

Inspection of Nova Training

Inspection dates: 28 June– to 1 July 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Nova Training is an independent learning provider based in Willenhall in the West Midlands. At the time of inspection, the provider operated 22 centres, mostly in the Midlands with a small number of centres in the east of England. There were 600 learners following study programmes, the largest number of which were employability programmes. Of these learners, 101 were in receipt of high-needs funding. There were 489 apprentices following 17 different standards-based apprenticeships. The largest number of these were on level 3 motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle) and level 3 business administrator, which together accounted for almost half of all apprentices. The remaining apprentices were following customer service, retail, management and motor vehicle standards at levels 2 to 5.

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

Learners and apprentices – many of whom arrive disillusioned with education from their previous experiences – are positive about their learning with the provider. They speak highly of the support and care of tutors and enjoy the small classes and one-to-one support they receive.

Tutors support learners to go beyond the curriculum and develop their broader interests and involvement in the local community. For example, they participate in litter picks, support charities and develop community spaces. In one centre, learners developed a community room to support families with members who have additional needs and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Learners benefit from visits from external speakers, who talk on a variety of issues and topics. For example, one speaker recently discussed topics such as sexual health and healthy relationships, including issues of consent and equal rights. Other speakers have discussed physical and mental health and knife crime.

There is a strong focus on ensuring learners attend sessions. The provider uses a range of strategies to track learners who fail to attend. Provider staff contact the learners, parents and carers by phone, send letters and, where required, make home visits. Poor attendance results in parents being invited to meet with the provider. As a result, while attendance is marginally below leaders' aspirations, most learners attend well.

Most learners and apprentices achieve well, and many make positive progress to their next steps, either with the provider or on to other training or employment. Learners feel well prepared to take their next steps and can identify how their learning is helping to prepare them. For example, apprentices improve their communication with colleagues in the workplace. They develop confidence in their job roles and, in some cases, take on new tasks and responsibilities as a result.

Learners recognise the provider's centres as safe places to learn. Through the personal development programme, learners develop an understanding of essential life skills, including online safety, the dangers of radicalisation, an understanding of fundamental British values and awareness of county lines.

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

Leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the curriculum they offer, which is squarely focused on supporting learners who are often the hardest to reach and at risk of leaving education. This vision is shared throughout the organisation at all levels, and as a result, staff widely recognise and work towards the shared goals of the organisation.

Leaders and managers have developed a curriculum which reflects the needs of local and regional economies and their partner organisations well. For example, they

target learning opportunities to support economically deprived areas and have selected the location of their centres carefully to ensure that they can have the most impact in these localities.

Leaders, managers and staff work closely with external agencies to support learners and apprentices. They support these agencies by offering routes into education and training for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and learners with a variety of often challenging personal circumstances and educational backgrounds.

Since the last inspection, leaders have appointed suitably qualified and experienced external governors to hold leaders to account for the quality of education they provide. Governors demonstrate a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provider and are active in providing support and challenge to leaders.

Leaders and managers have developed detailed processes to assure and improve the quality of education they provide as they broaden the curriculum offer to similar levels to those offered before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the impact of these processes is yet to be seen across the whole curriculum. Consequently, not all learners are in receipt of the same quality of education.

Leaders and managers offer a broad curriculum which benefits all study programme learners, including those with SEND. They place a clear emphasis on developing personal development skills beyond the vocational knowledge needed to complete their qualification. For example, learners on employability programmes study an integrated personal development curriculum. As a result, learners develop an understanding of wider social issues which could affect their daily lives.

Leaders identify the significant challenges of recruiting appropriately qualified staff. To address these issues, they have developed an internal programme to train and support staff into teaching roles, for example from teaching assistants to teachers, and, as such, are able to plan with confidence the strategy to grow the provider following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teachers support learners well to develop their confidence by engaging them in social action projects and meaningful work-related exercises. Teachers often link with external organisations well to enable those learners who require further support to receive this also. As a result, learners feel fully supported through their programme and gain key social and communicative skills.

