

Amacsports Ltd

Inspection date

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Inspection number

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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:

- Sports, leisure and recreation
- Employability training

Description of the provider

1. Amacsports Ltd (Amac) is a private training provider based in Womenswold, Canterbury. It was established as a limited company in 2003 and specialises in training for the fitness industry, mainly in Kent.
2. Amac provides work-based learning entry to employment (E2E) training to 63 learners through a subcontract with Kent County Council (KCC) at sites in Canterbury, Margate, Maidstone, Ashford, Dartford, Dover, Sittingbourne and Tunbridge Wells. It provides Train to Gain programmes funded by the Kent and Medway LSC to 49 learners on employers' premises across Kent and the South East, leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and 3 in exercise and fitness instruction and activity leadership, together with qualifications in literacy and numeracy.
3. Amac has recently completed a European Social Fund financed project in collaboration with Sussex Downs College to provide skills training connected to the 2012 Olympic Games. With KCC, it is about to offer training for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Britain. Amac provides privately-funded programmes in a variety of leisure, fitness and sport-related subjects. Government funded training represents around 70% of Amac's business.
4. Two directors lead Amac, assisted by four managers and three administrators. A number of tutors, assessors and internal verifiers work on a full-time, part-time or sessional basis.
5. In 2007 the proportion of 16–18 year olds in Kent, and in Medway, not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 5.2% and 5.6% respectively compared with 6.7% nationally. Of the working age population, 36.2% did not have a full level 2 qualification compared with 35.5% nationally.

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 | | Good: Grade 2 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: | Good: Grade 2 |
| Work-based learning | Contributory grade: | Good: Grade 2 |
| Quality of provision | | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to Gain | Contributory grade: | Good: Grade 2 |
| Work-based learning | Contributory grade: | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Train to gain | Satisfactory: | Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: | Grade 3 |
| Equality of opportunity | | Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

Sector subject areas

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sports, leisure and recreation | Good: Grade 2 |
| Employability training | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are good. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall, and good in Train to Gain. Leadership and management are satisfactory as are arrangements for equality of opportunity. Sports, recreation and leisure provision is good. Employability training is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Amac's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Progression rates for E2E learners are high and improving. Success rates on sports and fitness qualifications are high for the small number of leavers from Train to Gain provision. Amac has recently and usefully expanded its management team to cater for its continuing growth. It has successfully remedied some of the key areas for improvement it identified in its self-assessment report for 2006/07. However, its quality improvement arrangements are incomplete.
8. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The process suitably includes the views of learners, staff and some employers. The 2007/08 report is the second Amac has produced. It covers the publicly funded training Amac offers appropriately, and provides clear judgements against the key questions of the common inspection framework. However, detailed judgements do not distinguish sufficiently clearly between the two sector subject areas Amac provides. Inspectors agreed with some key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report. Some other strengths were judged to be no more than normal practice and some key areas for improvement were not identified. Grades in the report partly match those awarded by inspectors.

Key strengths

- Good progression and achievement of additional qualifications
- Good programme design

Key areas for improvement

- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

9. Achievement and standards are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Train to Gain learners' achievement of additional qualifications is good and improves their potential to progress at work. NVQ success rates are high for the small numbers of those leaving the programmes so far. Success rates in literacy and numeracy accreditation are satisfactory and improving. Progression to education training and employment for E2E learners is good. Progression rates have risen and are high. Three quarters of E2E learners gain qualifications relevant to work in the fitness industry.
10. The standard of Train to Gain learners' work is good. Learners develop their vocational and personal skills well. For E2E learners, standards of work and literacy skills are satisfactory. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are in line with all learners.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall, and good in Train to Gain. Standards of teaching and learning are good for Train to Gain learners. Learning materials and vocational resources are good. However, recording of learners' progress is incomplete. In E2E provision, teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory overall, but not enough teaching is good.
12. Programmes meet needs and interests well. On Train to Gain provision, the match of training and qualifications to learners' aspirations and employers' needs is good. The programmes enable many learners to overcome barriers and fulfil longstanding aspirations. They equip learners well to contribute rapidly to their employers' businesses. The design of the E2E programme is highly effective in meeting the interests of learners, many of whom have ambitions to work in the fitness industry. All learners have good work experience placements. The range of qualifications Amac offers them is good.
13. Support and guidance are satisfactory. Employers and trainers support Train to Gain learners well in their work and personal lives. E2E learners receive good additional support to help them remain on programme. However, Amac recognises it does not provide sufficient information to E2E learners about the wide range of potential careers in the sports and leisure industry.

14. The self-assessment report correctly assessed the quality of provision on Train to Gain programmes. However, the overall grades in the report were judged by inspectors to be too high.

