentices improve their English, mathematics, digital skills and behaviours as an integral part of their learning.

At the previous inspection, areas requiring improvement identified by inspectors included the monitoring of apprentices' progress with subcontractors, your English and mathematics strategy, the quality of written feedback, and the monitoring of actions in quality improvement plans. You and your senior leadership team have taken crucial and appropriate action to improve most of these aspects, leading to more apprentices and learners completing their programmes successfully and achieving their qualifications.

Safeguarding is effective.

Senior leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders, managers and staff at all levels have undertaken appropriate training and continue to do so on a regular basis. Staff are very aware of their responsibility to protect apprentices and learners from the possibilities and risks associated with extremist groups and radicalisation. Apprentices behave well while attending learning sessions and in the workplace; they demonstrate high levels of respect and courtesy for their colleagues and their trainers. They know how to keep themselves safe and they say they are safe.

Managers responsible for safeguarding have good relationships with relevant external partners and local agencies to ensure that all apprentices and learners are safe. They work very well with subcontracting partners to identify any safeguarding issues and react well to support apprentices and learners when necessary.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and managers know their provision well. They review and monitor the quality of the provision rigorously and effectively. Senior managers intervene effectively when they recognise underperformance. They have ensured that achievement rates across almost all subjects and levels continue to improve each year.
- Senior leaders and managers have a good focus on improving the standard of teaching and learning. The processes for observing teaching, learning and assessment are rigorous, and observers make accurate judgements on the quality of provision and the progress that apprentices and learners make. Leaders and managers use information from observations well to evaluate the performance of trainers and their subcontractors, and take appropriate and timely action to tackle areas of underperformance. As a result, almost all

apprentices remain in their current employment on completion of their programme and a high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications and progress into sustainable employment or further study.

- Leaders and managers have forged very good relationships with their subcontractors and manage their performance well. Rigorous monitoring and performance review meetings occur regularly and cover all aspects of compliance and key performance indicators, including the observations of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have worked exceptionally well alongside their subcontractors to ensure that apprentices who transferred from a failed provider are well supported and make good progress towards the completion of their programmes.
- Apprentices and learners have a good understanding of the need to improve their English and mathematics skills to aid their chances of gaining employment or promotion and to improve their communication skills in the workplace. A very high proportion of apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications as part of their apprenticeship, with a significant proportion achieving at a higher level than that required by their programme. They value the opportunity to improve their skills as part of their training and work assiduously towards improving their expertise. However, trainers do not routinely encourage apprentices to continue to develop their English and mathematics skills throughout the full duration of their apprenticeship.
- The large majority of apprentices and learners make good or better progress towards achieving their intended qualification and programme outcomes. Trainers make good use of information about apprentices' and learners' starting points, prior attainment and intended outcomes to plan learning and identify milestones on the new standards-based apprenticeship. However, employers are not routinely involved in this process, particularly on the standards-based apprenticeship where employment behaviours are an integral aspect of the programme.
- Apprentices benefit from effective feedback that helps them to make good progress and improve the standard of their work. However, a minority of trainers do not routinely record the feedback that they give to apprentices or involve employers sufficiently in apprentices' progress meetings. Consequently, in a number of instances, employers do not know what skills apprentices need to gain at work in order for them to make more rapid progress or achieve their qualification outcomes.
- Apprentices and learners benefit from good and effective impartial careers advice and guidance. Managers have a clear strategy to ensure that apprentices benefit from employment opportunities. Staff guide and support prospective applicants well to prepare them for employers' interviews. Good, ongoing advice and guidance help apprentices make informed decisions about possible promotion opportunities at work or the option to progress to higher-level qualifications in their chosen occupational area.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- trainers routinely provide apprentices with effective feedback that will help them to improve their work, continue to develop their communication and mathematics skills, and help them make more rapid progress
- employers become more involved in planning learning and checking apprentices' progress, and make contributions to the ongoing review and target-setting meetings in order to be able to provide the training or work opportunities required.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Hunsley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, we were assisted by the quality manager, as nominee. We met with you, your senior leaders, managers and trainers. We visited lessons with members of your management and lesson observation teams to observe teaching, learning and assessment and to look at apprentices' and learners' work. We spoke to apprentices and learners, held meetings with staff and your subcontractors and reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners, employers, parents and carers by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires and by seeking the views of learners during the on-site inspection activity.