

Martec Training Limited

Interim visit report

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| Unique reference number: | 53259 |
| Name of lead inspector: | Martin Ward, Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Visit dates: | 10 to 11 December 2020 |
| Type of provider: | Independent learning provider |
| Address: | London Road Newcastle-under-Lyme ST5 1LZ |

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/or disabilities.

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

Martec Training Limited was inspected in October 2018 and received a monitoring visit in June 2019. At the time of this visit, there were 120 learners on programme with most of them working towards a range of motor-vehicle-related qualifications, and a few learners on culinary courses. Some 95 learners attended study programmes, with 50 on level 1 and 42 on level 2. Seven learners were on traineeships, and 18 apprentices were working towards level 2 and 3 standards-based apprenticeships. Some 35 learners had education and healthcare plans. The company also provided training for 39 apprentices under a subcontract agreement with a local college of further education and an independent learning provider. This provision was out of scope.

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?

In anticipation of the restrictions in March 2020, leaders prioritised the development of practical skills. During March, they introduced online remote learning.

Leaders described how, through regular staff meetings and by monitoring work completion, they were able to check what was being taught.

Managers reported how they had delayed work experience for study programme learners. They described how they retained a regular timetable with small teaching groups.

Managers supplied laptops to learners who did not possess them. Some learners did not enjoy or engage well with learning remotely. Managers opened the centre for these learners and provided individual face-to-face tuition. This was important for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who found it difficult to learn at home. Managers said they had increased the number of teaching assistants.

Tutors continued to teach apprentices though the initial lockdown, even if they were furloughed. Although on-site practical delivery was suspended, tutors taught theory sessions online.

Some apprentices did not achieve their apprenticeship at the planned date due to delays in completing their English and/or mathematics qualifications. Others were not ready for their end-point assessment because of furlough or reduced opportunities to complete practical assessment.

Most study programme learners and apprentices continued in learning.

Employers said managers had clearly communicated the progress of apprentices.

Managers explained how they had returned to face-to-face teaching as soon as this was safe, and this would be the main form of teaching in the future.

Leaders reported that recruitment had increased in September 2020. In response to demand from schools, they had extended the curriculum to include culinary training.

Learners explained how managers and tutors helped them to have clear plans for next year, including higher-level study and apprenticeships.

Governors felt they were well informed, aware of the challenges and how leaders tackled them.

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?

Prior to lockdown, leaders brought forward the development of practical skills. For example, in the level 1 certificate in transport maintenance, tutors taught a unit on brakes and suspensions. From March to July 2020, tutors focused on developing underlying theoretical knowledge.

Tutors taught through an online communication tool. Where needed, they posted paper-based resources to learners. In many cases, learners received additional online question-and-answer sessions to check their understanding and to correct any misunderstandings.

Learners continued to submit assessments through their online e-portfolio system. Tutors used this information to identify which topics tutors needed to reinforce.

Leaders described staff training and development. Managers provided training for teachers on the technical use of the online teaching software. Staff worked with colleagues to share ideas on how to teach topics.

Leaders completed 'virtual learning walks' to assess and provide feedback on the quality of online teaching.

Tutors told inspectors that the break in face-to-face learning slowed the development of learners' interpersonal skills and challenged their mental health. Managers had deployed specialists in these areas, to provide individual support.

Leaders said that, although attendance did drop slightly during lockdown periods, it remained close to 90%.

Managers introduced new learners into the centre through one-to-one taster sessions. These would normally have been delivered to a group. Managers staggered the start of teaching for different groups. Learners who have high needs attended on their own for one week to get used to how the centre operated.

With new learners, managers reported that the biggest challenge in English and mathematics was to identify their starting points and gaps in learning. Tutors had to teach many basic skills. Managers reported that some learners had not been in education since March 2020, and the break in learning had affected what they could remember.

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

Senior leaders had adapted their policies and practice in line with government guidelines on COVID-19.

Managers provided updated safeguarding and well-being training for staff.

Senior leaders and managers kept in regular contact with learners and apprentices. They knew which learners and apprentices were at risk or vulnerable. This included learners with SEND, learners with family disruption and learners who were shielding. They often coordinated their work with external professionals.

In planning for a safe return to on-site activity, managers provided learners with information on the physical adaptations that had been made to the centre. Learners explained how they were working in 'learning bubbles' and wearing face coverings.

Learners were aware of how to keep safe online. For example, they knew what to wear, and how to present themselves online.

Learners knew who to contact if they had any concerns. Learners felt comfortable to talk to staff about their feelings and any incidents.

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