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

15. Leadership and management are satisfactory, a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report. Amac has a clear and ambitious strategy for growth. Business planning is sound and detailed, envisaging significant but sustainable growth for the next three years. Over the last four years Amac has steadily developed its publicly-funded provision, building effectively on its origins as a provider of privately-funded sports industry training. It has secured new contracts to expand its provision. In recent months it has increased its management team to provide additional capacity to sustain growth, and invested heavily in developing attractive, informative paper- and internet-based marketing materials.
16. Amac has productive working relationships with a wide range of organisations. It works effectively with other training providers to broaden its provision. Strong links with the Connexions service help to ensure E2E learners receive necessary support. Amac responds flexibly to the needs of employers who have learners through its Train to Gain provision. Good links with sport and fitness industry employers help it provide worthwhile work experience to E2E learners.
17. Amac supports and develops its staff well. Most managers and tutors have joined the company recently. They receive satisfactory induction to their roles, supplemented by effective continuing support. Amac staff training and development plans are comprehensive and detailed, based on thorough analysis of need. Most staff are appropriately qualified. Tutors work towards a good range of appropriate assessor and teaching qualifications, and also receive some company-wide training.
18. The use of data in managing the provision is satisfactory. Managers monitor performance against key indicators monthly. Data on success and progression are accurate, timely and readily available. Amac use them appropriately when setting its satisfactory range of targets for improvement. However, it does not routinely analyse retention and achievement of learners from different ethnic backgrounds, or by gender.
19. Operational management is sound. Communication is satisfactory between Amac's offices and its centres across the region. Tutors and assessors meet monthly. Meetings follow standard agendas and are recorded appropriately. The management of learning resources and accommodation is satisfactory. Amac's strategy to meet learners' skills for life needs is satisfactory.
20. Procedures for safeguarding meet current government requirements. All staff working for Amac are vetted. A manager is the designated person for safeguarding. Appropriate

policies and procedures covering safeguarding and child protection are in place and discussed at the induction of new staff and learners.

21. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of learners are mainly satisfactory. They include routine risk assessment of venues where practical work takes place and the monitoring of employers' health and safety procedures during the set-up of work-placements. Health and safety matters form an important part of learners' induction, but occasionally practice during E2E training sessions is poor.
22. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. Amac routinely recruits young people and adults who have been unsuccessful in compulsory education. Amac's programmes are effective in helping them overcome barriers to participation in learning or gaining employment. When joining programmes, learners receive a suitable overview of equality and diversity concepts during their induction, subsequently reinforced at reviews. E2E learners develop an appropriate understanding of their rights and responsibilities in learning through simple classroom activities early in their programme. All learners receive useful training in equality and diversity concerning their work with clients as part of their fitness trainer qualification studies. Amac's policies and procedures covering bullying and harassment are satisfactory. Policies on equality and diversity are thorough and detailed as are race, gender and disability statements. However, action planning and impact assessments remain to be completed.
23. Some aspects of equality of opportunity are not sufficiently promoted. Learners receive summaries of Amac's equal opportunities policy, but these are not written in sufficiently plain English. Amac's analysis of equalities data shows that women and members of minority ethnic groups are under-represented in E2E programmes but it has yet to devise a strategy to remedy this. Otherwise detailed marketing plans do not include analysis or actions concerning equality and diversity. Promotion of equality and diversity is not part of written business plans, or the organisation's statement of core values.
24. Arrangements for improving and assuring quality are incomplete. A detailed quality policy has a sound approach to quality improvement, but few of the arrangements it proposes have been implemented. For example Amac has no schedule for the annual cycle of quality improvement activities the policy describes. Amac's quality manual contains a range of policies and procedures but these are often inaccurate and unused. Audits of individual learning plans for E2E programmes is satisfactory, but monitoring of the content of other key documents such as lesson plans and schemes of work is not sufficient. Judgements following Amac's internal observations of teaching and learning do not sufficiently emphasise learning, or provide sufficient evidence to justify the high grades often awarded. Arrangements for internal verification are incomplete. Amac has identified the need to improve its quality improvement arrangements and appointed a manager to take responsibility in this area. However, this appointment is too recent to have had any effect as yet.

