

Abacus Training Group

Progress monitoring report

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Name of lead inspector:	Carolyn Brownsea, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Address:	Suite 2J, The Office Suite Pine Close 12 New Road Industrial Estate Avis Way Newhaven East Sussex BN9 0DH

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Abacus Training Group was last inspected in May 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education and training in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

Theme

What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have made reasonable progress to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have taken steps to resolve most of the recommendations identified at the previous inspection. For example, they use data more effectively to monitor the progress of learners. Managers use attendance data to identify absences swiftly and to contact learners to plan support that enables the learner to catch up with their work.

Leaders value the external oversight and scrutiny provided by experienced and well-informed consultants who support and challenge leaders effectively. They have supported leaders to revise their curriculum offer to ensure that the provision offered is of high quality and meets the needs of learners. As a result, more learners stay on

their courses and pass examinations. Leaders' recording of the impact of actions taken to improve the quality of teaching is not sufficient to enable them to assess the benefits for learners accurately.

Leaders have prioritised staff training to improve the quality of learning. Trainers have undertaken a detailed training and mentoring programme that has improved their teaching skills. Managers have implemented an effective appraisal process which informs trainers' personal development plans. As a result, trainers learn new skills such as tattoo removal, which enables leaders to offer a wider curriculum for learners.

Leaders have worked with staff to improve the quality of written feedback so that learners know how to improve. Trainers encourage learners to critically evaluate their own work. As a result, learners know how to improve and many do.

Trainers assess the prior knowledge, experience and qualifications of learners. They know their learners well and use this information to plan learning and provide individualised support. For example, learners with dyslexia benefit from alternative resources so they make the same progress as their peers.

Learners benefit from experienced, knowledgeable and appropriately qualified trainers. In lessons, trainers set clear expectations of learning, explain theory well and give clear practical instructions. Trainers use quality workbooks that learners complete. These support learners to become more confident and use terminology fluently with clients. For example, learners clearly explained the underpinning knowledge of colour theory and technical application to produce body and face art. Trainers do not set time-bound targets for learners so that leaders and trainers can monitor progress.

Learners describe the new and substantial skills they have developed. Trainers plan frequent opportunities for learners to practise their skills; they become more proficient as a result. Learners on nail courses become competent in the safe and correct use of nail drills. They demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Learners on make-up courses understand how to recognise various skin diseases and how to deal sensitively and professionally with clients affected by them.

Staff provide learners with opportunities to develop the literacy and numeracy skills that they will need for work. For example, they teach learners about pricing, costing and ratios. They support learners who speak English as an additional language to pronounce words correctly and help them to have discussions with their clients.

Learners benefit from clear and individualised advice and guidance to help them to make informed choices about their careers and next steps. Trainers support learners to develop the employability skills they need to start their own businesses. For example, trainers adapt lessons for learners studying make-up courses to include topics such as product promotion, safe use of social media to market their businesses and stock control.

Leaders moved learning online at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have supported trainers to teach remotely through additional training and guidance. Consequently, trainers have become increasingly confident and adept at using different online teaching tools.

Managers and trainers have prioritised the teaching of safe working in response to COVID-19. When restrictions eased, they made the necessary and sensible changes to how they taught practical skills to reduce risk of infection and allow learners to continue their studies and make progress. Learners benefit from completing an additional qualification which certifies that they are COVID-competent.

Leaders have put in place measures to support learners struggling with mental health issues, such as recording lessons and providing information on mindfulness. Learners value the frequent communication and encouragement they receive from staff.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- ensure that trainers provide learners with clear targets that they review, to enable managers to review and monitor the progress of learners
- ensure that leaders capture the progress of their actions to enable them to accurately assess the impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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