

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Jon Gibson
Didac Limited
Woodwise Academy
Riverside
Crews Hole Road
BS5 8BB

Dear Mr Gibson

Short inspection of Didac Limited

Following the short inspection on 10 and 11 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 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

Didac Limited (Didac) specialises in furniture-making, woodworking and joinery. It also supports the retail sector linked to these specialisations effectively. Your well-equipped academy in Bristol provides good-quality experiences for apprentices and employers regionally and nationally. The small number of learners aged 16 to 18 who are following a level 2 study programme in furniture-making are also well supported.

You and your newly restructured senior leadership team have made good progress in many of the areas for improvement reported at the previous inspection. The addition of a recently appointed senior manager responsible for quality improvement is a positive step, which is beginning to show impact. Didac continues to provide a supportive environment for apprentices and study programme learners. Consequently, apprentices and learners gain useful new knowledge and skills that improve their future career options.

The teaching and assessment of practical skills are good. As a result, apprentices and learners develop very good practical skills and self-confidence, and a high proportion achieve their qualifications. Apprentices develop excellent industry knowledge and behaviours and they quickly become an asset to their company. For example, customers with a trade supplier ask to deal with apprentices by name because they receive such good service.

Almost all apprentices who achieved their qualifications over the last three years have gained employment within their chosen career. A large proportion of

apprentices were retained by their apprenticeship employer. Almost all of the small number of learners who completed their level 2 study programme in furniture-making last year moved on to apprenticeships or employment.

You continue to have strong links with your employers and with external organisations. Your team's expertise has been influential in developing the new apprenticeship standards in furniture-making. You work well in partnership with the local training provider network to benefit learners across the region. For example, you have collaborated on the development of an online package to teach learners about fundamental British values.

Safeguarding is effective.

Directors and staff take appropriate actions to keep learners safe. Managers act swiftly on the rare occasions that incidents occur, keep appropriate records and regularly review safety practices. For example, your senior team reacted immediately to feedback from an inspector about a few study programme learners who were wearing inappropriate footwear in the workshop. Managers provided alternative footwear or non-workshop activities for these learners, reminded staff what was expected and revised risk assessments. You understand that it is vital that you ensure that learners are wearing correct protective equipment at all times.

All staff have undertaken appropriate training in safeguarding and 'Prevent', and you plan to provide additional training to your designated safeguarding officers to extend their knowledge even further. The requirements of the 'Prevent' duty are met. However, your 'Prevent' action plan is not yet sufficiently developed and requires further detail on possible risks and how these are minimised.

Most apprentices and learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe at work or in the academy. Learners' knowledge of staying safe online, and of the dangers of extremism, is less developed as staff do not reinforce these topics sufficiently well beyond learners' induction.

Inspection findings

- Directors and senior managers know the strengths and weaknesses of Didac well, and these are reflected in a useful self-assessment report. You are strengthening your quality assurance processes. For example, senior managers are providing staff with useful advice on how to improve the quality of provision as a result of their monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, managers have not used the findings from their monitoring to produce a comprehensive quality improvement plan that identifies areas for improvement sufficiently well. They do not check that actions are bringing about the desired improvements carefully enough.
- Senior leaders have an in-depth knowledge of individual apprentices' and learners' progress, and they monitor this well through regular meetings and good use of internal systems. Managers analyse the performance of different groups of apprentices and learners effectively, for example by gender or age. This analysis

enables managers to plan relevant courses and provide appropriate support, where it is required, to apprentices and study programme learners with additional learning needs.

