

Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd (also trading as Qube Learning)

Inspection date

29 August 2008

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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' monitoring 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:

- Hospitality and catering
- Literacy and numeracy
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

- 1. Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd, also trading as Qube Learning, is a subsidiary company of Qube Holdings Ltd. The organisation has administrative offices in Wallingford, Oxfordshire. Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd trading as Qube Learning holds Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contracts with London Central LSC, East of England LSC, East Midlands LSC, Greater Manchester LSC and South East England LSC. A managing director, who reports directly to the board of the holding company, leads Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd trading as Qube Learning. The director of learning has day-to-day operational responsibility for learning.
- 2. Learners are employed across England and the majority of their learning takes place in the workplace. The 57 full-time and part-time staff employed by Qube Learning deliver most of the learning. JHP Training, Southend Hospital NHS Trust and Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust are subcontractors for some provision. Qube Learning is also a subcontractor to JHP Training for approximately 1,000 learners. This provision was not inspected.
- 3. Currently, Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd trading as Qube Learning has 118 apprentices, 55 advanced apprentices and 853 learners on Train to Gain. Of these, 79 apprentices and 255 Train to Gain learners are in commercial enterprises including hospitality and catering. Train to Gain literacy and numeracy courses account for 302 learners, 94 apprentices and 156 Train to Gain learners are in business, administration and law. The small proportion of learners on courses in health, public services and care are not part of the inspection. Approximately 30% of learners are from a minority ethnic group.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based Learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based Learning	Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based Learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based Learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory although for a small proportion of apprentices, achievement and standards are inadequate. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory. The quality of provision, including the effectiveness of teaching, training and learning, the response to the needs of learners and employers and guidance and support, are satisfactory. Provision is satisfactory in hospitality and catering, literacy and numeracy and business, administration and law. Leadership and management are satisfactory as is the provision for equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve Satisfactory: Grade 3

- 5. The capacity to improve is satisfactory. The provider has made adequate progress in addressing most areas for improvement and maintaining strengths identified at the previous reinspection. However, framework completion rates remain low for the small proportion of apprentices. The quality assurance processes are satisfactory and good use is made of feedback from learners, employers and other providers.
- 6. Self-assessment is broadly accurate. The process takes account of the views of learners, employers, subcontractors and staff. Inspectors agreed with most grades, strengths and areas for improvement in the self-assessment report. However, omissions occur in some areas, in particular, business, administration and law. Self-assessment action plans are satisfactory but key personnel responsible for action points are not clearly identified. Management and team meetings include regular updating and monitoring of action plans.

Key strengths

- Good guidance and support across all areas
- Particularly good internal communications

Key areas for improvement

- Poor overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- Ineffective quality monitoring of teaching and learning

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 Work-based learning Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

- 7. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates for learners on Train to Gain administration programmes are outstanding. The provider's most recent data indicates that in 2007/08, overall success rates are good for Train to Gain learners in hospitality and catering and satisfactory for most other Train to Gain learners. Train to Gain accounts for approximately 83% of learners. Timely success rates on the apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes have been below national averages for the previous three years, well below in some instances. The provider's self-assessment report does not recognise the poor completion of apprenticeship frameworks. The rate of progress this year has improved and the provider's most recent data for apprenticeships indicates that overall success rates are improving and are now satisfactory. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are similar to those for all groups.
- 8. Standards of learners work overall are satisfactory. In business administration, learners develop good personal and workplace skills. The majority of learners' portfolios are satisfactory with an adequate range of evidence. In the better portfolios, particularly well presented evidence demonstrates a high standard of written work and good theoretical knowledge and understanding.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

- 9. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Standards of teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with good individual coaching provided for learners in literacy and numeracy. Insufficient use is made of a broad range of learning resources in literacy and numeracy and business, administration and law. Assessments and verification are thorough. Standardisation meetings ensure clear procedures are followed and any issues are quickly dealt with. Assessments are generally well planned. The standards of learners work are mostly satisfactory. Initial assessment and reviews are satisfactory overall. Initial diagnostic assessment of individual learning needs is thorough and adequately identifies the support requirements of learners. Learners with learning difficulties receive adequate support.
- 10. Overall, a satisfactory range of programmes is offered to meet the needs of learners and employers. The provider has developed good working relationships with a wide range of employers and, in some cases, has developed in-house training programmes to benefit learners and other employees. Self-assessment is comprehensive and is shared with

employers. The self-assessment process has led to appropriate improvements being made to the provision.

