

WS Training Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

25–28 June 2019

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders have not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for study programme learners.
- Leaders have not significantly improved the proportion of learners and apprentices who achieve their qualifications.
- Tutors do not challenge learners and apprentices to ensure that they make good progress in their learning. Learners and apprentices do not develop their skills and knowledge beyond the basic requirements of their qualifications.
- Too few learners on study programmes benefit from timely impartial careers advice to ensure that they make informed decisions about their next steps.
- On study programmes, too many learners miss lessons. Too few learners attend regularly enough to make good or better progress in their learning.
- Assessors do not ensure that employers are sufficiently involved in the planning, assessment and reviewing of apprentices' skills development. Too few employers have a good understanding of the current progress of their apprentices

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders work very effectively with the local authority and partners to provide good preparation for employment for learners with high needs.
- Assessors and tutors use their vocational knowledge and experience effectively to enable apprentices and learners with high needs to make good progress.
- Learning support assistants use their knowledge and experience effectively to support closely learners who have high needs. Consequently, these learners quickly develop their skills to live and work independently.
- Leaders have a strong focus on improving the English and mathematics skills of learners and apprentices. A higher proportion now achieve their qualifications.

Full report

Information about the provider

- WS Training Ltd is a medium-sized independent learning provider located in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. It has four sites located around Ipswich and in Colchester. Apprentices and learners are recruited from a wide range of localities in the East of England.
- At the time of the inspection there were 329 adults and young people on apprenticeships. In addition, 47 learners were on study programmes and 56 learners were on specialist courses for those with high needs.
- WS Training Ltd works with four subcontractors. They deliver Prince's Trust programmes for young people, and apprenticeships in human resources, and the construction industry.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers need to rapidly improve the number of learners and apprentices who pass their qualifications by ensuring that:
 - study programme learners attend their lessons and remain in learning
 - assessors and tutors support study programme learners and apprentices better to develop their skills and knowledge beyond the basic requirements of the qualification
 - assessors plan and review learning, knowledge and skills development with apprentices and their employers
 - tutors benefit from more targeted professional development activities to improve the quality of their teaching practice.
- Leaders and managers must improve careers advice for study programme learners to ensure that learners can make informed decisions about their next steps.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rapidly enough. They do not focus sufficiently on teaching and learning in staff and management meetings. There is too little discussion about what makes teaching and learning good and what needs to improve further. Managers do not set clear improvement actions for tutors that would enable them to improve their teaching.
- Leaders do not analyse the achievement of learners in enough depth. As a result, improvement in the proportion of learners and apprentices who achieve their qualification has been slow.
- Leaders' self-assessment and their arrangements for quality improvement are not yet having enough impact. Improvement plans do not always link to self-assessment and often do not focus enough on the impact improvement actions have on learners.
- Leaders and governors have a clear strategic aim to serve the community in Suffolk and meet the needs of learners in this area. They use their links with Suffolk County Council, employers and the local enterprise partnership to plan their provision purposefully. Leaders provide courses for learners that meet their specific social and learning challenges very effectively. As a result, provision for learners with high needs is good. Leaders use their good links with employers to plan apprenticeship programmes that very effectively meet the skills needs of a range of industries, such as in engineering and construction.
- Leaders have a clear and effective strategic focus on improving learners' English and mathematics skills. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of learners and apprentices who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications.
- Leaders manage subcontracted provision effectively. Leaders have significantly reduced the number of subcontractors they work with due to concerns regarding the quality of learning they provided. Subcontractors' results are now similar to, or better than, the rest of the provision.
- Leaders have established an effective equality and diversity committee. They identify and discuss issues in relation to equality and diversity, such as the existing achievement gaps between different groups of learners and ways to improve the achievement of these learners. Leaders' efforts in this area are recent and are yet to have an impact on ensuring that different groups of learners pass their qualifications equally well.
- Appropriate staff training enables staff to understand how to best help and guide their learners. For example, staff are trained to manage instances of inappropriate learner behaviour and are suitably informed and knowledgeable about how to safeguard learners. They use this knowledge to help learners better manage the range of challenges they face in their lives.
- Leaders and managers have acted quickly to rectify where apprentices were not getting their full entitlement to off-the-job learning.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are effective. They have been strengthened to provide the appropriate financial expertise and experience of further education that was previously lacking.
- Board members challenge senior leaders effectively. For example, they influenced the strategic decision to reduce the number of subcontractors. They have established more rigorous arrangements for assessing new subcontractors to be approved by the board.
- The external members of the board understand the organisation well. They visit staff regularly to discuss performance and observe teaching and learning. As a result, they know the strengths and weaknesses of the provider. For example, they recognise that strategic objectives and targets should be improved and focus on the impact on improving learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The external board members understand the issues in the local area and those affecting the learners at the provider. Leaders ensure that board members are updated on safeguarding concerns.
- Leaders follow safer recruitment practices. They complete appropriate checks on staff prior to commencing employment, updated every three years, and keep detailed logs of these checks.
- Leaders have effective arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns which staff and students understand. The designated safeguarding lead follows up any concerns appropriately and works effectively with social workers, carers and parents where necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Tutors and assessors do not make enough use of learners' and apprentices' starting points to plan activities that enable them to develop their skills and knowledge beyond the basic requirements of their qualifications. As a result, too few learners and apprentices make good progress in developing high-quality vocational skills.
- Tutors do not ensure that study programme learners take enough pride in the presentation of their work. Tutors do not help these learners to improve the quality of their handwriting over the length of their course. Consequently, their work does not show enough improvement over time.
- Assessors and tutors do not always set high expectations for learning. They often do not provide learning and assessment that challenges more able and confident apprentices and learners to make rapid progress or expand their knowledge.
- Assessors and tutors do not routinely plan off-the-job learning training to develop apprentices' wider skills and knowledge. Training focuses overly on completing elements of the qualification, not on skills development. As a result, it does not deepen apprentices' subject knowledge or higher-level thinking skills.

