

Inspection of ITEC North East Limited

Inspection dates:

15 to 18 August 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

ITEC North East Limited is a not-for-profit independent learning provider with registered charitable status that was established in 1982. At the time of the inspection, there were 127 apprentices studying on standards-based apprenticeships at level 3 and level 4. Of these, 105 apprentices were studying on the level 3 business administration standard, 12 were studying the level 3 digital marketer standard, eight were on the level 3 information communication techniques standard and fewer than five were working towards the level 4 software developer standard. ITEC North East Limited also provides courses for adult learners. At the time of the inspection, there were fewer than five learners on a programme, although 561 learners have been enrolled on employability courses during this academic year, the vast majority on short courses.

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

Tutors create a calm and welcoming environment for apprentices and adult learners which is conducive to learning, both online and face to face. Tutors set high expectations for attendance and punctuality. As a result, the large majority of apprentices and learners attend well.

Apprentices and learners feel safe in the online and face-to-face learning environment and know how to report any concerns that they may have. However, a few adult learners cannot recognise the signs of someone being radicalised, and they are unable to recall what local risks there are and how these risks may impact themselves or their peers.

Apprentices and adult learners on long courses have positive attitudes to their learning. Most apprentices aim for high grades at end-point assessment. However, adult learners on short employability courses are often not sufficiently motivated because they already have the knowledge, skills and experience that their course covers before they start.

Apprentices produce a high standard of work of which they are proud. They complete comprehensive assignments that clearly identify where they apply their knowledge and skills and work towards helpful improvement projects that have a positive impact on their job roles. For example, apprentices complete projects to improve efficiency of processes, including raising invoices, tracking export records and managing property keys. In a few cases, on the subcontracted adult learning provision, learners' work does not meet the required standard despite tutors having marked it as correct. Tutors do not consistently correct spelling and grammatical errors, and learners continue to make the same mistakes.

Most apprentices develop a good understanding of how to apply fundamental British values in the workplace and at home. Staff help apprentices to understand the importance of respect and tolerance and the qualities and behaviours expected by their employers. However, too many adult learners are not able to identify how they put British values into action at work.

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

In too many cases, managers do not enrol learners onto adult learning programmes with integrity. Too often, learners' prior knowledge, skills and experience are not considered well enough, and learners are enrolled on courses at a level much lower than their ability. For example, learners with high levels of industry experience and strong results at initial assessment are enrolled on level 1 courses which they find too basic. As a result, they do not gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Tutors ensure that applicants are suitable for an apprenticeship and identify new apprentices' starting points accurately. They make effective use of information about apprentices' prior knowledge and skills to plan programmes to meet employers' and

apprentices' needs. All apprentices have a training plan in place which is agreed upon with their employer and tutors. The majority of apprentices are new to their job roles and develop substantial new knowledge and skills as part of their apprenticeship programme.

Tutors adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of apprentices who have special educational needs. For example, apprentices with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are supported to improve their organisational skills so that they complete their work professionally and build well-structured portfolios in line with their peers. They receive support to help prioritise their work and improve their timekeeping and are prompted to take regular breaks from work to help keep them motivated. Apprentices with dyslexia receive support from the 'dyslexia champion', which includes the supply of overlays to use on the computer screens and the use of coloured paper.

Tutors design the apprenticeship curriculum well to enable apprentices to develop the skills and knowledge that their employers require. They work closely with employers to ensure that training is relevant to their sectors. The business administration programme has been further developed for the estate and letting industry and is linked closely to the certificate in property advice and practice, which is a recognised qualification in the industry. Staff with specific experience and qualifications in property management have mapped the qualification to the business administration standard. This ensures that apprentices gain the specific skills and knowledge that they need for working in the estate and letting agency sector, as well as generic business administration skills.

