

# The Growth Company Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

30 October–2 November 2018

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Governors and leaders have successfully rectified most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders' and managers' strategies to improve teaching, learning and assessment have been successful. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the range of apprenticeship programmes they offer make a strong contribution to reducing local and regional skills gaps.
- A high proportion of apprentices and learners who remain on their courses achieve their qualifications.
- Governors and leaders promote a highly inclusive ethos. Programmes successfully engage apprentices and learners who face barriers to learning and employment.
- Apprentices and learners develop good practical skills and produce work of a high standard.
- A high proportion of adults achieve useful qualifications that help them to gain employment or progress to higher education.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within their planned end date is not yet consistently high across all subjects.
- Too many learners on 16 to 19 study programmes at level 2 leave their course and do not achieve their qualification.
- Apprentices and learners who are from Black and minority ethnic heritage do not achieve as well as their White British peers.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The Growth Company Limited (TGC) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 1989. The focus for TGC is economic, personal and professional development within communities across the Greater Manchester region. The company provides apprenticeships, adult learning programmes and 16 to 19 study programmes. Apprenticeships focus on priorities for the Greater Manchester skills strategy and needs of the local labour market. Adult learning programmes are primarily aimed at meeting the needs of unemployed adults and those wishing to return to study to progress to higher education. TGC engages with the hardest to reach young people and adults in the region.
- Approximately two thirds of study programme learners, three quarters of adult learners and nearly half of apprentices come from the most deprived wards in the Greater Manchester region. The unemployment rate in the Greater Manchester region is slightly higher than that for the North West and for the United Kingdom.

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

- Rapidly increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes by the planned end date across all subject areas so that achievement rates are consistently high.
- Identify why learners on study programmes at level 2 leave their courses early and implement effective actions to ensure that learners remain on their course and achieve their qualifications.
- Ensure that actions to reduce the lower achievement rates for apprentices and learners from Black and minority ethnic groups are closely monitored and successful.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders have successfully rectified most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Learners on study programmes now make good progress. Off-the-job training is effective and ensures that apprentices develop a good range of technical and specialist skills. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good.
- Senior leaders instigated a root and branch review after the previous inspection. They have restructured the management team and have successfully introduced new roles. These place a high priority on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and on the quality of the learners' experience.
- Strategies to improve the quality of courses are rigorous, comprehensive and effective. The quality improvement plans at subject level are thorough, detailed and set clear measurable targets. Senior leaders monitor progress against these carefully. When courses do not achieve targets, a 'notice to improve' is instigated. This results in improvement actions and very close scrutiny of their impact. For example, qualification achievement rates for learners on construction level 1 study programmes have improved significantly due to this approach.
- Governors and senior leaders promote a highly inclusive ethos. Learners and apprentices have good opportunities to engage in learning, irrespective of their starting points and barriers to learning. Learners treat each other with respect and behave responsibly.
- Senior leaders and managers work closely with local partners and employers. This results in a well-planned, coherent curriculum that meets the needs of residents and employers in Manchester and also the regional priorities for the Greater Manchester region. For example, a project to recruit staff with a large international company resulted in local people gaining employment in warehouse roles.
- Most staff who observe lessons provide reliable and accurate judgements of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers use performance management processes effectively. Tutors and managers who do not improve their practice to the required standards leave the company. Staff appraisals are thorough and lead to appropriate improvement targets.
- Managers have successfully improved the quality of subcontracted courses and now rely less heavily on subcontractors. The large subcontract for the teaching and learning framework apprenticeship that had low achievement rates at the previous inspection has been taken in-house. The proportion of apprentices who gain their qualification has subsequently increased.
- While the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification in the planned time has improved, in a small number of subjects these proportions remain stubbornly low. Managers recognise this and have a rigorous action plan at subject level to address this issue.

- Self-assessment accurately identifies the key strengths and weaknesses of courses. However, the associated action plan does not set clear and measurable targets to enable senior leaders to have a clear view of headline progress.

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

- The governing body has been strengthened since the previous inspection. Governors now have a good range of business, financial and educational skills, experience and expertise and support senior leaders effectively. They provide challenge when improvements are not made quickly enough.
- Governors now receive detailed reports from senior leaders that help them to monitor the quality of courses effectively. This has resulted in improvements in all of the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers maintain an accurate and up-to-date single central record of checks on staff, including for those at subcontractors. Designated safeguarding officers ensure that all staff have introductory and refresher training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead has had appropriate training and members of the team have had specialist training, such as that relating to child sexual exploitation. The relevant staff have had safe recruitment training. References and eligibility to work in the United Kingdom are followed up diligently when required.
- Designated safeguarding officers are well informed about potential risks to learners' safety. They make good use of local intelligence to protect learners from extremist views and develop appropriate training. Designated safeguarding officers are highly vigilant and report any concerns to the local 'Prevent' officer.
- Learners demonstrate a good awareness of how to work safely in workshops and in their workplace. For example, they wear the correct personal protective equipment and demonstrate the correct procedures for their industry. Learners know who to go to if they have any concerns and understand how to work safely online.
- Effective partnerships exist with local safeguarding teams, external agencies and voluntary organisations; for example, with the local authority designated officer, local safeguarding board and local 'Prevent' officer. Staff respond quickly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns raised by learners.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders and managers plan and provide learning programmes that help apprentices and learners develop good vocational practical skills and gain qualifications. For example, adult learners on courses for employment gain essential qualifications to work safely in the construction industry.
- The vast majority of tutors and skills-development coaches are highly qualified. They use their knowledge and expertise well to plan and provide activities that engage and motivate apprentices and learners. For example, tutors encourage adult learners to use