- Tutors and assessors ensure that learners and apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills effectively. For example, engineering assessors teach apprentices how to use ratios through their practical work. As a result, an increasing number of learners achieve their functional skills qualifications.
- Tutors and assessors are suitably qualified and have good subject expertise and industry knowledge. Tutors use this experience to work effectively with learners from a variety of backgrounds and different levels of ability, some of whom have significant barriers to learning.
- Tutors and assessors carry out frequent checks on the progress of learners and apprentices. Learners who have high needs reflect successfully on their own performance to identify clear and time-bound actions. Tutors ensure that parents and carers of learners who have high needs are fully involved in planning their programmes and the setting of appropriate targets.
- Tutors ensure that most learners benefit from high-quality and effective additional support to help them achieve their courses. Staff carry out a thorough assessment of all learners' support needs early in their programmes. Learning assistants successfully help learners to remain in class despite their anxiety levels. Learners who have high needs are expertly supported to develop their skills and independence, such as following health and safety procedures effectively in a busy working kitchen.
- Tutors and assessors successfully develop learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity. For example, learners who have high needs are encouraged to prepare meals in the café that reflect local, cultural diversity. On occasion, tutors do not confidently challenge learners' stereotypical views and inappropriate comments made in classes.
- Tutors of learners who have high needs know their learners well. They use this knowledge to plan learning activities that help learners successfully achieve their personal targets. Consequently, most of these learners make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Too few learners on study programmes have good attendance at their lessons. While tutors help learners to resolve a range of social and behavioural challenges, the impact of this help is not effective enough to ensure that they attend their lessons regularly enough to make good progress in their learning.
- Tutors do not routinely help learners make informed choices about their next steps. Too many study programme learners have not benefited from effectively planned or timely impartial careers advice. Consequently, too many do not know what they will do once they finish their course.
- Assessors and tutors do not ensure that apprentices and learners on study programmes understand the impact that British values have on their daily lives. Too few learners and apprentices understand the importance of British values or know the relevance of them to their work settings, their everyday lives and interactions with others.
- Tutors help learners who have high needs to develop their self-confidence very effectively. These learners participate in a range of good quality work-related activities which develop their communication and team-working skills. For example, learners work

in the café, serving customers, learning how to cook food and how to keep the environment clean.