11. Support and guidance are good. Careers support is good and learners are encouraged to consider a range of career options. Personal support is readily available. Staff are flexible in their arrangements to meet learners, often holding training sessions early in the morning or at weekends to accommodate peak working hours. Reviews include clear monitoring of learners' progress although target setting on some individual learning plans is not sufficiently challenging. The small proportion of learners with additional learning needs receive appropriate support.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

- 12. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the company has restructured its management of the provision. Senior staff and operational staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Newly appointed staff undertake a thorough induction which includes shadowing more experienced staff. Following restructuring, senior managers now have a clearer focus on improvement.
- 13. Partnerships are good with particularly effective links with a wide range of employers, support agencies and other organisations. The company has successfully provided training programmes for a range of minority ethnic groups including hospitality programmes for the Bangladeshi community. The partnerships formed with other organisations widen opportunities for those who cannot access learning through traditional routes. Strategic planning is satisfactory, focusing well on the establishment of clear pathways for learners and is very clear about the direction of training and development across the country. The business plan is clearly written and senior managers are fully involved in planning for the future.
- 14. Internal communications are particularly good. The regular and informative staff newsletter gives up-to-date information on courses as well as performance data. The monthly staff meetings enable staff to share information and best practice across sectors. Good use is made of mobile telephones and staff keep in daily contact with each other and are able to quickly identify issues with learners. An intranet is currently being developed and piloted with some staff. The use of data is satisfactory and discussed at team meetings where subcontracted provision is adequately monitored. Clear service level agreements are in place with subcontractors.
- 15. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory with regular reinforcement of learners' knowledge and understanding. The carefully designed marketing and learning materials guard against discrimination. Clear checks are made of subcontractors to make sure they effectively promote equality of opportunity. Complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly. Regular review and updating of the clear policies for equality and diversity takes place. Qube Learning is compliant with race and

gender equality, disability discrimination, child and adult protection and other legislation responsibilities. Staff have recently received training to ensure they have a clear understanding of updated legislation and equality and diversity issues, although the benefits from this have yet to take effect. The company has recently re-established an equality and diversity committee that has a clear focus on training for staff. Data on different groups of learners is collected and analysed although this information is not fully used to develop management decisions.

- 16. The procedures for safeguarding learners are adequate and meet current government requirements. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are done for all staff who have direct contact with learners, including those from subcontracted provision. Recent training ensures staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding requirements.
- 17. Overall, quality improvement is satisfactory. Good use is made of feedback from learners, staff and employers. Information received is thoroughly analysed and action plans put in place to make improvements. Although the self-assessment process is comprehensive, the report itself is insufficiently detailed and does not identify several key issues. Internal verification is thorough and any issues are dealt with quickly. Regular observations of teaching and learning are undertaken, however they are poorly recorded and with few judgements. Insufficient use is made of observations to improve the quality of teaching.

What learners like:

- Studying while at work
- Gaining a qualification
- 'Individual tutor sessions are good because I don't feel confident in groups'
- 'The programme will help improve my job prospects'
- 'I like being able to talk with my adviser at any time'

What learners think could improve:

- Poor wording of some theory questions
- 'I wasn't sure when I was going to finish the course'
- 'Too much paperwork'
- 'The explanation about the programme was too long at induction'

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

18. Currently, 334 learners are on hospitality and catering programmes across England, 72 adult apprentices, seven apprentices and 255 Train to Gain learners. The majority of apprentices are in food and drink service, others are on programmes in bar service, food processing and cookery, professional cookery and hospitality supervision. The majority of Train to Gain learners are recruited to programmes in food preparation and cookery whilst others undertake programmes in housekeeping, front office and food and drink service. All learners are full-time employees, recruited directly from the industry. Almost 25% of learners are male and 13% are from minority ethnic groups. The provider works with 103 employers nationally. Training and assessment take place in the workplace.