What learners like:

- Supportive readily available staff
- Materials on Train to Gain programmes – ‘we got a brilliant booklet; it made work so much easier’
- Running of the E2E course – ‘it’s laid back. I can learn and have a laugh’
- Working relationships with tutors
- Skills for life training available on Train to Gain – ‘I never thought I’d be able to get a qualification because my Mathematics wasn’t up to it’

What learners think could improve:

- Some learning environments – ‘there’s not enough space between machines’
- Intensity of the E2E course
- Some E2E learning sessions

Sector subject areas

Sports, leisure and recreation

Good: Grade 2

Context

25. Amac offers Train to Gain funded sports qualifications and training at levels 1, 2 and 3. Of 49 current learners, five are working towards an NVQ at level 3 in instructing physical activity and 44 towards activity leadership and/or exercise and fitness NVQs at level 2. Learners work towards relevant vocational qualifications including instructing children's health related fitness, nutrition and weight management and first aid certification. Some 19 learners are working towards literacy or numeracy qualifications at levels 1 or 2. Learners also attend off-the-job training in health and safety, child protection, and safe warm-up exercises.
26. Most learners are employed or have work-placements at leisure centres, gyms and fitness suites. Others are community-based martial arts coaches who wish to improve their practice and achieve accreditation.

Strengths

- Good development of personal and work skills
- Good achievement of additional qualifications
- Good learning materials and vocational resources
- Good match of training and qualifications to learner aspirations and employer needs

Areas for improvement

- Incomplete recording of learner progress
- Insufficiently effective internal verification

Achievement and standards

27. Achievement and standards are good. Learners' development of vocational and personal skills is good. Learners plan fitness and exercise programmes effectively for a wide range of individuals, advise carefully on the safe and correct use of complex exercise equipment and deal well with questions from the public. Learners who start the programme with poor communication, literacy or numeracy skills routinely improve their self-confidence and abilities to work with colleagues and the public.
28. Learners' achievement of additional qualifications is good and improves their potential to progress within the industry. Several learners have gained new employment with local leisure centres and gyms since starting training. NVQ success rates are high for the small numbers of those leaving the programmes so far. For the eight learners aiming for an NVQ at level 2 in instructing exercise and fitness whose planned end date was in 2007/08, overall success rates are high at 86%. Learners' work in NVQ portfolios meets national standards and includes a good range of evidence from the workplace. Success rates in literacy and numeracy accreditation are satisfactory and improving.

Quality of provision

29. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Learning materials and vocational resources are good. Learners develop their skills and knowledge in well equipped fitness suites and sports halls. Their extensive use of often complex and computerised exercise and fitness equipment prepares them effectively to meet current industry requirements and customer expectations. It allows them to gain the full range of practical experience required for their NVQ and in employment. Learning materials are designed particularly well to help learners to master complex skills and knowledge and cover all aspects of exercise and fitness. However, at some sites facilities for theory teaching and reviews are poor.
30. Learners' NVQ portfolios contain a good range of workplace evidence collected by observation and questioning. They include fitness programmes and session plans produced by learners. Assessors are making increasing use of DVD and audio to record evidence of learners' skills, effectively meeting the needs of learners who are reluctant to provide written evidence.
31. Recording of learners' progress is incomplete. Individual learning plans specify activities such as attendance at training sessions or the need to complete assignments, but do not contain goals which are sufficiently specific or with clear timescales for completion. Overall goals are not sufficiently broken down into small achievable steps for learners or employers to use when judging progress. At reviews of progress the recording of current training and the results of assessments is not sufficient. Few employers are actively involved in the review process. Some on- and off-the-job training is not sufficiently co-ordinated. Recording of learners' progress was identified as an area for improvement in Amac's self-assessment report.
32. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well. The match of training and qualifications to learners' aspirations and employers' needs is good. The flexibility of Amac's programmes and the training it provides in literacy and numeracy helps many learners to overcome barriers to fulfilling their longstanding aspirations to become fitness instructors. Training equips learners well to contribute rapidly to their employers' businesses and reduces risks usually associated with employing inexperienced staff. Employers appreciate highly the emphasis within the programmes on learners improving interpersonal as well as vocational skills. The range of qualifications learners work towards are well beyond the minimum needed to work in the leisure and fitness industry, and enable learners to satisfy requirements for membership of professional bodies. Information, advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. Employers and trainers work together well to support individuals in their work and personal lives. Amac staff provide appropriate and timely personal support to learners, often out of normal working hours.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Operational management is sound. Communications are good. Staff development is good. Staff's occupational expertise and qualifications are appropriate. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

34. Internal verification of NVQs and other awards is not fully effective. Amac has yet to establish a strategy for internal verification which fully reflects the increases in the range of qualifications offered, learner enrolments and the numbers of assessors. Monitoring of assessment practice is too limited and standardisation of assessments not sufficiently frequent. Arrangements to monitor learners' progress towards their qualifications are not sufficiently developed to provide timely information on assessor activity or learner support needs. Amac recognises the need to improve monitoring and its plans include the introduction of computer-based systems.
35. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Some strengths and areas for improvement in the self-assessment report match those inspectors identified, although some strengths in the report are no more than normal practice. The grade for the sports, leisure and recreation sector area in the report matched inspectors' judgements.