- Tutors help study programme learners develop a range of additional skills effectively. Learners become more resilient through participating in a range of team activities. They are better able to manage their anger and stress levels.
- Assessors ensure that apprentices successfully apply their new knowledge and skills within their work settings, for example by revising the dining arrangements in a care home so that residents' preferences are considered.
- Learners enjoy the friendly and small learning environment. They know the staff well and are confident to approach them for help if required. Learners feel safe and know how to avoid difficult situations such as bullying and how to protect themselves when using social media.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications continues to improve, but is not yet high enough. On study programmes, not enough learners remain in learning and achieve their qualifications. A high proportion of current learners left their learning early. Apprentices' achievement remains low.
- Despite recent improvements, there remains too much variation in the achievement of different groups of learners. For example, the achievement of male learners on study programmes remains significantly below that of female learners, and learners from different ethnic backgrounds do not achieve equally well.
- Most learners do not make good progress based on their starting points. While the standard of learners' work meets the requirements of their qualifications, and apprentices gain skills appropriate to their job roles, more talented and able learners and apprentices do not develop their skills and knowledge beyond the basic requirements of the qualification.
- Leaders and managers have significantly improved the proportion of learners who achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. However, while the proportion of apprentices who achieve their functional skills qualification is improving, it is not yet good.
- Learners and apprentices who successfully complete their studies gain employment, move on to further study or remain in full-time work. Almost all apprentices remain in full-time work once they have completed their apprenticeship. An increasing number of apprentices are progressing onto higher-level study or gaining promotion within their workplaces.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Around a tenth of learners follow study programmes, designed for learners who have been excluded from school and who have significant challenges that prevent them from remaining in learning. Most learners study short 12-week courses.

- Managers have not ensured that enough learners on study programmes participate in external work experience. As a result, too few learners develop a clear understanding of the behaviours and skills required to gain jobs, and too few continue into work or further study on completion of their programme.
- Tutors do not ensure that enough learners understand how to keep themselves healthy physically. For example, tutors allow learners to bring energy and sugary drinks into lessons. They do not discuss the impact of these on learners' long-term health.
- Most learners behave maturely in lessons and in the centre. Tutors ensure that learners clearly understand managers' expectations regarding good behaviour and learners' own responsibility towards themselves and others. As a result, they develop appropriate personal and social skills. However, in a few lessons, tutors fail to appropriately challenge learners' derogatory language or disruptive behaviour.
- Tutors improve learners' team-working and communication skills through a range of enrichment activities, for example boating, taking part in community projects and working with learners who have high needs. Learners increase their confidence and self-esteem as a result.
- Staff help learners to become more self-aware and manage their own concerns and anxieties effectively. External speakers and trainers visit classes to help learners understand a range of topics, such as mental health, suicide, stress and anger management. Staff refer learners to external counselling services where required, which often helps them to remain in learning.
- Staff provide a safe and friendly learning environment. Learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Of the 329 apprentices, approximately half study qualifications at intermediate level, a few at higher level and the rest at advanced level. Most apprentices are adults studying standards-based apprenticeships, over a range of subject sectors, including business, health care, engineering, hairdressing and management.
- Assessors do not ensure that employers are sufficiently involved in the planning, assessment and reviewing of apprentices' skills development. Too few employers have a good understanding of the current progress of their apprentices or understand precisely the skills and knowledge apprentices should be developing. As a result, they do not know how they can help them to make good progress or support them to practise and develop their skills further when at work. On higher-level programmes, assessors rarely involve apprentices in the planning and reviewing of their learning and progress. They do not enable apprentices to manage their own learning and skills development.
- Managers have not ensured that enough apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. Leaders have recently strengthened arrangements to support apprentices better to gain these skills. However, this is a recent initiative and is yet to have a significant impact on apprentices' achievement within agreed timescales.
- Leaders and managers use their close links with employers and the local enterprise partnership to design apprenticeships carefully. Consequently, apprenticeships match employers' skills shortages and help fill local job opportunities. Managers now ensure that

employers will comply with the requirements of the apprenticeship programme before enrolling their apprentices.

