

Inspection of Vocational Skills Solutions Limited

Inspection dates:

5–8 October 2021

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Vocational Skills Solutions Limited (VSS) was established in 2012. At the time of their previous monitoring visit in May 2019, VSS provided training for apprentices and adult learners. However, in June 2020, VSS stopped delivering apprenticeship training.

Currently, there are 1,077 adult learners on programmes in the North West, West Midlands and London. This includes 205 learners on traineeship programmes. Largest numbers are on level 2 diploma in adult care, level 2 award in forklift truck operations and level 2 award for door supervisors in the private security industry (security industry). The remaining learners are on a range of level 1 and 2 programmes in warehousing, construction, customer service, employability skills, English and mathematics.

At the time of inspection, learning was provided face to face and remotely.

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

Leaders promote a culture of compassion and care at VSS. As a result, learners feel part of an inclusive community. Learners look forward to their training sessions and talk enthusiastically about how they have increased their confidence and self-belief as a result of their courses. They say that the tutors make learning easy. Learners feel inspired to achieve their career goals. They are motivated to be successful and are confident about their future opportunities.

Learners show high levels of respect for each other and VSS staff. They feel safe and secure when attending classes in the training centres. Learners know how to report concerns and feel confident that they will be heard by VSS staff. In a few isolated instances, tutors do not challenge learners' inappropriate language.

Learners develop useful new skills and knowledge across the different courses on the adult learning programme. Construction learners understand the required safety measures when working at heights. Rail track and maintenance trainees confidently select the appropriate tools when maintaining rail tracks.

Leaders pay for Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) cards and Road Transport Industry Training Board (RTITB) certificates for construction and forklift truck learners. By doing this, leaders have removed a barrier to employment for these learners.

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

Leaders have developed a range of practical and knowledge-based pre-employment courses and traineeships to meet regional and national skills priorities, for example in customer service, forklift truck, warehousing and storage, security industry, business administration and rail track and maintenance. Leaders also offer a level 3 diploma in adult care to upskill employed adults working in the care sector in the West Midlands.

Curriculum leaders and tutors plan teaching in a logical order. This means that learners incrementally build their knowledge and skills over the duration of their courses. For example, forklift truck learners firstly learn about health and safety and safe working practices. Then they learn how to safely operate a forklift truck before skilfully moving a range of different-sized pallets.

Tutors are passionate about their subjects and are appropriately qualified. They have extensive industry experience. They keep up to date with new equipment and technological advancements in their sector.

Tutors use assessment well. They routinely check learners' understanding. Tutors consistently revisit the topics that they have explored in previous sessions. As a result, learners develop their practical skills. For example, customer service learners practise the verbal skills needed to manage difficult customers. Forklift truck learners

practise complex manoeuvres around obstacles in warehouse aisles. As a result, learners hone their skills to industry standards.

Most tutors support learners to develop their English and mathematical skills. In level 3 adult care, learners confidently speak to medical staff and social workers when discussing care plans. They skilfully administer the correct amount of medication and accurately measure fluid intake of the residents in their care. Warehousing learners accurately calculate stock levels.

Tutors provide feedback to learners that helps them to improve their practical work. However, tutors do not routinely provide enough developmental feedback that helps the majority of learners improve the quality and presentation of their written work.

Enrolment and career progression officers work effectively with learners to ensure that career plans are completed at the start of their courses to identify possible future job roles. They provide learners on traineeship programmes with useful information relating to apprenticeships or other employment opportunities. Learners on forklift truck courses receive information about jobs within the industry. Tutors invite employers to talk to learners in relation to job opportunities and careers.

In a few instances, learning support coaches do not provide effective support to learners. Leaders acknowledge that this is a very new role, and that further training is required to ensure that learning support coaches know how to fully meet learners' additional needs.

Leaders recognise that they have not planned the duration of their learning programmes well enough in a few curriculum areas. As a result, learners have not completed their courses on time. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to ensure that these learners swiftly complete their courses.

Governance arrangements are effective. Those responsible for governance provide the necessary challenge to senior leaders to help them evaluate and improve the quality of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers implement an effective set of safeguarding policies and procedures to keep their learners safe. Experienced and appropriately trained designated safeguarding leads are visible and known to learners in training centres.

Leaders work effectively with partner organisations to keep learners safe, for example local authorities, regional 'Prevent' duty coordinators and the Probation Service. Leaders provide food and clothes banks at their training centres for learners.

Most learners are not well enough informed about local risks with regard to radicalisation and extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should rapidly improve their oversight of the progress that learners make towards the development of their knowledge and skills.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors provide developmental feedback to learners to help them improve the quality and presentation of their written work.
- Leaders should prioritise training for learning support coaches to ensure that all learners receive effective and individualised support.
- Leaders should ensure that all tutors know the importance of promoting high expectations of learners' workplace behaviours and support them to confidently challenge unacceptable behaviour.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1270904
Address	18 Beecham Court Smithy Brook Road Wigan WN3 6PR
Contact number	0161 478 4040
Website	www.vocationalsolutions.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Phil Juniper
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of learner experience and improvement, 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 visiting 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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