

# Weir Training Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

16–17 May and 22–23 May 2018

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is an outstanding provider

- Directors and managers have successfully established a culture where they and their staff are passionate advocates for high-quality apprenticeships and for the success of their apprentices.
- Directors have successfully driven forward improvement since the previous inspection, including for outcomes for learners and for teaching, learning and assessment, which are all now outstanding.
- Governance is excellent because of good strategic direction and overview and the rigorous monitoring of performance by directors.
- In close partnership with employers, directors pay very good attention to employers' and local skills needs in planning their provision.
- Apprentices value their programmes highly, make excellent progress and achieve consistently high standards.
- Very skilled training specialists provide highly effective training, delivered in successful partnership with employers and which they relate to apprentices' and employers' priorities.
- Training specialists use employers' business objectives to set challenging and relevant projects for apprentices, which successfully extend their learning, develop skills, and enhance job progression.
- Apprentices' attainment of their apprenticeships, including functional skills where relevant, is high.
- Apprentices make excellent progress in their jobs, often gaining promotion, and many continue their training.
- Robust quality improvement, by directors, managers and training specialists, has apprentices' progress at its heart, and includes prompt actions to remedy weaknesses.
- Directors and managers have introduced apprenticeship standards particularly well.
- Directors, managers and all staff ensure a culture in which aspects of equality and diversity have a high profile in training, and where they expect employers to play their full part in exemplifying good practice.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- Weir Training Limited, established in 2000, is a private limited company, with two executive directors. It is located in Chobham, Surrey, just inside the M25, and close to Heathrow Airport. The company provides apprenticeships, across a wide geographical area, including Surrey, Berkshire and immediately surrounding areas.
- Programmes operate at intermediate, advanced and higher levels for apprenticeship frameworks and at levels 2, 3 and 4 for standards-based apprenticeships. Currently, framework programmes are in retail and commercial enterprise, business, administration and law, and in information communication technology (ICT), and for the new standards in each of these areas. Apprentices, nearly all of whom are adults, are with 47 different employers, ranging from micro to large-scale businesses.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- To maximise improvement and maintain high performance, directors and managers should ensure that self-assessment and quality improvement plans are always fully evaluative, with detailed targets for improvement, to provide consistently strong support for directors' and staff's productive quality initiatives.
- To maintain the momentum of improvement in the quality of training, especially in the context of growing provision, directors and managers must make best use of their valuable training observations to identify common threads for improvement in teaching, learning and assessment more rigorously.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- Since the previous inspection, directors and managers have ensured significant improvement to the quality of training and to outcomes for learners. They have addressed all of the key areas for further improvement from the previous inspection. Outcomes for learners and teaching, learning and assessment are now outstanding, as are apprentices' personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- The two directors, who now work full-time at Weir Training, are at the heart of its successful strategic and operational management. They are committed to the provision of high-quality apprenticeships by working successfully in close partnership with employers. They have developed a portfolio of apprenticeships, which meets the needs of employers and of the local labour markets. Increasingly, Weir Training's high reputation means that it is often dealing with international and global employers.
- Directors and managers are introducing apprenticeship standards successfully. Directors have taken a positively measured approach to this, only starting programmes when they and their training specialists know that the rigour and quality of the standards are high. Employers consider that directors and managers are experts, who act for them as a constant point of reference when they grapple with the intricacies of the new apprenticeship arrangements.
- Directors and managers fully implement a clear strategy to develop apprentices' English, mathematics and ICT skills beyond those required by their particular apprenticeships. They have been particularly thorough in the ongoing development of apprentices' ICT skills through their 'digital' initiatives.
- Directors are very successful in promoting a culture of high standards across the company. They are painstaking in their support for apprentices. They work highly effectively, with their small team of managers and training specialists, by setting clear priorities for the improvement of training and leading in the rigorous analysis and review of apprentices' performance.
- Directors and managers ensure rigorous quality improvement. At their monthly, or more frequent, meetings of directors with the curriculum project manager and the apprenticeship manager, and of the latter with training specialists, the focus is on the continuous monitoring and review of apprentices' progress and performance. They promptly agree actions to improve their own performance, that of apprentices and of employers. For example, employers play a very positive part in the quarterly reviews of apprentices' progress, but at one point directors and managers determined the need to refresh employers' interest. Discussion and action with employers led to improvement.
- Directors understand that they are not getting the best from their work with self-assessment and the overall quality improvement plan. While these identify broad areas for action and improvement, they are insufficiently specific and evaluative to shape and underpin quality initiatives. This is particularly the case with the outcomes of the well-managed observations of training and assessment, which directors use well to help improve the individual work of training specialists. However, they do not summarise, analyse and use them sufficiently at the overall company level.

