

# Inspection of Central Training Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

14 to 17 November 2023

**Overall effectiveness****Good**

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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>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

**Information about this provider**

Central Training Academy Ltd (Central) opened in 1983. It has seven main locations in Southend, Canvey Island, Harlow, Biggleswade, Marlow, Aylesbury, and Long Eaton.

Most of Central's learners and apprentices study hairdressing. There are 215 apprentices on level 2 hair professional apprenticeship standards and 34 on level 3 creative and technical professional standards. Four apprentices study business administration at levels 2 and 3. A further 49 apprentices study public sector compliance standards at level 3. Central has 46 learners who study a level 2 in women's hairdressing at centres in Canvey Island and Southend. A further 21 study programme learners in Derby study a pre-employment programme, with three learners completing a pre-employment programme with Greater Anglia. Forty-two learners study skills for employment, training, and personal development in Aylesbury.

Just over a third of learners and apprentices also study English and mathematics. Most apprentices study in London, Essex and the Midlands. Central has 33 learners

with high needs, who study a pre-employment programme in Aylesbury and Stevenage. Central does not use subcontractors.

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

Learners and apprentices feel valued at Central. They appreciate the support that they receive from managers and tutors. Tutors know their learners and apprentices well. Tutors use this knowledge to provide effective support for learners and apprentices.

Learners and apprentices have positive attitudes to their studies. Young learners with negative experiences of school enjoy their learning at Central. They stay on their courses, and their attendance at lessons is good.

Apprentices develop their confidence at work. Hairdressing apprentices develop skills in communicating with clients from all walks of life. Apprentices put clients at ease by chatting to them during services and treatments.

Learners and apprentices feel safe at work and at Central. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns. Training centres and apprentices' workplaces are safe and welcoming. Learners and apprentices are confident that staff will handle any concerns they have sensitively and effectively.

Learners and apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills appropriately during their training. However, too few learners and apprentices achieve qualifications in these subjects.

Learners and apprentices build their confidence and skills through a wide range of enrichment activities. Hairdressing apprentices and learners take part in a company-wide skills competition. They design a mood board that illustrates their inspiration for a hairstyle. They then create the hairstyle on a mannequin and photograph it for their digital portfolio. This develops their skills and enhances their employability.

Learners with high needs enjoy their learning at Central. They learn about different housing options, such as buying and renting. This helps them to take their first steps towards independent living. As a result, learners quickly become more financially aware and better prepared to manage their own finances. However, learners do not receive the specialist teaching and specialist support identified in their education, health and care plans.

Learners and apprentices quickly develop new skills and knowledge. They take pride in their work and enjoy applying their skills in professional settings. Hairdressing learners and apprentices practise setting techniques on mannequin heads until they can perform the same techniques on paying clients. Level 3 creative and technical apprentices develop skills in advanced haircutting. They take on more challenging hairdressing services, such as balayage, at work.

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

Leaders provide a curriculum that focuses effectively on improving learners' and apprentices' life chances. Leaders provide a range of provision that meets learners'

needs, including those at risk of dropping out of education. The curriculum responds to national, regional, and local skills gaps. The provider makes a positive contribution to improving learners' and apprentices' social mobility.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, are agile in responding to changing labour markets and employers' needs. For example, leaders responded swiftly to a local authority request to develop provision for learners with high needs. Leaders develop new courses to provide the soft skills that employers want. Leaders have secured a very large government contract to provide public sector compliance officer programmes. As a result, those responsible for governance provide effective support in shaping Central's strategic direction.

Tutors ensure that learners and apprentices learn new skills and knowledge in a logical order. Hairdressing learners develop a good understanding of how to stay safe in the salon. They learn about the hazards that may occur at work so that they can keep themselves and their clients safe. They quickly learn to carry out effective client consultation. Learners and apprentices practise the massage movements used in shampooing and conditioning before developing their hairstyling and cutting skills. As a result, learners and apprentices move swiftly on to carrying out commercial services on clients.