- Apprentices and study programme learners make very good progress, especially in their development of practical skills in furniture-making and joinery and in dealing with customers. They produce very good standards of work. For example, study programme learners made a fully functional tool box with drawers and doors to a very high standard. Furniture-making apprentices develop useful computer-aided design skills, and joinery apprentices produce high-quality finished products such as gothic windows.
- Your staff make frequent, well-planned visits to apprentices and their employers that ensure apprentices make good progress through their apprenticeship. This contributes to a large majority of apprentices completing their qualifications within their planned timeframe. Although trainer/assessors set apprentices targets regularly, these are often short-term and administrative rather than focused on the longer-term development of specific skills and knowledge.
- Apprentices who are following new standards are not always aware that they can achieve distinction grades, because your staff have not discussed this with them. Not all trainer/assessors set work or targets for more capable apprentices to aim at this higher grade.
- You and your team have excellent relationships with apprentices' employers. You offer flexible models of training that meet employers' needs well, and frequently provide bespoke training to specific employers and apprentices. Didac has increased the amount of off-the-job training for a large proportion of apprentices so that they have the chance to learn and practise new skills. However, staff need to ensure that a small number of apprentices spend more time being trained in order to reach their potential.
- Resources for apprentices and study programme learners are of a high quality. Your workshop contains industry-standard equipment that teachers use effectively to prepare study programme learners and regionally based apprentices well for working in the sector. You have invested in a virtual learning environment that contains excellent resources for apprentices. You monitor the use of these resources well, but have yet to determine how useful these are in helping apprentices to learn new, or consolidate existing, knowledge.
- The Didac team has excellent links with a range of external organisations. These include the British Woodworking Federation, the Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network and a large apprenticeship training agency that you helped to establish. These strong links have enabled you to share expertise, influence the development of apprenticeship standards and benefit apprentices and employers regionally and nationally.
- Most apprentices are clear about the career pathways available to them and the skills, knowledge and attributes that they need to do well in their chosen career. Most of your trainer/assessors have regular discussions with apprentices about career and course options. A large proportion of previous apprentices found work related to their apprenticeships.

- Managers plan information, advice and guidance sessions for apprentices at specific points in their apprenticeship, but fail to monitor closely that they take place. Not all study programme learners have a clear idea of their next steps as staff have not helped them consider all of their options fully.
- A large majority of apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Apprentices consolidate the English and mathematics skills that they need as part of their work through regular use of these skills, for example in the accurate measuring and cutting of timber. However, very few apprentices develop English or mathematics skills beyond those that they need for their apprenticeship because trainer/assessors do not plan and provide sufficient learning for them. Your staff do not provide enough help to apprentices who have achieved relevant qualifications before they start their apprenticeships, or the few study programme learners who have already achieved a grade D or 3 at GCSE, to develop their English and mathematics skills further.
- Not enough study programme learners completed useful work experience related to their course this year. Those who did not participate completed valuable projects, but did not benefit from working with employers in the furniture-making sector. Your staff do not oversee learners' work experience sufficiently well or set appropriate work for learners so that they gain more from their time with employers.

Next steps for the provider

Directors should ensure that:

- senior managers use all available information to develop a strategic quality improvement action plan and check regularly that actions are completed. This should inform directors of progress and confirm that actions and initiatives are benefiting apprentices and learners.
- the 'Prevent' action plan is developed further to mitigate all possible risks to your apprentices, learners and staff. Staff need to make all apprentices and learners fully aware of the potential risks from radicalisation and extremism and how to stay safe online.
- staff are provided with sufficient training and support in English and mathematics so that they have the confidence and ability to extend these skills for apprentices and study programme learners.
- staff use their excellent links with employers to provide a higher proportion of learners on study programmes with high-quality work experience in your specialist sector and increase the amount of off-job training for a small number of apprentices.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Flint
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the managing director as nominee. We met with senior managers and directors, trainer/assessors, learners and apprentices, and employers. We reviewed learners' work and Didac Ltd systems to monitor learners' progress and welfare. We observed teaching, learning and assessment, accompanied by managers. We considered the views of learners through Ofsted's online questionnaire, face-to-face discussions and phone calls. We also reviewed key documents, for example those related to self-assessment and quality assurance, performance monitoring of staff, and safeguarding.