- Tutors help most apprentices develop their technical knowledge. Apprentices use technical language confidently and understand the theoretical knowledge behind practical tasks. This helps them contribute productively to their workplaces. For example, a construction apprentice frequently takes responsibility to rectify issues on his employer's snagging list.
- Apprentices' behaviour in the workplace is very good. Apprentices develop their personal and social skills well. They are confident in expressing their opinions and asking to take on additional work. For example, an intermediate-level apprentice asked to complete additional, more difficult tasks to extend his knowledge further. Apprentices feel safe at work and know who to talk to should they have any concerns.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- Managers provide courses for 56 learners receiving high needs funding from two local authorities. The learners follow three pathways ranging from pre-entry to level 2. Courses have a different focus depending on learners' prior learning and skills, aspirations and abilities. All learners attend for three days each week.
- Tutors and managers ensure detailed communication between the local authority, parents, carers and learners is used effectively to plan courses. Learners participate in individually tailored programmes which lead to greater independence in their everyday lives. Learners access courses based appropriately on their previous qualifications, knowledge, anxiety levels and career aspirations.
- Staff effectively use the information about learners' abilities, skills on entry, and their education, health and care plans (EHCP). The information provides an appropriate baseline for further learning. Leaders capture learners' progress well through a range of appropriate assessments. This motivates learners to improve their skills and abilities continuously.
- Tutors use their expertise to provide good-quality teaching and support for learners who have high needs. Learning support assistants use their knowledge, skills and training to support the additional learning requirements of learners very well. Managers carefully match learning assistants' skills to provide the most effective support and guidance for learners. As a result, the large majority of learners rapidly improve their skills and knowledge.
- Tutors ensure that learners frequently visit the community, go shopping and learn how to travel on their own. Tutors provide learners with lots of opportunity to develop their social communication skills. As a result, learners improve their independent living skills, self-esteem, confidence and resilience.
- Tutors ensure that all learners study mathematics and English at an appropriate level. Information and communication technology are used very effectively to help learners research careers information and to complete project work. This supports learners to develop these valuable skills for their independent living and future job roles.
- Managers secure appropriate additional services to support learners' specific needs, such as music therapy. For the few students who require speech and language therapy, they

access appropriate external support from specialists. As a result, most learners make good progress and achieve their learning goals.

- Learners who have high needs achieve better than their peers. Tutors and learning support assistants have high expectations of learners. Assessment is timely, frequent and accurate. Learners receive concise and constructive verbal feedback to support their next steps. However, too many tutors provide cursory feedback on learners' written work. This does not enable them to know how to improve their work to a high standard.
- Learners' behaviour is good. They have high attendance and enjoy their studies. They gain confidence through working in a range of settings, for example the provider's café, working in local farms and on an allotment. As a result, learners increase their independence and take responsibility for their own safety and well-being.
- Tutors, learners, parents and staff from local authorities work closely with learners to plan their next steps and destinations as part of their EHCP reviews.
- Safeguarding is effective. Learners feel safe and secure at the provider and on placements. They know how to report any concerns they may have. They have an appropriate understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Safeguarding and equality and diversity are promoted well. Learners live and feel safe in a diverse society.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55448
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,040
Principal/CEO	Jane Wood
Telephone number	07703 295022
Website	www.wstraining.co.uk

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)	68	24	4	7	–	13	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	104	61	31	112	–		21	
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	56							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Lawtonash Training Services A14 East Anglia Ltd Blue Sky Assessing and Consultancy Ltd Inspire Suffolk (Princes Trust)							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy chief executive of 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

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Philip Elliott	Ofsted Inspector
Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector

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