Strengths

- Good success rates on Train to Gain programmes for 2007/08
- Particularly effective support for learners

Areas for improvement

Poor overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes

Achievement and standards

- 19. Overall, achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners on Train to Gain make good progress. The success rate in 2007/08 was 81%, significantly up from 62% in 2006/07. The overall success rates on apprenticeships has been poor for the past three years. In 2006/07, only 20% of advanced apprentices and 30% of apprentices achieved their framework. The overall success rate for advanced apprentices was 24% below the national rate and 26% below for apprentices. However, apprentices currently on programme are making good progress and the most recent data from the provider indicates that overall success rates have significantly improved and are now satisfactory.
- 20. Learners develop satisfactory occupational skills and most demonstrate good knowledge of the sector. The majority of Train to Gain learners are returning to learning for the first time in many years. They are well motivated and value the training they receive. Learners improve their confidence and this has a positive impact on their work.

Quality of provision

- 21. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Learning Advisors work well with learners and use a variety of teaching styles to ensure that learners have a good understanding of topics covered. The range of learning resources, such as textbooks and in-house learning materials, is good and is used effectively to promote learning. Most portfolios of evidence are organised well and contain an adequate range of workplace evidence. Individual learning plans and reviews are satisfactory with clearly identified target dates for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) unit completion, which learners understand. Assessors and managers monitor these well. Many learners benefit from training programmes provided by their employers such as manual handling and cellar management, however, the learning plans or reviews do not always take these into account.
- 22. Qube Learning provides a satisfactory range of programmes covering apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and Train to Gain which meet the needs of learners and employers. The range and level of programmes allow sufficient progression routes for learners and good opportunities to improve their employment prospects.
- 23. Support and guidance is good. Learning Advisors give good pastoral support to learners. Learners receive good information and advice relating to career progression. They benefit well from the time assessors spend with them. Learning Advisors spend additional time with those learners who require more support. Learning Advisors help learners to improve their levels of competence at work.

Leadership and management

- 24. Leadership and management of hospitality and catering are satisfactory. Communication between managers and Learning Advisors is particularly good and regular staff meetings and development days are productive. Meetings with staff across other sector skills areas allow for sharing of good practice. Individual Learning Advisors have clear targets which are set and regularly reviewed. Learning Advisors' overall performance is formally reviewed every six months. Internal verifiers shadow assessors monthly to support and promote good practice. Assessments are well planned and verification is thorough. All staff follow the clear quality improvement framework.
- 25. Promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Learners and Learning Advisors have a reasonable understanding of equality and diversity. Learning Advisors use questions effectively to improve learners' knowledge. The development of the self-assessment report clearly involves staff who contribute to the process during development days. The views of employers and learners are also considered. The report was mostly accurate although it lacked detail and failed to identify the poor performance of the apprenticeship programme.

Literacy and numeracy

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

26. Currently, 302 learners are on Train to Gain on Level 1 and Level 2 literacy and numeracy courses with 110 employers. Learners are in London, the East of England, and East Midlands. All learners are full-time employees. Most teaching and assessment takes place in the workplace. Seven Learning Advisors and one team manager deliver the programme.

