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Mr Alan Cave
Chief Executive
EXG Ltd
Unit 40, Newtown Shopping Centre
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Dear Mr Cave

Short inspection of EXG Ltd

Following the short inspection on 4 and 5 July 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 March 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

Since your previous inspection EXG Ltd (EXG) has become part of APM Limited (APM), a much larger independent learning provider. While EXG continues to have a separate contract from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), it no longer has an independent identity. All systems and procedures for EXG are now integrated into those used by APM. The brand under which EXG markets and promotes itself is that of APM, and all staff and learners associate with that organisation.

EXG's curriculum almost exclusively focuses on provision for adults, with the main courses being employability, functional skills in English and mathematics, and information technology (IT) qualifications. The organisation has a very small number of apprentices still on roll; however, it has not recruited apprentices for two years.

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have maintained the quality of provision across the organisation. They have worked effectively to ensure that staff continue to offer a high standard of training and education to learners. Leaders and managers have not fully addressed all the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. However, a newly appointed head of quality and compliance recognises where managers need to make further improvements, and is in the process of putting in place strategies to bring that about.

Those learners interviewed during the inspection spoke very positively of the value

and opportunities they gain from their time studying at EXG. They appreciate the high level of commitment shown by the teachers in supporting and encouraging them to succeed. This fulfils the organisational mission of 'enabling better lives', and fits strategically with other elements of the parent company's business focus, which cover skills, employment, youth and justice.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers give safeguarding a high priority. Safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive, and appropriately integrate the 'Prevent' duty. Staff promote British values effectively to learners. The organisation has in place suitably trained designated safeguarding officers. All staff, including board members, receive regular safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.

As part of learners' induction, teachers advise learners how they can keep themselves safe in different situations, including e-safety and the risks in each region associated with radicalisation and extremism. Teachers reinforce these themes through their teaching, often using current themes to make the topics relevant to learners. As a result, most learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and know whom they should contact if they have any concerns. Managers have good links with external agencies in the regions in which they operate, such as with Local Safeguarding Children Boards. They keep a detailed log of any safeguarding or related concerns. Managers deal with incidents swiftly and make referrals to external agencies where appropriate.

Inspection findings

- Leaders have managed the merger with APM effectively. Leaders at EXG and those of APM share common values that underpin their business well and focus strongly on providing support to learners who come from a range of disadvantaged backgrounds. Managers continue to foster strong and effective links with partner organisations, in particular the local enterprise partnerships, local chambers of commerce, Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service. These strong partnerships are key to leaders developing the curriculum to meet the training, educational and developmental needs of those learners who are referred from these organisations.
- Since the previous inspection, the proportion of adult learners who successfully complete their qualifications has remained high. Data for 2017/18 indicates that staff are successfully maintaining that trend. Managers recognise that the progress made by the very small number of apprentices has been slow. This influenced leaders' and managers' strategic decision two years ago to cease recruiting any more apprentices. Leaders confirmed that this decision will be reviewed when managers have redesigned the apprenticeship delivery model to ensure that it is able to respond to the needs of the new apprenticeship standards and address previous weaknesses in this area.
- While staff at each centre are able to report verbally on the very positive destinations of many of the learners, the process to capture, record and report on this information is weak. Leaders and managers acknowledge this weakness.

They are in the process of putting in place suitable strategies to ensure that the organisation can track and monitor progression and destinations far more effectively.

- Teachers accurately assess learners' starting points to ensure that they place learners on appropriate courses. They use information from these early assessments effectively to develop personalised learning plans. However, these plans do not always contain sufficiently detailed targets, or detail to make it clear to learners what they should be doing to improve.
- Teachers monitor the progress of learners well and provide them with detailed verbal feedback. This helps to ensure that the very large majority make good progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers identify learners' broader development needs well. They provide very good personal and welfare support, which helps learners achieve their aspirations and goals. Leaders and managers maintain strong partnerships with external agencies, in particular the National Careers Service, which enable learners to access suitable careers advice and guidance. As a result, learners receive effective guidance and individual support to help them consider their next steps.
- Leaders and managers have a sound understanding of the relative strengths and areas for improvement of the organisation. Managers recognise the shortfalls of the current quality assurance processes. The newly appointed head of quality and compliance is clear that, historically, there was an over-emphasis on financial performance indicators, and insufficient focus on learners' progress. Managers are introducing new systems to enable them to record and report more accurate, timely and relevant data on learners' performance. They have also introduced a new quality board to provide a more critical overview and to track and monitor progress in greater detail.
- Managers create good opportunities for teachers to improve their skills. They also maintain an effective overview of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers have good access to staff training and continuing professional development. They maintain comprehensive professional development records that illustrate the breadth of their learning opportunities. Managers use their lesson observation process effectively. They provide clear actions to teachers to help them focus on improving their teaching and assessment practices. Managers hold monthly standardisation meetings with teachers that provide useful opportunities for staff to share good practice with other colleagues. Staff have also recently received relevant and timely updates on topics such as how to embed British values and the 'Prevent' duty within learning activities.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and managers should ensure that:

- teachers and assessors finalise the new delivery model for apprenticeship standards prior to relaunching and enrolling new apprentices, and ensure that it is sufficiently robust to raise the quality of the apprenticeship provision
- teachers not only discuss targets with learners, but ensure that they record accurately those activities and goals for learners that will enable them to refer to their records and make the best progress
- they track and monitor the progress of learners more thoroughly and evaluate the quality of provision more effectively.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Nelson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Ofsted Inspector visited the provider for two days. The head of quality and compliance, as nominee, assisted the inspection team. Inspectors spoke with senior leaders, managers, teachers and learners. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment and reviewed learners' work. They also reviewed achievement and progression data, and key policies and documents, including those related to self-assessment, quality improvement, performance management and safeguarding.