

Marson Garages (Wolstanton) Limited trading as Martec Training

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Name of lead inspector: Victor Reid, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Martec Training was inspected in October 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Currently, 55 learners are on programme working towards a range of motor vehicle-related qualifications. Of these, 46 learners attend study programmes, two learners are on a traineeship, and seven learners are working towards a level 2 standards-based apprenticeship. The company also provides training for a small group of apprentices under a subcontract agreement with a local college of further education. This provision was out of scope for this monitoring visit.

Themes

What progress are leaders and managers making in ensuring greater objectivity when evaluating and reporting on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment?

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have revised and strengthened their oversight of, and reporting arrangements for, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have developed a more comprehensive and accurate observation process than was formerly the case. As a result, governors and leaders now have a more detailed and informed understanding of the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision.

Senior leaders and managers are improving both the rigour and frequency of observations of learning delivered by trainers. Managers routinely review most aspects of each learner's programme, including learners' attendance, their starting points and the standard of their work, to inform their view on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Most observers are improving their skills at judging the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment. The large majority of observers provide constructive feedback to trainers on the strengths and weaknesses of their practice. Observers also routinely comment on the extent to which planned classroom and workshop activities have a positive impact on learners' progress and achievement. Although most observers' written feedback is detailed, a few observers focus too much on teaching rather than on assessing its impact on learning. In a few cases, observers'

feedback is overly descriptive and insufficiently evaluative, so that it does not effectively support improvement.

Managers now routinely risk-rate the performance of all trainers, following initial observation. This informs the planning and organisation of professional development support which trainers receive, as well as the timing of any follow-up reobservations. Managers provide good professional support and advice for trainers to improve where their performance is not in line with leaders' high expectations. For example, trainers have recently undertaken targeted training to improve their confidence in the planning of learning. This includes accommodating the range of learners' prior achievements and developing their coaching skills. In addition, vocational tutors have completed additional training to support them in helping learners to improve their skills in English and mathematics. Managers ensure that tutors whose performance is of concern are reobserved promptly to establish any evidence of improvement. Trainers whose performance does not improve following support quickly leave the organisation.

A small minority of trainers have yet to receive an annual observation in line with the company's observation strategy. As a result, leaders and managers do not yet have a complete view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the entire provision. In addition, when good or better practices are identified through observation, managers do not ensure that these are swiftly shared and implemented across all programme teams.

The extent to which teachers and assessors routinely make skilful and effective use of information on learners' and apprentices' prior learning and attainment in planning challenging learning.

Reasonable progress

Leaders have introduced a range of well-considered initiatives to improve the monitoring and oversight of learners' and apprentices' progress. A detailed English and mathematics diagnostic assessment provides accurate information of learners' skill levels and support needs. Leaders have also recently introduced a personal and social skills initial assessment tool, to establish their starting points in these skills. This provides more insightful information on learners' strengths and on those aspects that they could improve. However, a very small minority of learners who start their course late do not have their initial starting points recorded well enough. These learners do not make as secure progress as their peers.

Trainers frequently track and monitor the progress that learners are making in their English, mathematics and vocational qualifications. Most study programme learners had completed their vocational qualifications at the time of the monitoring visit. Similarly, most learners and apprentices have now completed their functional skills qualifications or are awaiting results of examinations. Leaders' records indicate that more learners are leaving the programme early than was the case last year.

However, most of those learners who have stayed on are on target to achieve their qualifications.

In practical lessons, tutors plan and use effective learning activities that enable the majority of learners to gain a good understanding of the correct technical terminology and skills used in their industry. For example, learners on level 1 motor vehicle programmes contribute to their own initial assessment by identifying relevant personal goals, including the skills and knowledge that they need to improve. Tutors support learners to practise and hone these skills when undertaking a range of well-considered vocational tasks. These include carrying out a basic engine service, replacing worn brake pads and checking the alignment of a car's steering geometry. As a result, most learners can demonstrate that they understand the basic technical language required to explain what they have learned in practical tasks. Learners on the traineeship programme receive effective coaching in small, classroom-based groups. This helps their preparation for work placements and future employment, including progression to apprenticeships.