- Training specialists promote debate on how to improve their training and support for apprentices. They are innovative in the development of their training and increasingly share best practice, focused through their 'share and care' discussions. Since the previous inspection, the sharing of good practice has become routine. Training specialists with key responsibilities for particular areas of development share and utilise their expertise to support consistent delivery.
- Directors and their staff keep themselves fully up to date with their work-related skills. Directors and managers very well support training specialists to develop their training skills and subject expertise, and to make good use of their professional development opportunities.
- Directors, managers and all staff ensure a culture in which they promote aspects of equality and diversity very effectively, so that apprentices' understanding is high. In particular, they are very good at ensuring that employers meet their obligations for equality and diversity to their apprentices. Directors and managers act quickly to tackle any instances of prejudiced behaviour.

### **The governance of the provider**

- The two founding directors of Weir Training provide its excellent governance. They successfully execute their clear strategy to provide high-quality apprenticeships, in close partnership with employers. At the same time, they secure the company's capacity to maintain and grow its provision efficiently and effectively.
- Directors are at the heart of the essential arrangements for safeguarding and support for apprentices, including health and safety and equality of opportunity.
- Directors use their excellent understanding of work-based learning and of the complexities of apprenticeships, to promote the most appropriate individualised programmes for their apprentices.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. With the strong leadership of a director, serious attention to safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, permeates all aspects of the company's work.
- The thoroughness and comprehensiveness of policies and procedures noted at the previous inspection continue to improve. Staff's and apprentices' training is up to date and uses the latest training available from specialist agencies.
- Of particular value is that training specialists, during apprenticeship reviews, check, reinforce and update apprentices' understanding of key aspects of safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values. This is a detailed activity, which they integrate well with the review.
- Nearly all the apprentices are in employment and directors and their staff work hard to ensure that employers understand their responsibilities and implement agreed safeguarding arrangements.
- Directors and managers ensure that they meet their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty.

Training for staff is exhaustive and innovative. Apprentices have a good understanding of why they need to know about the 'Prevent' duty and of what they need to do should they have any related concerns.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Directors and managers have ensured that teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly since the previous inspection, resulting in the very large majority of apprentices making excellent progress on their programmes.
- Directors, managers and training specialists plan apprenticeship programmes very well. They work productively with employers and apprentices to meet the needs of individuals and businesses and ensure that programmes fully meet the principles and requirements of apprenticeships.
- Training specialists have high expectations of their apprentices. They are well qualified, use their good commercial experience well to enliven learning, and make good use of questioning to check and deepen apprentices' understanding. Training specialists are particularly skilful in coaching apprentices very effectively to derive the evidence required to meet the assessment criteria for their programme.
- Training specialists use key business objectives, individualised for each employer, to generate relevant and challenging projects for apprentices. Apprentices and their employers respond very well to these. The projects provide very good opportunities for apprentices to extend their learning and develop skills, and to increase their responsibilities and their value to employers.
- Directors and managers ensure that staff use comprehensive initial assessment to fully identify apprentices' skills and aspirations. Training specialists thoroughly use the outcomes to ensure that the projects apprentices undertake best meet their needs and help fulfil their personal development. They also use initial assessment to identify which apprentices require additional support for the development of their functional skills.
- Training specialists are very well aware of their apprentices' quality of work and progress. In a very supportive way, they regularly and frequently assess and review apprentices in the workplace. Training specialists are careful to involve employers and, as a result, employers are very clear about the progress their apprentices are making. In reviews, training specialists successfully encourage apprentices to reflect on their progress, and set clear targets for them. Assessment fully meets the requirements of the awarding bodies.
- Directors and their staff track apprentices' progress carefully by making very good use of an electronic portfolio. This allows managers to monitor progress and arrange speedy interventions when required. In support of this highly successful monitoring, the apprenticeship manager holds monthly one-to-one meetings with each training specialist to rigorously analyse the progress of their apprentices.
- Managers and training specialists develop apprentices' skills in English, mathematics and ICT very effectively. Apprentices receive good individual coaching support, in addition to full coverage of the functional skills during the monthly assessors' visits, which leads to much higher achievement. Training specialists and apprentices use high-quality resources very effectively to support apprentices' learning.
- In contrast to the previous inspection, apprentices studying business administration now

receive good support in the development of their ICT skills, leading to a qualification for all apprentices, irrespective of whether it is a mandatory part of their programme.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