Strengths

- Good individual coaching
- Good guidance and support

Areas for improvement

- Low timely success rates on literacy and numeracy
- Weak target setting at reviews and on individual learning plans

Achievement and standards

27. Achievements and standards are satisfactory with 58% overall success rate in 2007/08 up from 57% in 2006/07. However, timely success rates are low at 23% during the last year. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and learners demonstrate adequate levels of writing and numeracy skills. Learners' files are of an appropriate standard. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

- 28. Overall, the quality of provision is satisfactory Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners receive high levels of good individual coaching. Many do not like working in groups and value the individual support which improves their confidence and motivation. Staff use positive language to improve learners' self-esteem. Learners work in good learning environments in the workplace and their learning advisers put them at ease. The basic principles of literacy and numeracy are clearly explained, however, an insufficient range of learning resources is used. Learners focus well on the achievement of their literacy and numeracy qualifications. Although worksheets are adapted to ensure they are contextualised and vocationally relevant, little use is made of information technology or other resources to stimulate learners.
- 29. Initial and diagnostic assessment is satisfactory. Short-term target setting at reviews and on individual learning plans is weak. Recognition of the different learning needs in relation to personal, social, vocational and employment aspirations is insufficient. Learners' goals are not clear; targets are often too general and not specific to individual needs.

- 30. Programmes adequately meet the needs of learners and employers. The timing of teaching and learning sessions in the workplace meets the needs of employees and employers. The induction process is thorough and includes satisfactory promotion of equal opportunities and other relevant issues. All learners receive an informative induction pack although some information is difficult to read for those with low levels of literacy.
- 31. Guidance and support for learners is good. Learning Advisors break down barriers between themselves and the learners. Learners appreciate the flexibility of Learning Advisors who re-arrange appointments when learners experience personal and family issues, changes of work shifts and other constraints. Readily available to discuss participants' development needs and difficulties through the individual sessions or by telephone, Learning Advisors guide learners to appropriate support agencies when needed. Initial advice and guidance is good and learners are referred to college courses or further training where needed. A comprehensive range of information on agencies for counselling, housing advice and other guidance is included in the learner's induction pack.

Leadership and management

32. Leadership and management of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. Staff meetings are regular, clearly recorded and include sharing of good practice. Staff keep in touch with each other, often daily by telephone, to discuss and resolve issues. Monitoring takes place on the targets set at the regular staff appraisals. Staff are adequately qualified. Regular teaching and learning observations take place but observers are not fully trained to conduct observations of literacy and numeracy. The observation process is not sufficiently evaluative and results in insufficient improvements. The self-assessment and action planning process fully involves staff. Inspectors agreed with the grading for literacy and numeracy in the self-assessment report but it did not include some of the key strengths and areas for improvement identified on inspection. Staff training includes equality and diversity. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

33. Currently, 250 learners are on business, administration and law programmes. Approximately 65% of the learners are on Train to Gain, 114 working towards administration, customer service and team leader NVQs at Level 2, 42 working towards administration, customer service and management NVQs at Level 3 and 94 are on apprenticeship programmes in business administration. Approximately 27% of learners are male and 14% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. All learners are full-time employees and training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Learners are predominantly in the East of England with the majority in London. Employment is in a range of commercial enterprises and other establishments including hotels, hospitals, retail establishments, care homes, schools and voluntary organisations. Learning Advisors visit learners in the workplace and provide training, support and assessment.

Strengths

- Outstanding overall success rates for Train to Gain learners in administration
- Good development of personal and workplace skills
- Good support for learners

Areas for improvement

- Poor overall success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- Slow progress for learners on some Train to Gain programmes

Achievement and standards

- 34. Overall, achievement and standards are satisfactory. Overall success rates for learners on Train to Gain programmes in administration are outstanding. Since 2006/07, all learners have successfully achieved their qualification. The proportion of learners on this programme accounts for 28% of the total number of learners in business, administration and law. Overall success rates for learners on other Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory although progress is slow for learners in customer service and management.
- 35. Overall success rates on apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes are poor with 53% overall success rates for apprentices and 35% for advanced apprentices in 2005/06 and 39% for apprentices and 44% for advanced apprentices in 2006/2007. Those who do achieve make slow progress.
- 36. The development of personal and workplace skills is good. Many learners develop confidence and interpersonal skills which support the development of working relationships. Learners develop good critical thinking skills and demonstrate a clear understanding of legislation such as health and safety policies and procedures. A small proportion of learners have achieved more responsibility or promotion as a result. The standard of learners' portfolios is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