Too many tutors focus on the recording of unit completion to inform managers' views of learners' progress. They do not ensure that targets are set to improve learners' skills, knowledge and behaviours above the expected level of the qualification. Tutors' reviews do not identify the skills, knowledge and behaviours which learners have gained during their programme outside of the requirements of the qualification. In a few cases, trainers do not set sufficiently ambitious personal targets to enable learners to make good progress towards achievement.

The impact of actions taken by managers and teachers to ensure that learners and apprentices benefit from meaningful feedback on how to improve their performance and develop their vocational, personal and English and mathematics skills.

Reasonable progress

Leaders have introduced new marking and feedback policies. These set out clear expectations of staff and provide a detailed set of entitlements as to what learners can expect regarding the quality and consistency of marking and assessment feedback. Managers have also implemented a well-considered staff development programme focusing on practical strategies to improve tutors' skills in providing learners with informative and detailed feedback.

Most trainers have improved their levels of confidence in providing learners and apprentices with helpful feedback that informs them what they do well and where further improvements are required. Inspectors' work scrutiny of a sample of learners' portfolios indicates that an increasing proportion of learners are now routinely benefiting from more detailed and informative feedback than was formerly the case. As a result, most learners now have a clear understanding of the progress they are

making in their studies and what they need to do to improve their work to achieve their qualifications.

Managers and trainers have improved their use of information to track learners' and apprentices' progress more closely and to offer timely support to those identified as being at risk of not achieving. Previously, the level of risk was based solely on attendance. Managers and tutors now also consider learners' and apprentices' punctuality, behaviour and the standard of their work. Regular monthly course team meetings are effective in enabling managers and tutors to identify and respond to any emerging areas of underperformance.

A small minority of trainers are not yet following the principles set out in the recently developed marking and feedback policy. As a result, feedback that they provide to learners is insufficiently evaluative. Most learners benefit from tutors setting clear, short-term targets, which helps them to focus on what they need to do to meet assignment deadlines. However, long-term targets and associated feedback focus too much on the completion of units and not enough on individual development needs and interests. For English and mathematics, teachers' judgements and the feedback that they provide are based too much on the results of mock assessments and not on learners' wider learning and skills development over time.

The effectiveness of actions being taken by governors and leaders to strengthen self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes, with a clear focus on the impact of actions taken to raise standards and improve the quality of learners' and apprentices' experience.

Reasonable progress

Governors and leaders have recognised the need to improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection. They have undertaken a wide-ranging review to strengthen their scrutiny and oversight of internal quality assurance processes and improve reporting and monitoring arrangements. Membership of the governing body has been strengthened through the appointments of additional external members who possess a wide range of skills, including expertise in education and training.

Board members have greater access to pertinent data and information. As a result, they are improving their ability to scrutinise reports and to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of provision. Minutes of governors' meetings now reflect more clearly the knowledge and understanding that governors have as to the quality of provision. Board minutes demonstrate an increased level of challenging and probing questions about key operational performance measures.

Governors and leaders have ensured that the self-assessment report (SAR) and the associated quality improvement plan (QIP) have benefited from externally commissioned reviews. These are now well-focused and informative. Leaders have ensured that the format and structure of the information contained with the SAR are

evaluative and focused. Within the report, there is increased use and visibility of operational performance data relating to learners' progress and outcomes both in-year and over time, and against stated performance targets.

Leaders and managers have well-constructed plans for the different aspects of improvement. The revised QIP appropriately sets out what needs to improve across the provision and the specific actions that leaders and managers are taking. Responsibilities for implementing each of the stated actions contained within the plan are well-defined. Target dates for achieving actions are realistic and challenging.

A few of the actions for improvement set by leaders within the QIP focus too much on the development and implementation of new 'processes' and 'initiatives' with insufficient consideration of their impact on learners' everyday experience. Leaders have ensured that the plan sets out appropriate short-term improvement targets. However, the improvement document has yet to incorporate any long-term milestones or set out how these would relate to wider operational key performance indicators. As a result, governors do not yet have a complete overview of information needed to demonstrate the full impact of improvement actions.

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