

The Training and Recruitment Partnership Limited

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	55053
Name of lead inspector:	Sue Hasty HMI
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Sutton Business Centre Restmoor Way Wallington SM6 7 AH

Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of students and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and disabilities.

We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

Information about the provider

The Training and Recruitment Partnership Limited (TRP) is an independent learning provider based in Sutton, Greater London. TRP offers apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3, as well as higher-level apprenticeships. It also runs traineeships directly and through a subcontracting arrangement with one subcontractor.

At the time of the interim visit, 90 learners study a range of framework and standards-based apprenticeships. The majority of learners study for qualifications in mentoring, management, IT users, supporting teaching and learning in schools, and early years qualifications. Twelve learners are on traineeships. Fifteen learners are aged 16–18 and 87 learners are 19 and over. Most learners are based in London and the south-east of England.

What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?

Managers acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 on some of the employers they work with, such as in the childcare and hospitality industries. They no longer recruit apprentices from the hospitality sector. Leaders and managers plan to expand programmes in construction, education, business, and leadership and management.

Teachers adapt the order of the course content so that learners can continue their studies throughout the pandemic restrictions. For example, on traineeships, rather than doing work experience, trainees learn about working in a team or build their knowledge of customer service skills. In schools, teachers left the teaching of how to support pupils on a one-to-one basis until schools reopened.

Teachers now hold shorter and more frequent lessons with learners individually. Learners say that they like the smaller group sessions where they feel more comfortable in speaking.

Employers report that because of social distancing rules in schools, such as working with fewer groups of pupils, learners do not get the experience of supporting pupils across all year groups. Learners also miss out on leading after-school groups because they are not running.

Leaders explained that they recently made the decision to reduce the number of subcontractors they work with. As a result, the number of learners on courses has significantly reduced. Now, in-house staff employed by TRP teach the vast majority of programmes.

Leaders and managers think that growing the business is a key challenge. They work with employers across the country to develop new apprenticeships to meet their needs. For example, because the youth work apprenticeship standard is not ready, they train youth workers using the team leader standards instead. Leaders say that apprentices feel that the training exceeds their expectations.

What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?

Leaders, managers and teachers say that because they moved very quickly to teaching courses online, learners continued to make progress. Managers track learners' progress with assessors using probing questions at monthly review meetings. Managers support assessors to make changes to learners' individual plans and put on additional lessons to help learners catch up. Learners also watch recordings of lessons they miss.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that some learners miss the social aspect of learning in the centre with a group. Consequently, they support teachers and assessors to teach key aspects of a course, such as safeguarding, face to face. Teachers also set up sessions with learners in person to give feedback on how to improve their skills and knowledge.

Teachers and assessors develop their skills in online teaching through training in using video conferencing platforms and online portfolios. Learners say that they appreciate the wider range of teaching methods and different resources that teachers use when learning online. For example, teachers refer learners to podcasts and online videos to help them extend their knowledge.

Managers join online lessons to assess teachers' performance. They say that they give prompt feedback to teachers which helps them make changes quickly. For example, teachers now know how to set up smaller groups online in breakout rooms.

Learners find online learning convenient because it fits in with their work commitments and means that they do not have to travel. Managers and teachers report that learners engage with online learning more confidently than at the start of the pandemic. They say that attendance at lessons remains the same.

Learners receive advice and guidance at the start of their course. Managers also support learners on an informal basis with looking at alternative career choices. Learners say that they benefit from learning how to create a curriculum vitae. As a result, they get job offers from employers.

How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

Staff contacted learners to check on their well-being within the first two weeks of the outbreak of the pandemic. They continue to monitor learners' mental health and well-being in review meetings. Teachers and assessors keep records of any concerns they have about learners.

Staff attend training courses to become mental health first-aiders. Staff say that this helps them identify when learners are not coping.

The designated safeguarding lead keeps up to date with guidance on current safeguarding topics by attending local 'Prevent' network meetings. Staff report that they receive useful information on current safeguarding issues to share with learners. These include dispelling myths, such as about the link between COVID-19 and the 5G network, and the increased risks of online fraud.

Learners know who to contact if they have any safeguarding concerns. Learners say that they understand the new arrangements for keeping safe when visiting the centre.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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