

# Inspection of Acorn Training Consultants Limited

Inspection dates:

16–19 November 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Acorn Training Consultants Limited (Acorn) is part of Learning Curve Group (LCG). At the LCG Ripley, academy learners can undertake study programmes and adult learning courses. Forty-one young people study level 1 construction, early years or business administration. Around 14 adults study employability courses.

Adult learners study a three- or six-week long distance learning course, and there are 50 different courses available. Currently, 969 adults study distance learning courses in subjects such as mental health, counselling, business, digital and care.

Leaders work with two subcontractors. Young people at White Rose School of Beauty and Health study courses at level 2 and level 3 in beauty therapy, nail services, complementary therapies and media make-up. There are currently 491 learners, and they attend one of nine academies across Yorkshire. Knights Training Academy is based in Greater London. There are three football academies where 121 young people study level 3 sport and physical activity.

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

Young people attend university open days and useful sessions with industry experts which help them to prepare for what they want to do next. In sport, good community links enable learners to teach primary school children football skills and learn about their local area.

Adult learners appreciate the opportunity to study independently and flexibly. They develop new knowledge and skills that enhance their performance at work or introduces them to alternative careers. Those learners who request individual support receive detailed and helpful advice. Most adults achieve their qualifications and progress on to other relevant courses.

Learners rightly say that the culture at all sites is all about inclusion and respecting people's differences. Learners gain the confidence to challenge stereotypical behaviour they may experience in the industry and discuss matters such as discrimination and gender pay gaps.

Young people, including those who are often disillusioned with education, benefit from a highly inclusive approach from staff. Learners receive good support and appreciate their small group sizes. As a result, learners start to enjoy learning and want to participate in class. Nevertheless, even though learners' attendance improves from a low starting point, it is still too low on too many courses.

Tutors support young people to recognise the risk to their safety when online or communicating with friends on social media. Learners have access to a good range of support. As a result, learners feel safe and know how to stay safe.

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

Leaders use their close links with employers in the health and care industry to develop well-designed distance learning courses for adults. The courses contain relevant and well-sequenced content that adult learners need to progress in their roles or to introduce them to a new sector.

Study programmes in make-up artistry, complementary therapies and sport meet learners' and employers' needs well. For example, leaders adapt the curriculum to include more bridal make-up due to local demand. However, leaders do not plan a broad enough construction curriculum for the very few learners on this course.

Teachers are suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced in their industries. They have appropriate teaching qualifications. Most teachers use their subject expertise well to devise resources and provide useful industry examples that help learners understand key concepts.

Teachers provide ample opportunities for young people to revisit and practice practical skills. Learners develop fluency and produce a high standard of practical work. For example, in make-up artistry learners study basic special effects techniques in bruising, then they progress on to using latex, scar wax and adding prosthetics.

Most teachers of young people use assessment successfully to check learners understanding and tackle misconceptions. They use questions, quizzes and timed assessments well. A few teachers in sport do not plan enough time in class to routinely check learners' understanding. Teachers are less adept at revisiting theoretical knowledge with learners. As a result, a minority of learners in sport and complementary therapy are less able to recall certain information, such as the names of muscles in the face or leg.

A few study programme teachers do not use learners' starting points well enough to plan learning. For example, construction learners with industry experience complete the same practical tasks at the same time as others who do not. As a result, those with more experience make slower progress than they are capable of.

Adults access distance learning workbooks and learning materials that are informative and comprehensive. Around a quarter of adult learners can access a new well-designed online learning platform. These learners benefit from completing quizzes and activities that check they understand topics and provide them with useful real-time feedback. The remaining three quarters do not have their learning checked in a timely way. Teachers check at the end of each three-weekly unit unless learners ask for help. When learners do ask for help, they receive good guidance and tutors explore their understanding well. However, too many learners do not ask for support and have to resubmit their first end of unit assignment.

Adult learners receive comprehensive feedback from teachers on their end of unit assignments. Feedback includes links to extend learning, offers learners extra examples and encourages them to contextualise and apply their learning further. As a result, the standard of learners' work improves demonstrably over time. However, this approach limits a few learners who study single unit courses from developing their work to such a high standard.

Leaders have a clear strategy to support learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use a range of strategies to support learners with SEND. They provide additional one-to-one sessions or extra verbal feedback to ensure that learners understand what they need to do next. This supports learners to keep up with their studies.

Teachers develop most learners understanding of pertinent health and well-being matters and the risks they might encounter in their local area. Learners know about adolescent health, gambling awareness and how to spot the signs of peer-on-peer abuse. A few make-up artistry learners have not yet learned about sexual harm or healthy relationships and have less awareness of the local risks they might experience. Leaders have suitable plans for this to take place soon.

Leaders ensure that all learners receive impartial careers guidance. Learners get helpful support and guidance on the career options available to them. This ensures that most learners are clear on their next steps. Teachers help learners prepare appropriately for interviews. Construction learners all gain their CSCS card, which is invaluable to secure employment on building sites.

Leaders and managers monitor the quality of the curriculum through a range of sensible mechanisms. Leaders use the outcomes of these to identify largely suitable actions for improvement. Processes to oversee the quality of the subcontracted provision are appropriate. Leaders plan a good range of development for teachers, including an annual teaching and learning conference. This development has an obvious impact on teachers. For example, effective training on the quality of teacher feedback is evident in learners' work.

Governors meet monthly and consider comprehensive reports from leaders on the quality of education. Governors undertake site visits to join classes and meet with learners and staff. The reports and visits allow governors to understand the learner experience. They use this information well to challenge leaders and monitor their progress with improvement activities.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities for safeguarding. Policies and procedures are clear, with suitable processes to oversee subcontractors. When referrals are made, actions are timely, detailed notes are taken and appropriate support is put into place for learners who need it.

Leaders ensure that staff receive good training on safeguarding and related matters. The helpful monthly 'hot topic' updates support staff to set topical safeguarding themes into context. Staff use this information well to raise learners' awareness of risks they may face. Leaders have a strong focus on developing staff and learners' awareness of themes surrounding sexual harm.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should improve attendance for learners on study programmes to help them make even better progress with their studies.
- Teachers should plan more carefully how they revisit theoretical concepts to ensure that learners gain a secure understanding of them over time.
- Teachers should consider how they make better use of the information they have on learners starting points to allow all learners to make good progress.

- Leaders should ensure that teachers in sport and adult learning make better use of assessment to check learners understand the topics they learn to help learners improve the standard of their work.

**Provider details**

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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Brenda McLeish
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	19–21 January 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	White Rose School of Beauty and Health Knights Training Academy

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the CEO, 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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