Tutors provide effective training to apprentices both online and face to face in the workplace. Tutors on the level 3 business administration apprenticeship effectively link training to apprentices' job roles and provide helpful examples of where to use business processes such as project development, risk matrices and business tools, including PESTLE analysis. Digital marketing tutors use a range of activities to help apprentices learn successfully. For example, they use a real-time collaborative web platform and social media accounts and demonstrate how to identify different audiences. Apprentices consolidate their learning through research tasks and presentations about how they market their businesses.

Tutors assess apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours well through effective questioning in lessons, assignment briefs and monthly meetings that employers also attend. Tutors check that apprentices fully understand how to apply their knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace.

Apprentices are well prepared for their next steps. They have a clear understanding of the requirements for end-point assessment and how to gain a distinction. Around a third of apprentices who are successful at end-point assessment gain high grades. Most apprentices gain promotion or take on additional responsibilities, and a few move into staff management roles, manage their own apprentices or have set up their own businesses. Most adult learners move onto positive destinations such as employment, further areas of study or voluntary work.

Leaders and managers have useful quality assurance processes in place. They carry out observations of teaching practice to support improvement, annual stakeholder surveys and quality reviews of all aspects of their provision. However, these processes do not provide leaders with a clear view of the weaknesses in the adult learning provision, so they cannot make the improvements required.

Leaders do not have sufficient oversight of the work of the subcontractor. As a result, they are not aware of weaknesses in this provision. Too often, tutors at the subcontractor do not successfully develop adult learners' written English skills throughout their time on the course, and, in a few cases, learners' work does not meet the required standard.

Apprentices who need to gain qualifications in English and mathematics as part of their apprenticeship programme benefit from helpful training and gain their qualifications quickly. Tutors identify common mistakes in apprentices' written work and provide helpful advice on how apprentices can make improvements. When apprentices need additional support, tutors offer this through one-to-one sessions at times that fit in with apprentices' work commitments. As a result, most apprentices who take examinations in English and mathematics pass at the first attempt.

Leaders recruit staff who are suitably trained and qualified in their roles. Tutors have the necessary vocational and professional skills and knowledge to teach. They keep their vocational skills up to date through a range of professional development opportunities. However, a few tutors are not supported to develop their teaching skills further.

Learners and apprentices receive helpful careers information, advice and guidance to prepare for their next steps. Tutors carry out one-to-one meetings, and, during training sessions, apprentices and learners are provided with frequent industry updates and advice on how to progress to the next level.

Leaders have in place a governance board, the members of which have many years of experience in the organisation. Board members bring expertise in corporate management, economic regeneration and human resources. They receive information on finances, data and quality. However, board members do not provide sufficient challenge to ensure that leaders manage effectively the quality of the training that learners and apprentices receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers recruit staff who are safe to work with young people and vulnerable adults. They use safer recruitment practices including checking the right to work in the UK, Disclosure and Barring Service checks, references and qualification checks. Once recruited, staff adhere to a six-month probation programme which includes mandatory training on safeguarding and preventing radicalisation.

Leaders and managers have in place qualified designated safeguarding officers. Safeguarding staff are qualified and undertake further qualifications every two years to ensure that their knowledge of safeguarding is current. All staff are trained annually in safeguarding.

Leaders and managers have in place useful policies to ensure that the organisation is compliant with safeguarding legislation and that learners are kept safe. These include social media policies, bullying and harassment and a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the oversight of adult learning programmes, including those delivered by the subcontractor, so that leaders have an accurate overview of the quality of the programmes and can tackle weaknesses.
- Ensure that adult learners follow programmes that take into account their starting points and enable them to develop new knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that tutors assess adult learners' work accurately so that learners are aware of the progress that they are making and what they need to do to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	52563
Address	ITEC House Hilton Road Aycliffe Business Park Newton Aycliffe DL5 6EN
Contact number	01325 320052
Website	www.itecne.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Tracy Wilson
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2016
Main subcontractors	Trade Techs Northern Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of operations, 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

Glenise Burrell, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Seaman	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonny Wright	His Majesty's Inspector
Philippa Firth	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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