social media to share their knowledge and experiences and support each other. However, in a few theory lessons tutors pitch teaching at middle-ability learners and do not ensure that the less and the most able learners make good progress.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have reviewed the advice and guidance that apprentices and learners receive before being enrolled on a programme. A centrally managed recruitment team is now in place to ensure that all apprentices and learners receive good advice and are assessed thoroughly before beginning their course. As a result, apprentices and learners are now recruited to the most appropriate course and level.
- Most tutors have high expectations of their learners. They accurately identify learners' starting points by assessing their level of knowledge, skills and behaviours. They set challenging targets so that learners can make the progress of which they are capable. Learners on study programmes make at least expected progress in the theory element of their course and make better progress in developing practical skills. Adult learners make good progress; the large majority progress to further study or employment.
- Skills-development coaches monitor apprentices' progress frequently, which enables them to identify when apprentices make slow progress. Staff provide support to help apprentices catch up quickly when they fall behind. As a result, the majority of apprentices make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. However, staff set targets for apprentices that are too focused on completion of units of qualifications and not on their wider skills development.
- Most apprentices and learners produce written work to the standard required for the level of their programme. Apprentices and learners on construction and engineering courses demonstrate high standards of practical work. For example, level 2 engineering study programme learners independently recalibrate lathes using specialist equipment.
- Tutors and skills-development coaches do not develop apprentices' and learners' English skills in vocational lessons and in their written work well enough. Too many apprentices and learners make slow progress in developing their English skills. A few tutors do not provide learners on study programmes with correct information to help them gain confidence and improve their application of mathematics skills.
- Tutors and staff do not use the information they have on apprentices and learners with additional support needs to plan and provide learning effectively. Strategies are too generic and not specific enough to meet learners' and apprentices' individual needs to help them make the progress of which they are capable.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders, managers and staff have put in place rigorous actions that have been successful in improving apprentices' and learners' attendance. The majority of apprentices and learners attend their lessons regularly and are punctual.
- Apprentices and learners demonstrate positive behaviours. They work cooperatively and respectfully with their peers and staff. Learners on study programmes develop a good awareness of social responsibility through a range of planned activities. For example, learners participate in environmental cleaning projects for local waterways and raise money for local charities. However, a few tutors do not challenge study programme

learners' use of inappropriate language.

- Tutors help learners develop skills that prepare them well for employment. For example, learners on adult learning programmes improve their curriculum vitae writing and practise their interview techniques. Learners on study programmes participate in a range of purposeful work-related activities and work experience. For example, level 1 hairdressing learners practise skills such as blow drying and braiding on 'live' models in the salon. This helps build their confidence and prepares them for work experience in local salons.
- Apprentices and learners receive good careers advice and guidance. Learners benefit from a wide range of activities such as visits, external guest speakers, including local and national employers, and careers advisers. Apprentices and learners know what their next steps are and what they need to do to achieve them.
- Support for apprentices and learners is good. Staff monitor apprentices' and learners' progress carefully and swiftly intervene to ensure that they remain on target to achieve their goals. Apprentices and learners value the personal support they receive, which builds their confidence and improves their self-esteem. Apprentices and learners enjoy their learning and are proud of their achievements. For example, level 1 construction learners evaluate their plastering skills with high levels of enthusiasm.
- Apprentices develop their mathematical skills through effective integration into their learning. However, tutors in vocational lessons do not plan sufficiently to extend learners' mathematical skills over time.
- Apprentices and learners do not develop their English skills quickly enough. Tutors do not routinely identify or help apprentices and learners to improve their spelling or punctuation. Consequently, apprentices and learners repeat mistakes, which slows the progress that they make in improving these skills.
- Apprentices and learners feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe. For example, study programme learners are aware of the risks associated with online safety. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of radicalisation and extremism. However, not all apprentices have a good enough understanding of these issues.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have addressed most of the weaknesses that existed at the previous inspection and, as a result, outcomes for apprentices and learners are now good. The majority of apprentices and learners make at least good or better-than-expected progress.
- According to the provider's data for 2017/18, the proportion of learners on study programmes at level 1 who achieved their qualifications improved and is now high. While qualification achievements for study programme learners at level 2 improved from 2016/17, too many learners leave their programme early.
- English functional skills qualification achievements for learners on study programmes have significantly improved at all levels. Two thirds of all learners achieve their functional skills qualifications in English. Mathematics functional skills qualifications improved at entry level and are now high.