Employability training

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

36. Currently 63 learners are on E2E programmes at Amac centres in Kent. Training is planned for learners to attend 16 hours a week for up to 20 weeks, with an additional four hours a week of work experience, usually for five weeks. Learners work towards a level 1 award in exercise studies in the first half of the programme and a level 1 sports leader award in the remaining 10 weeks. Most learners work towards qualifications in literacy and/or numeracy at level 1 or 2. Other activity is designed to develop learners' job seeking, personal and social skills. Referral to the programme is mainly through the connexions service. A manager, five vocational and two skills for life tutors are responsible for the programme.

Strengths

- Good progression to education training and employment
- Highly effective course design meeting learners' interests

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient good teaching
- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are good. Progression to education training and employment is good. Progression rates are high overall at 65% for 2007/08, rising to 75% for the small number of leavers in the first quarter of 2008-09. Learners gain qualifications highly relevant to work in the sports and leisure industry. During 2007/08, 74% of leavers achieved qualifications.

38. Learners' skills development is satisfactory. Many learners have good knowledge and skills concerning sports and fitness. They develop their literacy and numeracy skills appropriately. The standard of learners' work in both practical and classroom based activities is at least satisfactory although for some learners tasks set are not sufficiently challenging.

Quality of provision

39. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Initial assessment is satisfactory and usually takes place appropriately during the first four weeks of the programme. Tutors routinely identify and record learners' employment aspirations, barriers to learning and support needs. Assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills is appropriate although detailed analysis of the particular skills a learner needs to develop further is often not sufficient.

40. Practice in setting learning goals and reviewing learners' progress is satisfactory. Learners and tutors agree appropriate goals although some are not sufficiently specific or measurable. Monitoring of learners' achievements in sports and fitness activities is good, and satisfactory for literacy.
41. Insufficient good teaching is provided. In the better sessions, tutors meet individual learners' needs well. Peer-learning, where learners work together in small groups or pairs, is good. Learners enjoy sessions and participate well. However, much teaching is uninspiring. In these sessions the use of questions to check and develop learners' understanding is ineffective. Learners do not receive sufficient encouragement to correct their own errors. At the beginning of sessions tutors do not adequately establish the outcomes learners should expect. Evaluation at the end of sessions places too much emphasis on tasks completed rather than learning. Tutors do not link classroom and practical sessions sufficiently to what learners learn during their work-placements.
42. The extent to which programmes meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The design of the programme is highly effective in meeting learners' interests. Most learners have ambitions to work in the sports and fitness industry. They enjoy the practical aspects of their training and find the sports and fitness activities particularly motivating. All learners have good work experience placements in the public leisure centres where the rest of their training takes place. Programmes are sited at centres convenient for learners. The match between course content and the business needs of potential employers is good. Learners work towards a good range of qualifications including vocational and skills for life accreditations. The range of activity to develop job seeking skills is satisfactory.
43. Support for learners is satisfactory. Amac provides good additional support to help learners remain on programme. It includes help for learners with parenting responsibilities for whom it provides childcare and transport to training centres. Learners receive appropriate advice from connexions advisers about possible training or employment options. However, Amac recognises it does not provide sufficient information to learners about the wide range of potential careers in the sports and leisure industry. It is improving this as part of its plans to achieve the Matrix standard in information, advice and guidance.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Programme management is satisfactory. Staff are generally well qualified and have appropriate vocational experience. A good staff development programme enables tutors to update their skills and gain relevant qualifications. Tutors and employers welcome the good and frequent support the programme manager provides. Communications are effective. The detailed content of work-placements is not sufficiently well planned.
45. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity and their rights and responsibilities while on the programme is satisfactory. Reinforcement of this during reviews of progress is satisfactory. Materials on equality and diversity used by tutors are well presented and readily understandable. However, some the language in some information booklets is too complex and the print too small.
46. Quality improvement systems are incomplete. Grades awarded following observations of teaching and learning are often too high, and feedback places too much emphasis on

teaching rather than learning. Managers do not check tutors' schemes of work routinely before they are used or audit their content subsequently. Systems are ineffective in identifying those instances where reviews of learners' progress are poor. The sampling of learners' work as part of internal verification is not sufficiently thorough.

47. Self-assessment is broadly satisfactory. The self-assessment report successfully identified high rates of learner progression as a key strength but did not identify the quality of teaching as an area for improvement. Inspectors judged many of the strengths contained in the leadership and management section of the report as normal practice. The grade at inspection for employability training was lower than the grade in the self-assessment report.

Annex**Learners' achievements**

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the provider/college 2007 to 2009:

| Year | Number of leavers in the year | Achieved objectives rate* (%) | Progression rate** (%) |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2007/08 | 63 | 49 | 65 |
| 2008/09 (3 months) | 8 | 25 | 75 |

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider before inspection