Trainers ensure that learners and apprentices have opportunities to practise and apply what they have learned. For example, level 3 motor vehicle apprentices frequently revisit areas of learning so that they develop fluency and consistency in their knowledge and skills. As a result, apprentices apply their knowledge well and quickly make an impact in the workplace.

For learners with high needs, teachers create learning which prepares them well for independent living. For example, most learners develop a good understanding of how to manage finance and understand income, expenditure, the impact of being in debt, how to budget and how to seek financial help. As a result, learners are well prepared to manage these aspects of their lives independently.

In most cases, teachers and coaches provide useful feedback which supports learners and apprentices to improve the quality of their work. For example, apprentices benefit from useful oral feedback which recognises their achievements and progress, as well as identifies what they need to do to improve. However, in a few cases, feedback provided by staff does not always provide learners and apprentices with clear and supportive actions to improve.

Staff are well qualified and experienced in the areas they teach and are supported well by managers to develop their teaching and vocational skills through a variety of professional development opportunities. As a result, staff continue to develop their teaching skills and are confident to use these skills in the classroom.

Managers and staff develop effective links with parents to ensure they are informed of the progress learners are making, and to develop parents' understanding of the opportunities available to learners. As a result, parents provide support and encouragement to learners to participate in programmes and make positive next steps.

Leaders work effectively with external partners to provide support to learners and apprentices in preparing for their future career progression. Most learners and apprentices receive appropriate careers advice on further education or employment opportunities. However, in a few cases, learners do not receive this advice and are unclear on their next steps.

Tutors do not always ensure that the development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills is sufficiently well planned. Tutors set tasks on an individual basis. However, not all apprentices complete these tasks in a timely manner. Consequently, tutors are not able to track how quickly all apprentices develop these skills and to what extent.

Most learners and apprentices develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. This newly acquired knowledge often helps apprentices to progress further within their jobs. Learners and apprentices are more employable and make better contributions at work. Learners with specific support needs make particular progress in their confidence and social skills development.

Tutors explore a range of issues through the curriculum that increases learners' understanding of life in modern Britain. Many learners understand the importance of fundamental British values, and they know how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism. However, in too many cases, learners are unclear on the values and are not sure about what to do if they encounter radicalisation and extremism.

In most cases, leaders, managers and teachers prepare learners and apprentices well for their next steps. Most learners on employability courses make a successful transition to employment or further study. Those who do not successfully progress are given additional support to reengage with education or employment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have developed an effective culture of safeguarding which extends well to all provider sites. They have appointed a suitably qualified designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a number of qualified deputies, and have safeguarding-qualified staff at each centre who report directly to the central safeguarding team.

Leaders have developed suitable policies for the safe recruitment of staff and ensure that all staff undertake both initial and relevant ongoing checks appropriate to the age of the learners they teach.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to recognise and report concerns and intervene in a timely manner to offer support to learners who ask for help, or exhibit signs of being at risk.

The DSL has developed appropriate external links with agencies and support providers in the areas around the providers' centres and uses these to provide support and information for learners on risks most closely associated with the areas in which they live and work.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure the feedback that all learners and apprentices receive provides them with useful guidance on how to improve their work.
- Leaders must ensure that quality assurance of their study programmes and apprenticeships is applied across all centres and apprenticeship standards to ensure that all learners and apprentices receive high-quality teaching and learning.
- Leaders must ensure that all learners and apprentices receive advice and guidance which will allow them to make informed decisions on their next steps.
- Leaders must ensure that the development of English and mathematics skills of all apprentices is planned and monitored to ensure that all apprentices make appropriate progress from their starting points.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53682
Address	3 Lower Lichfield Street WV13 1PX
Contact number	01902 366278
Website	https://novatraining.co.uk/
Principal	David Bucknall
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	11 to 14 July 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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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