At the start of their course, customer service learners identify the principles of customer service. They then develop their understanding of how to communicate with different customers. Level 3 creative and technical professional apprentices studying hairdressing gradually develop their skills in analytical research and reflection in their written work. As a result, apprentices gain a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts.

Most vocational tutors use effective teaching strategies to ensure that learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of key concepts. For example, hairdressing tutors start with a skills demonstration. They show learners the step-by-step stages of a technical haircut such as a one-length bob. Learners then practise this until they are confident.

Teaching for learners with high needs is not yet good. Tutors do not use effective teaching strategies to enable learners to remember important topics and concepts. Tutors are not always appropriately qualified. As a result, they do not know how to tailor their teaching in ways that are meaningful and beneficial to learners' needs. Tutors do not check that learners understand concepts before moving on to a new topic. As a result, too few learners with high needs make good progress.

Too few tutors check English and mathematics learning carefully enough to ensure that learners and apprentices make good progress. Not enough learners and apprentices develop a secure understanding of mathematical concepts, and too few learners achieve grade 4 or above in GCSE English and mathematics.

Most learners are making effective progress in basic skills such as customer service or foundation hairdressing skills. Historically, too few young people have stayed in

learning and completed their technical and English and mathematics qualifications. Leaders have taken appropriate action, and study programme learners are now making expected progress.

Leaders, staff, and employers set high expectations for the behaviour of learners and apprentices. Hairdressing learners and apprentices deal sensitively with clients and contribute to the smooth running of the salon. Public sector compliance officer apprentices have a positive attitude to their learning. They develop a detailed understanding of the expected standards of behaviour in different workplace settings. Young learners who complete pre-employment training for the rail sector develop positive attitudes before commencing work placements. As a result, learners and apprentices develop the personal and professional behaviours expected in training and at work.

Learners and apprentices have a good awareness of the importance of equality and diversity. Learners on customer service programmes discuss how rail operators aim to increase the number of female train drivers. They attend employer events celebrating diversity. They know the importance of treating peers and colleagues with respect. Hairdressing apprentices at Canvey Island and Southend understand that welcoming all clients is not only inclusive but is also good for business.

Learners and apprentices undertake a good range of additional activities beyond their qualifications. Customer service learners aiming for a career in the rail industry attend the drivers' academy at Stratford, where they complete simulation activities. They visit the rail operations control centre in Romford to learn about different job roles, such as logistics. Hairdressing apprentices at Long Eaton receive additional training with a commercial hair product supplier. As a result, learners and apprentices enhance their appeal to employers.

Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of their next steps. They receive helpful and impartial careers advice and guidance. Hairdressing apprentices know the range of career options available to them on completion of their apprenticeship. They understand the transferrable skills they develop during their hairdressing apprenticeship. They know that these skills equip them for other roles working with the public. Learners with high needs have useful discussions about their career options with tutors. They know the skills that they need to pursue their aspirations. As a result, learners and apprentices are well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders and managers have developed an effective governance model. They use external expertise effectively to improve the quality of provision. Non-executive directors bring extensive experience to their roles. They provide appropriate support and challenge in board meetings. They ask probing questions and use the information compiled by leaders to evaluate their progress against targets. As a result, leaders have actioned weaknesses in programmes for young people and for the provision of careers advice for apprentices identified at the previous inspection. However, leaders' focus on the improvement of English and Mathematics and on the provision for high needs learners has not yet secured the necessary improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Ensure that learners with high needs receive the specialist teaching and support that they need to make good progress.
- Ensure that tutors of learners with high needs are appropriately qualified.
- Improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics so that learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications in these subjects.

## **Provider details**

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<b>Address</b>	44 Alexandra Street Southend-On-Sea SS1 1BJ
<b>Contact number</b>	0800 783 2901 Extension 228
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.centraltraininggroup.com">www.centraltraininggroup.com</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Martin Kolton
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent Learning Provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 to 13 March 2020

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of learner progress and compliance, 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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