

Triangle Training Limited

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Early years and playwork

Description of the provider

1. Triangle Training Limited is a private organisation specialising in the delivery of childcare training. The head office is in Leamington Spa and the company has centres in Northampton, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Telford, Nottingham and Leicester. The company holds contracts from six Learning and Skills Council (LSC) regions: Birmingham and Solihull, Northamptonshire, the Black Country, Shropshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, to deliver apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship training. It also has a contract from the East Midlands region of the LSC to deliver Train to Gain programmes, also in childcare. The provider also has Train to Gain programmes in the West Midlands under subcontract to another provider, STL. At the time of the inspection, there were 652 learners on apprenticeship programmes, of whom 26 were male, and 393 learners were on advanced apprenticeship programmes, of which 7 were male. Of the 213 learners on Train to Gain programmes, 150 are directly contracted. Sixteen per cent of learners are from backgrounds other than White British.
2. The provider employs 60 staff including: the managing director, an operations director, a quality manager, a training manager, training co-ordinators, internal verifiers and moderators, assessors, trainers, a key skills tutor, recruitment officers, administrators and trainee assessors.
3. Most apprentices start by attending a 10 week programme led pathway at one of the provider's centres.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Early years and playwork	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are all good. Provision in early years and playwork is also good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. The capacity to improve is good as is the effectiveness of steps taken to improve since the previous inspection. Successful actions were made to address all of the weaknesses that were identified. Learners' success rates have improved significantly and are now at least satisfactory overall and are good for advanced apprentices. The provider makes good use of feedback from employers and learners in the evaluation of its programmes and their continuous development. Rigorous quality assurance has maintained or improved standards while the provider has greatly increased its geographical coverage and learner numbers.
6. Self-assessment is good. This process is thorough and inclusive, and provides a largely accurate picture of the provision. The self-assessment report identifies most of the strengths and areas for improvement noted by inspectors, although self-assessment grades are overgenerous. The report did not grade overall effectiveness or capacity to improve nor did it give separate grades to achievement and standards, or the quality of provision. The 2007 self-assessment report is closely linked for the first time to a quality improvement plan instead of the previous development plans. Arrangements to monitor and assess progress in most areas are good.

Key strengths

- Good overall success rates for advanced apprentices
- The acquisition of work skills is good
- Much good teaching and learning on the programme led pathway
- Good pastoral support
- Clear strategic direction
- Operational management
- Comprehensive and effective quality assurance

Key areas for improvement

- Not enough employer and learner involvement in target-setting
- Insufficient recording of progress monitoring in some areas
- Inadequately systematic identification of additional learning needs
- Insufficient staff awareness of equality of opportunity issues
- No qualified staff to provide specialist support to learners with additional learning needs

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement and standards are good. Overall framework success rates for advanced apprenticeships are good. They have improved over the last three years, from 66% to 79%. In the Black Country, the overall success rate during 2006/07 for advance apprentices is outstanding, at 91%. In the same period, overall success rates for apprentices is satisfactory, at around 70%. The test pass rate for key skills for communication at Level 1 is good, at 96% during 2006/07. In the last three years, timely framework success rates have increased from 15% to 54%. There is no difference in the performance of male or female learners. Overall success rates for learners from a minority ethnic background are low, at 28% during 2006/07.
8. Learners' acquisition of work skills is good. They are motivated and develop in confidence. Learners are better able to understand, plan for and meet the needs of children in their care. Learners develop a good understanding of childrens' cultural and dietary needs and their importance to children and their parents. Learners develop good childcare practice. Progression for learners to higher levels of qualification and jobs is good. Learners have a good understanding and insight into the area of work. Self-assessment recognises these strengths but over emphasises them.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

9. Teaching, training and learning, both on and off-the-job, are satisfactory. There is much good teaching, training and learning on the programme led pathway. The programme is cohesive and logically structured. The provider identifies this as a key strength in their self-assessment. Most lessons are well planned. Schemes of work are detailed and contain appropriate references to key skills. There is very little planned differentiation, or actions by trainers in sessions, to address learners' individual needs and abilities.
10. Learners enjoy a wide range of activities, well linked to working with children. They begin to develop a range of skills that prepare them well for working with children. Trainers help them to link practice with theory. Learners gain a good grasp of the national vocational qualification (NVQ) process and of what they need to do to gain their qualification. They start work early on their key skills portfolios. Most learners are well motivated and work hard. The principles and values of childcare, learning and development are appropriately incorporated in to the programme led pathway. They form a central part of induction for Train to Gain learners. For apprentices and advanced apprentices not on the programme led pathway there is often not enough emphasis on these aspects during individual training in the workplace.
11. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation at all centres is adequately sized, well cared for and provides a safe and healthy environment for learning. There is a satisfactory range of equipment and materials used appropriately in lessons. Workplaces offer the range of experience needed for learners to achieve their qualifications. There is increasing internet based information available to all learners. There are sufficient trainers, assessors and

internal verifiers. All have appropriate qualifications, occupational backgrounds and are effectively deployed.

12. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Sufficient observations are carried out and clearly recorded. Performance criteria are accurately referenced, but often knowledge evidence from observations is not identified. Assessments are clearly planned but insufficiently negotiated with learners. The process of learners' progress reviews is satisfactory overall. Learners' targets and progress are reviewed regularly at monthly meetings. However, the cumulative progress of the learner is frequently not made clear on the written record. Progress monitoring sheets are not completed in all areas and learners and employers are insufficiently aware of learners' progress. Assessors sometimes set targets without sufficient negotiation with learners and employers and in some areas the targets are not set appropriately. The self-assessment report does not identify these weaknesses.
13. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of the learners well. They can access training through a variety of options. Ten week block training sessions are held for apprentices at the beginning of their training programme, especially for those not employed. The provider organises morning and evening off-the-job training sessions to fit in with learners' work patterns and facilitate their attendance. Train to Gain learners are also encouraged to attend sessions relevant to their programmes and needs. Learners can obtain course teaching materials 'online' to supplement their own notes or if they are absent from a teaching session. Learners can undertake their NVQ through a paper based route or through using an e-portfolio.
14. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners have positive relationships with staff at Triangle Training and feel well supported. Regular meetings with trainers provide learners with good pastoral support. Visits to the workplace are frequent and well documented. Most support is on an individual basis. Assessors and trainers support and coach learners to raise their self-esteem, build confidence and develop employability skills. Learners have effective support to help gain or change employment. Good initial advice and guidance ensure learners understand their job and employment requirements.
15. Initial assessment does not systematically identify learners' additional learning support needs enough. There is an over reliance on learners to declare any additional support requirements at interview. This is identified as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. There is no overall strategy to address individual learner needs and no appropriately qualified staff to provide specialist support in literacy, numeracy or language. The provider does not refer learners with such needs to specialist providers. Some staff have undergone training, such as dyslexia awareness, and all staff provide additional support to learners. Results from initial assessment are not routinely transferred onto individual learning plans.
16. Recruitment officers help learners with jobsearch activities and work-related personal development, valued by learners. Good systems monitor learners' attendance. Assessors involve parents and carers to support good attendance.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are good. Directors and senior managers provide clear strategic direction. This is communicated to staff through very frequent meetings and a weekly newsletter. The three year development plan sets out a clear vision and targets for development of the provision. Directors have identified a number of other providers who are, both geographically and in terms of programmes offered, complementary to themselves and have agreed to form an operating group. It is too early to judge the success of this venture but there are plans to use economies of scale to provide and improve some common functions including IT support.
18. Triangle Training has comprehensive quality assurance arrangements. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Quality assurance contributes effectively to the provision. Operational quality manuals are comprehensive, covering the full range of policies and procedures, and are regularly audited and updated. Staff are familiar with the quality manuals and use them effectively to support their work. Self-assessment is good. All tutors are observed in their training sessions at least twice a year. The quality manager assures the quality in the observation of teaching and learning. However, there are missed opportunities for the sharing of external observations, such as observations conducted for tutors working towards the certificate in education. There is also insufficient access to observation of teaching and learning documentation in the centres. Internal verification is effective and verifiers support the assessment process well. They are involved in learner reviews, review of learner progress and meet regularly as a team to discuss the performance and progress of learners and assessors.
19. Operational management is good. Staff are well deployed and work well together as a team, each aware of their own roles and responsibilities. Staff are able to cover the equivalent role in other centres. Internal promotion of staff is good. For example, assessors have been trained as internal verifiers and have been promoted to centre-co-ordinator roles or more senior management posts. Centre co-ordinators and internal verifiers complement each other well and ensure that quality assurance is rigorous. Staff development is satisfactory. Staff maintain occupational competency as assessors through attending a minimum of three days in a workplace setting.
20. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. It is promoted through up to date policies and procedures, at learner induction, an employee rights and responsibilities pack and discussion at review. The provider monitors the performance of learners by gender and ethnicity. A small number of male learners have been recruited. Staff awareness of equality of opportunity issues is insufficient. Training is available but is not compulsory. Understanding of equality of opportunity is inconsistently applied to the training of learners. There is lack of detail in the questioning of learning during progress review. This has been identified as an area for improvement within the self-assessment report. The company largely meets its obligations under relevant race and equalities legislation.

What learners like:

- Hands on training in the nursery
- Training close to home
- Paper free portfolios
- Useful learner packs
- Support from trainers and assessors
- 'Help finding a job and earning'
- Extra support
- 'Brilliant staff, always helpful'
- 'Treated as an employee rather than a student'
- Small group size and friendships
- Respect between tutors and learner
- Help with future careers

What learners think could improve:

- 'The overly long day, when attending evening training'
- Availability of more locally based training
- Frequency of visits by assessors
- 'The extent to which assessors keep appointments'

Learners' achievements

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	2004/05	overall	96	70	48	66	34
		timely	88	22	31	22	21
	2005/06	overall	196	64	54	64	44
		timely	224	21	34	21	27
	2006/07	overall	182	79	N/a	79	N/a
		timely	163	79	N/a	50	N/a
Apprenticeships	2004/05	overall	229	69	50	69	38
		timely	123	11	29	11	22
	2005/06	overall	362	70	58	70	53
		timely	374	43	38	43	33
	2006/07	overall	430	69	N/a	69	N/a
		timely	234	57	N/a	57	N/a

Note: At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006/07 had yet to be fully validated

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** Provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'