

# Chiltern Training Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	51149
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Viki Faulkner, His Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Address:</b>	15 Station Road Reading RG1 1LG

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Chiltern Training Limited was inspected in November 2022. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Chiltern Training Limited (CTL) is an independent learning provider based in Reading, Berkshire. CTL provides apprenticeships and adult learning programmes across the Thames Valley. At the time of the inspection there were 245 learners in training. Most learners were apprentices. Of these, 225 were studying early years-related apprenticeships at level 2 to level 5. Ten apprentices were on the level 3 business administration apprenticeship. Almost half of the apprentices were 16 to 18 years old. Ten adult learners were studying level 3 early years, of whom seven were also completing at least one functional skill in mathematics or English.

The provider does not subcontract any of its provision.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders and managers made in supporting teaching staff to improve their pedagogical skills, particularly in relation to the quality of online learning? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have strengthened their oversight of the quality of teaching well. They now undertake helpful lesson observations, which they use to identify staff development needs. Leaders ensure observations have a clear focus, which leads to quality improvements. For example, leaders' recent observations supported trainers to improve starter activities that better help apprentices retain information over time. As a result, classroom tutors are improving teaching skills quickly.

Leaders have provided staff with helpful training, which has enabled them to improve their pedagogical skills. As a result, most staff now carefully plan and structure teaching sessions. Vocational tutors use their experience well to bring learning to life for apprentices. They use the learning from their training well to engage learners and apprentices effectively in a range of appropriately paced activities.

Leaders rightly recognise that the quality of online learning needs further development. Too many online sessions still lack learner engagement. Tutors do not use questioning well enough online to test learning or promote discussion. Tutors

recently attended helpful training on delivering online learning and e-learning. It is too early to see the impact of this on their teaching.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in providing apprentices with a comprehensive personal development curriculum that includes effective careers advice and guidance? Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have revised the personal development curriculum appropriately. Leaders ensure most apprentices have a reasonable understanding of safeguarding and healthy relationships. Visiting speakers talk about topics such as coercive control, threats from knife crime and online safety. Leaders rightly recognise that teaching about healthy lifestyles is underdeveloped in the business administration apprenticeship. As a result, these apprentices have only limited understanding of the impact this has on their life and ability to work effectively.

Leaders have responded well to the identified rise in mental health concerns. They have increased the support they provide to build resilience. They now offer free counselling to all apprentices. As a result, apprentices quickly grow in confidence and take on more responsibility in the workplace.

The vast majority of apprentices now benefit from helpful careers information throughout their course. They receive newsletters and social media posts and can join a dedicated careers week. Most apprentices receive guidance focused on careers in the sectors in which they work. Business apprentices receive information on routes such as business analysts and human resources practitioners. Early years apprentices learn about progression to nursery manager roles as well as wider opportunities, such as midwifery. As a result, apprentices are now well informed about a range of career opportunities that they may choose to pursue after their apprenticeship.

A few apprentices who are towards the end of their programmes and have already secured permanent employment have not received this information. As a result, these few apprentices have a limited understanding of the range of career opportunities that could be available to them in the future.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in improving the support and teaching of the functional skills elements of the apprenticeship? Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have worked effectively to strengthen the teaching of functional skills since the last inspection. They have increased the number of

teaching sessions and introduced an intensive mathematics class for those who failed exams at their first attempt. Apprentices value the new intensive model of teaching and learning, which helps them retain mathematical knowledge better.

Tutors ensure that most functional skills sessions are now well paced and structured appropriately. They use questioning well to check understanding and encourage mathematical thinking. However, staff do not use the results of functional skills initial and diagnostic assessment well enough to tailor individual learning plans. As a result, leaders cannot be confident that apprentices are focusing learning on areas that will have the biggest impact on enabling them to achieve swiftly.

Apprentices know more and can do more than when they started. For example, apprentices now apply their understanding of percentages to work out discounts. They use a range of new techniques to work out long multiplications in mathematics classes. In functional skills English, apprentices correctly identify the past continuous tense when analysing texts.

Although it is still early, the changes leaders have made are starting to have a positive impact on success rates. Fewer apprentices are now prevented from taking their final assessments because they have not yet passed functional skills. However, leaders do not routinely track key information, such as first-time pass rates. As a result, they cannot easily monitor the impact of changes they are making.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in implementing all elements of the apprenticeship standards, including preparation for their final assessment? Reasonable progress**

Leaders have reviewed and improved the role of assessors since the last inspection. Assessors now focus appropriately on the achievement of knowledge, skills and behaviours as well as progress towards qualifications. Assessors use a carefully curated bank of questions to test apprentices' wider understanding. As a result, leaders know that apprentices cover all elements of the apprenticeship standard over time.

Leaders now ensure that employers are fully involved in frequent, helpful progress reviews. Employers value the opportunity to participate. They provide useful feedback on the practical skills that apprentices are developing. Consequently, employers now have a greater understanding of apprentices' progress and know how to help them.

Leaders have improved the information they provide about the final assessment. As a result, apprentices and their employers now better understand this critical part of their programme. Assessors ensure that those apprentices near the end of their apprenticeship have a good understanding of how to achieve high grades. Apprentices highly value the support that staff provide, such as mock tests and

practice questions. As a result, apprentices are well prepared for final assessment. More now achieve higher grades.

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