- 37. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory and are generally well planned. In the larger organisations learners receive good additional training from their employer which supports their learning. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Assessment and verification are thorough. Assessments are well planned with the learner and internal verifiers clearly sampling assessment decisions. However, insufficient use is made of stimulating approaches to learning, which does not challenge all learners. Too much reliance is made on paper-based resources and access to information technology is lacking. In a small number of cases, learners' poor spelling, grammar and punctuation are not checked.
- 38. The range of programmes to meet learners' needs is satisfactory. Employers' needs are met with a suitable range and level of programmes on offer. Learners have adequate access to a wide range of qualifications suitable for their job roles.
- 39. Support for learners is good. Learning Advisors visit learners frequently and meetings are productive. Learners can contact their learning adviser at any time by mobile phone and by e-mail. Employers are flexible and supportive, with many allowing learners considerable time during work hours for training and assessment visits and to work on their portfolios. Employers have adequate involvement in reviews of learners' progress. Induction is satisfactory and learners receive clear information about their programme.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Newsletters and regular meetings, across both regions and subject areas, keep staff and managers well informed. All staff keep in daily contact with colleagues using their laptops and mobile phones. Staff are occupationally experienced and competent although some lack the skills to enable them to teach well and deal with learners who misbehave. New staff receive a thorough induction which includes opportunities for shadowing more experienced members of staff. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The self-assessment process involves all staff and although the report is mostly accurate it lacks detail and fails to recognise the poor completion of apprenticeship frameworks. Staff have satisfactory access to a broad range of data about learner progress but not all learning advisers use this effectively. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and staff and learners have a reasonable knowledge of equality and diversity issues. The use of discussion and worksheets satisfactorily promotes equality of opportunity to learners.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider **2004** to **2007**

Retail and commercial enterprise	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate (%age) **	National NVQ rate (%age)	Provider framework rate (%age)	National framework rate (%age)
					**	**	**
Advanced	04/05	overall	114	18	31	13	22
Apprenticeships		timely	118	8	22	5	15
	05/06	overall	110	17	36	15	29
		timely	115	10	24	8	19
	06/07	overall	35	31	50	20	44
		timely	57	14	34	7	30
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	474	31	46	25	36
		timely	488	24	30	18	23
	05/06	overall	204	41	54	33	49
		timely	203	25	38	20	34
	06/07	overall	88	39	59	30	56
		timely	171	14	44	9	41

^{*} 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.

[#] When available and validated by the LSC.

Business, administration and law	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate (%age) **	National NVQ rate (%age) **	Provider framework rate (%age) **	National framework rate (%age) **
Advanced	04/05	overall	17	47	47	24	32
Apprenticeships		timely	18	33	34	22	23
	05/06	overall	40	43	59	35	50
		timely	41	32	44	24	37
	06/07	overall	9	44	70	44	66
		timely	10	30	56	30	53
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall	147	45	56	33	46
		timely	161	31	35	23	29
	05/06	overall	104	59	62	53	57
		timely	99	37	44	37	41
	06/07	overall	36	39	69	39	66
		timely	55	18	54	18	52

^{*} 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

^{**} Provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR).

[#] When available and validated by the LSC.

Annex

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	provider NVQ rate (%
				age)**
Train to Gain	2006/07	overall	204	68
NVQ		timely	182	59
	2007/08	overall	655	75
		timely	675	47

^{*} 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.

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain skills for life programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	provider skills for life rate (% age)**
Train to Gain	2006/07	overall	37	57
(skills for life)		timely	16	42
	2007/08	overall	162	58
		timely	182	23

^{*} 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.

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^{**} NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider prior to inspection.

^{**} Skills for life qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider prior to inspection.