

Inspection of Central Training Academy Limited

Inspection dates: 10–13 March 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Central Training Academy (CTA) is an independent learning provider based in Southend-on-Sea. CTA has sites throughout Essex and London. A few study programme learners are situated in Rotherham and Derby. It provides learning programmes predominantly in hairdressing. It also offers a range of other courses, such as digital media, business administration and customer services. At the time of the inspection, CTA had approximately 550 apprentices, most studying at level 2. It had 140 young learners on study programmes mainly in hairdressing, beauty therapy, information and communications technology and sport, and 50 learners on traineeships. CTA had two learners with high needs. In addition, they had 63 adult learners on hairdressing, beauty therapy or English and mathematics programmes. CTA work with 10 subcontractors to deliver all provision types.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners are prepared for employment very effectively through their learning programmes. Apprentices quickly succeed in their workplaces. Employers understand the apprenticeship programmes. They tailor activities at work to support their apprentices' progress. Adult learners gain valuable skills and knowledge required for employment. Young learners, particularly those on traineeships, quickly build their confidence and resilience. Most progress to an apprenticeship or directly into work.

Learners benefit from additional activities that relate to their intended careers. For example, adult learners on the level 2 hair and make-up programme volunteer at a local theatre. They experience how different stage lighting affects stage make-up. Hairdressing apprentices take part in regular competitions and industry trade events.

Learners have good attitudes towards learning. They are motivated to do well. Most young learners and adults have poor previous experiences of full-time education. Learners and apprentices value the opportunity to learn. Staff understand learners' backgrounds. They use this information effectively to support learners to achieve.

Learners are safe in their learning environments and in the workplace. Most learners and apprentices have a sound understanding of how to stay safe at work, in learning and in their daily lives. For example, they have good awareness of their personal safety when travelling through London. Most learners and apprentices understand the importance of British values. For example, hairdressing apprentices show respect for clients' views in relation to politics and religion.

The experience of learners on study programmes with newly appointed subcontractors is too varied. Too many of these learners do not receive a good quality of education. Too many learners do not receive impartial careers advice and guidance. Too many learners are not well prepared for English and mathematics examinations.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders ensure that most young learners and adults improve their future prospects. Many learners who have previously disengaged from education quickly improve their confidence. They are motivated to achieve. The traineeship programme is particularly effective. As a result, young learners are well prepared for the demands of an apprenticeship. Most progress seamlessly to their next stage of education or into employment.

Staff work well with employers to identify their business needs. Most employers value the skills apprentices develop. They recognise the benefit apprentices bring to their businesses. Employers add value to apprentices' development through well-coordinated on-the-job training. Staff keep employers informed of apprentices'

progress effectively. As a result, apprentices quickly develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Staff carefully consider the content of learning programmes. They plan the order of knowledge and skills delivery effectively. Staff ensure that learners and apprentices build on their previous learning and sound underpinning knowledge. Staff ensure learners practise skills to ensure they master them before moving onto more complex practical skills. As a result, learners embed knowledge into their long-term memories. For example, young learners on level 2 beauty therapy understand how anatomy underpins the treatments they provide. They accurately apply their knowledge of bone structure and muscle systems to massages.

Staff take into account learners' and apprentices' existing skills and knowledge effectively. Consequently, they tailor courses to meet learners' individual needs. Apprentices who complete their programmes quickly achieve additional components, such as barbering qualifications. Staff use apprentices' existing technical abilities, artistic skills and theoretical knowledge to plan appropriate units within graphic design. Staff support learners with an identified learning disability or difficulty effectively. As a result, these learners achieve as well as their peers.

Staff provide highly effective feedback to learners and apprentices. Teachers quickly correct their errors. As a result, learners quickly improve the standards of their practical work. For example, hairdressing apprentices section hair neatly and use equipment correctly. Staff promptly identify if an apprentice's work is unsafe or they show poor technique. Apprentices who have been in training for longer cut hair precisely. They accurately check their own work for errors and make corrections. Apprentices are well prepared for their final examinations. As a result, the first cohort to take these assessments achieved a good proportion of high grades.

Most staff check and develop learners' understanding effectively. They use good questioning techniques and facilitate discussions well. Most learners and apprentices demonstrate a secure theoretical understanding, for example through answers to assignment questions and in-class discussions. Staff regularly link learning to the workplace. For example, apprentices studying business administration benefit from discussions related to their specific workplaces. However, a few staff at subcontractors do not assess young learners' progress or skills development regularly enough.

Leaders, managers and staff track the progress learners and apprentices make very effectively, particularly their vocational skills and knowledge. Leaders manage most subcontractors successfully. Governance arrangements are good. External scrutiny and the internal board provide useful challenge for leaders. As a result, they secure improvements to the quality of provision. Leaders' interventions ensure more learners and apprentices achieve within planned time frames than at the previous inspection.

Leaders support staff effectively in their own centres and in most subcontractors to improve their teaching skills and vocational practice. They have an excellent

understanding of staff well-being. Staff maintain up-to-date industry knowledge. Most are experts in their subjects. Staff share best practice and useful teaching resources. As a result, they improve their teaching skills.

Too many staff do not identify or help learners correct their mistakes in written English. Too much written work contains errors in spellings, punctuation and grammar. This includes errors in specific spellings of vocationally relevant terminology.

Leaders' actions have not yet improved the quality of some of the more recently appointed subcontractors, specifically those offering education programmes for young people. As a result, the quality of education for these learners requires improvement.

Leaders do not ensure young people achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics. The quality of English and mathematics teaching for young learners varies too much. As a result, too many are not well prepared for their examinations. Too many learners do not attend examinations in these subjects. In a few subcontractors of apprenticeship provision, functional skills delivery is not well structured.

Too few young learners in subcontracted provision receive impartial careers advice and guidance. Too few adults and apprentices are aware of the full range of career options available to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established an effective culture of safeguarding. They have useful relationships with external agencies. Managers ensure that all staff, including those at subcontractors, complete safeguarding training. They receive regular updates. For example, all staff and students recently undertook specialist training on the issue of 'county lines'.

Staff responsible for safeguarding are well qualified. They have up-to-date knowledge of issues, such as child sexual exploitation and mental health. Staff work effectively to resolve any issues learners raise. They have good links with local safeguarding teams and the police. They stay well informed about issues affecting the local area.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must swiftly review the provision in recently appointed subcontractors and take immediate action to improve the quality of education young learners receive.

- Leaders must ensure that young people achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics. Leaders must ensure greater importance is placed on this element of study programmes and traineeships and prepare learners better for examinations.
- Leaders must ensure that all young learners with subcontractors receive impartial careers advice and guidance. Staff must provide adults and apprentices with broader advice and guidance on their future careers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51072
Address	44 Alexandra Street SS1 1BJ
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Website	www.centraltraininggroup.com
Principal/CEO	Andrew Wright
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	February 2018
Main subcontractors	TLT Academy Jays Training Services PH Academy Keith Hall Debut Training Academy Skills Academy Solutions Ltd Creative Sport and Leisure Crown Vocational Training Best Practice Eden

Information about this inspection

Ofsted is aware of the challenges that Covid-19 is currently posing to those we inspect. During this visit, the inspectors took into consideration the impact of any measures being taken to slow the spread of Coronavirus by the provider. This has included the effect these measures have had on the current attendance of the learners and staffing arrangements.

The inspection team was assisted by the director of learner recruitment, progress and compliance, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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