- Although achievement rates for mathematics functional skills at level 2 improved in 2017/18, these are still too low and require further improvement. The proportion of learners who resit their GCSE English and mathematics qualifications to achieve higher grades is too low.
- The proportion of apprentices in 2017/18, according to the provider's data, who achieved their qualification improved. The proportion of apprentices who achieved within their planned end date has improved over the last three years. However, improvement has not been consistent in all sector areas. For example, achievement rates remain low in construction, business and administration apprenticeships.
- Leaders and managers have introduced successfully more rigorous monitoring of apprentices' progress. Currently, the large majority of apprentices are making good progress towards successfully completing their apprenticeship within their planned end date.
- Leaders and managers have sustained the high qualification achievement rates for learners on adult learning programmes. Learners on short courses for employment gain qualifications and skills that help them progress to employment. Learners on access to higher education programmes develop skills for further study. Most achieve their qualifications and progress to higher education.
- Apprentices and learners enjoy their courses. They gain good vocational practical skills that enable them to produce work to a high standard. For example, apprentices in engineering use their skills very successfully when preparing mechanical components to high tolerance levels for installing in complex production equipment.
- The proportion of learners who progress to further study, apprenticeships or employment is high.
- Leaders and managers have rightly identified in their most recent self-assessment that apprentices and learners from Black and minority ethnic groups do not achieve as well as their White British peers. Actions are in place to close the gap in achievement for these groups of apprentices and learners.

## Types of provision

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Currently, there are 476 learners on vocational 16 to 19 study programmes. Programmes range from entry level to level 3. Nineteen learners are studying at entry level, 289 at level 1, 167 at level 2 and one learner at level 3. Programmes include construction, engineering, retail, hairdressing, childcare, and preparation for life and work. Programmes are delivered at eight training centres across the Greater Manchester region.
- Leaders' and managers' planning and management of study programmes are good. Managers design programmes that meet the needs of local employers well. Programmes are planned so that learners can access learning throughout the year. This ensures that learners can quickly gain skills and qualifications that help them progress to employment and apprenticeships.
- Most tutors use their specialist subject knowledge well to plan and provide learning that challenges and motivates learners. As a result, learners enjoy their lessons and make

good progress in developing their skills. Learners produce practical work to a high standard and complete tasks that are above the level required for their qualification. For example, learners on level 1 motor vehicle studies complete complex paint respraying tasks using industry standard equipment.

- Tutors provide useful oral feedback to learners that helps them improve their practical skills. For example, in plumbing practical lessons tutors help learners improve the speed of their work when fitting waste pipes to better reflect industry standards. However, too often tutors' feedback on learners' written work does not correctly identify errors or inaccuracies. Consequently, learners do not improve their theoretical written work or their English skills as quickly as their practical skills.
- Learners benefit from effective support. Support staff review learners' progress frequently, which helps them stay on target to achieve their goals. As a result, the vast majority of learners who complete their course achieve their vocational qualifications. However, too many learners who enrol on level 2 vocational study programmes leave their courses early and do not achieve.
- Learners demonstrate a good understanding of fundamental British values. Tutors skilfully develop learners' confidence in discussing and debating topics that are relevant to their everyday lives. For example, in English lessons learners discuss how British law supports a parent whose children have been abducted and taken abroad to regain custody of the children.
- Most learners display positive behaviours and attitudes to their learning. They are respectful to their tutors and each other. Learners feel safe and demonstrate safe working practices in vocational workshops.
- Tutors provide learners with good careers advice and guidance. Learners know what they want to achieve next and what they need to do to progress. The proportion of learners who progress to further learning, apprenticeships or employment is high.
- In a few theory lessons, tutors do not provide learning to meet the needs of all learners. The pace is too slow and tasks are not sufficiently challenging for the most able learners to enable them to make fast enough progress. For the less able learners, tutors do not check and consolidate learning before moving on to the next topic, which results in them making slow progress.

## Adult learning programmes

**Good**

- Currently, 213 learners are enrolled on adult learning programmes. Ninety-four are on access to higher education programmes. This has five pathways: health and social care; education; childhood studies; business; and nursing and midwifery. Sixty-two adults are on level 1 and 2 construction courses in painting and decorating, joinery, plastering and scaffolding. The remaining 57 learners are on short courses for employment.
- Leaders and managers ensure that adult learning programmes meet the needs of employers and the local community. Short courses are designed with employers to meet local recruitment needs in specific sectors such as retail and warehousing. As a result, a large proportion of unemployed adults who complete their courses gain employment in these industries. The access to higher education programme has been designed to encourage learners from disadvantaged communities to return to learning. A high



proportion of adults on these courses progress to higher education to further their studies.