- Apprentices work to high standards and develop good skills in their vocational areas, and in such areas as manipulating data effectively using technology, effective project management, problem-solving, communicating and management.
- Apprentices are articulate and can describe the skills that they have developed with confidence. Training specialists ensure that apprentices' English skills improve during their programme. This includes, for example, the better writing of emails and developing greater confidence in communicating effectively with clients.
- Managers and training specialists ensure that apprentices undertake projects that provide them with significant additional opportunities, in which they take greater responsibility, and which meet the needs of their employers well. In one case, for example, apprentices developed new operating procedures to improve the uploading of files to servers, for the benefit of staff and clients. Following on from this, they wrote a new user guide and initiated staff training in the use of these new procedures.
- Staff and employers ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of how to keep safe in the workplace. Apprentices feel safe. They are clear how to keep themselves and their data safe online. They are aware of the risks and dangers of extremism and radicalisation and of what to do should they become concerned about potential risk. Staff include the 'Prevent' duty well in meetings with apprentices and in their assessments, and apprentices complete an online 'Prevent' duty awareness programme.
- Apprentices develop a sound understanding of British values. During reviews, training specialists are effective in checking, reinforcing and updating apprentices' understanding of this topic.
- Training specialists and employers promote good health and safety practices. For example, they check that apprentices have received appropriate manual handling training. Apprentices working on computers are clear about the need to take regular breaks and receive advice about how to reduce the risk of repetitive strain injuries. Staff and apprentices regularly discuss these topics during progress reviews.
- Apprentices develop their English, mathematics and ICT skills well, including those who have already achieved the standards required by their apprenticeship. Training specialists plan good use of projects to help apprentices in this respect. Many projects have a data collation and process requirement, involving the use of statistical functions in spreadsheets. For example, one apprentice gathered, analysed and processed customer feedback data, displaying the results in graphs to enable a manager to have a clear idea of the company's performance.
- Managers provide particularly good opportunities for apprentices to continue to develop their ICT skills, and they can pursue qualifications, regardless of whether or not they are a requirement of their programme.
- For the very small number of apprentices aged 16 to 18, the quality of careers guidance

before and during their programmes is good. Through thorough individual advice and guidance, training specialists match apprentices to appropriate programmes. Careers guidance is an important strand of the training specialists' work.

- As a result of the good careers advice and guidance provided by staff, apprentices are very clear about their next steps. The impact of this is evident in high success rates and through the progression apprentices make to new job roles and promotion. Staff also valuably help apprentices prepare for interviews for promoted positions.

## Outcomes for learners

## Outstanding

- Apprentices' progress and achievements have continued to improve since the previous inspection. Nearly all apprentices make excellent progress on their programmes, and the large majority successfully complete their courses, in a timely fashion. Apprentices following the new standards also make very good progress, but they have not yet taken any end-of-programme tests.
- Apprentices' achievement is high across most apprenticeship frameworks. In the small minority where it is not high, usually with low numbers starting, this is often because a few adult apprentices have unavoidably ceased their programmes due to life and work changes.
- Directors, managers and training specialists monitor the progress of all apprentices particularly well and take prompt action, including significant additional support, when apprentices are at risk of falling behind.
- Directors and managers ensure that apprentices study for, and take, the additional qualifications in English and mathematics required by their apprenticeship programme. Apprentices' successful completion of these functional skills is high and increased considerably in 2016/17.
- Directors' and managers' careful analysis of apprentices' progress and achievement revealed a significant gap in achievement in 2016/17, when females achieved significantly better than males. However, this gap has largely disappeared in 2017/18.
- A minority of apprentices have additional learning needs, and their successful completion is well above that of the national average for all apprenticeships.
- Many apprentices make excellent progression within their current employment, or by moving to promoted roles with other employers or through further studies at a higher level.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	55295
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	340
Principal/CEO	Julie Ridley and Sarah Caines
Telephone number	01932 567626
Website	<a href="http://www.weirtraining.co.uk">www.weirtraining.co.uk</a>

## 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+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	6	39	7	81	0	13		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by one of the two directors of the company, 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 apprentices and their employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed training sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

David Martin, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Griffin	Ofsted Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector

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