- Tutors use their subject knowledge well to provide activities that enable learners to make good progress on their courses. Adults on vocational courses develop good practical skills for the construction industry that improve their job prospects. Learners on access to higher education courses develop their research skills to help them complete assignments and extend their writing skills.
- Most tutors accurately identify learners' starting points and monitor their progress carefully. They ensure that learners know what they need to do to achieve their qualifications and improve the standard of their work. As a result, the proportion of adults who successfully achieve their qualifications remains high.
- In a few lessons, tutors do not check learning sufficiently to ensure that less-able learners understand specific concepts before moving on to new topics. This hinders the progress of a few learners. They do not use the information they have on learners' starting points consistently to provide tasks that challenge the most able learners.
- Tutors provide learners with useful and detailed feedback to help them improve their work. For example, access to higher education learners receive feedback on the subject-specific content of their assignments and their academic writing skills. This helps them gain higher grades in subsequent assignments. Learners on construction courses receive evaluative feedback on their work that helps them produce work to a good standard.
- Learners benefit from effective careers advice and guidance that helps them make informed choices about study options and career development. For example, unemployed learners on short courses attend recruitment fairs to explore local job opportunities. Tutors provide learners on access to higher education courses with a range of information on local universities and courses and learners attend university open days.
- Learners on adult learning programmes enjoy their learning. They gain confidence and take pride in their work. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now high for the majority of learners.
- Learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns they have. They demonstrate a good awareness of the threats of radicalisation and extremism. Learners are respectful and demonstrate positive behaviours in their learning centres.

## Apprenticeships

**Good**

- At the time of the inspection 2,349 apprentices were in learning; 776 at level 2, 1,282 at level 3, 182 at level 4 and 109 at level 5. Framework apprenticeships account for 60% of apprenticeships and standards-based apprenticeships for the remainder.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the apprenticeship provision makes a strong contribution to reducing the local and regional skills shortages. Apprenticeships on offer include business, administration and law, construction, planning and the built environment, and health, public services and care.
- Leaders and managers make sure that the provision complies with the apprenticeship-programme regulations. When employers are reluctant to allow apprentices to have the required amount of time for off-the-job learning, they no longer work with them.

- Apprentices' starting points are clearly defined. Skills-development coaches plan off-the-job training and learning systematically to meet apprentices' individual learning needs. They build on apprentices' prior attainment and prepare them successfully for sustained employment and career progression. Managers, skills-development coaches and employers do not plan on-the-job training so systematically.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning. Their self-confidence increases and their self-esteem improves. They develop good relationships with their tutors, other apprentices, and their workplace managers and colleagues.
- Most apprentices acquire a good range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours and become increasingly efficient in their job roles. For example, apprentices in health and social care gain knowledge and skills that enable them to reflect on and improve their health, safety and hygiene practices. Employers value highly apprentices' increasing efficiency and the good contribution they make to their businesses.
- Skills-development coaches integrate mathematics into most apprenticeship programmes very effectively. Many apprentices improve their mathematical knowledge and skills and apply them very effectively to tasks they carry out in their workplace. For example, scaffolding apprentices apply their mathematical skills very successfully to plan and erect scaffolding using data taken from scaled drawings.
- Leaders, managers and skills-development coaches have high expectations for apprentices. They monitor apprentices' progress rigorously and identify at an early stage those apprentices who are not making the required progress. Skills-development coaches provide good support to enable apprentices to catch up as quickly as possible. However, the proportion of apprentices who complete and achieve their programme by their planned end date is not yet high.
- Many apprentices do not make sufficient progress in developing their competency in oral and written English. Skills-development coaches do not refer routinely to the grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors in apprentices' written work, with the result that they are repeated. Occasionally, skills-development coaches accept superficial answers and they do not tell apprentices what they can do to improve the quality of their work.
- Apprentices' learning targets are too narrowly focused on completing units from the qualifications they are working towards. Skills-development coaches do not pay enough attention to setting targets that focus on apprentices' wider development for their current job roles and for their intended career progression.
- Too many apprentices have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and British values. They do not understand fully how they relate to their work and their personal lives.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	53233
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	7,370
Principal/CEO	Jayne Worthington
Telephone number	0161 2332628
Website	<a href="http://www.growthco.uk">www.growthco.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	308	81	167	71	1	61	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	355	421	537	745	40	251		
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:	Dutton Fisher & Associates Utility & Construction Training Limited							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of learning, 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 learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Elaine Price, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charles Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Keenan	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Ingle	Ofsted Inspector
Andrea Dill-Russell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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