

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Arthur Rank Training Ltd
Date of visit: 20 October 2008

Context

Arthur Rank Training (ART) is an independent company and a charity based in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. It provides programmes of education and training for socially and educationally disadvantaged 14 to 19 year old learners. It offers training in motor vehicle and construction skills, literacy and numeracy and personal development to enable the learners to progress into employment, education or training.

During the monitoring visit, ART had 316 learners in training. This includes 200 learners from 30 schools and the pupils' reintegration unit on a work-related learning course contract who attend motor vehicle and construction programme for one or two days per week. The young apprenticeship programme for 14 to 16 year old learners has 24 learners. ART has completed a European Social Fund contract for 96 learners aged 16 to 18 that focused exclusively on personal development activities. The above provision was out of scope at the time of the previous inspection in January 2008 and was not inspected.

ART holds a 65 place contract with Coventry and Warwickshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme for 16 to 18 year olds learners. The LSC contract accounts for 61% of the funding.

ART was inspected in January 2008. Inspectors found the overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, provision in preparation for life and work and leadership and management of the organisation to be inadequate. Equality of opportunity was satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

<p>What progress has the provider made to improve the low and declining rates of positive outcomes, including achievement of qualifications in literacy and numeracy and key objectives?</p>	<p>Reasonable progress</p>
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ART has made reasonable progress to improve achievement and standards since the inspection. The rates of positive outcomes were 39% and had declined over the

three previous years. The achievement of key objectives, as well as literacy and numeracy qualifications at Levels 1 and 2, were also low and had declined.

ART has concentrated strongly on improving positive outcomes by setting challenging targets for key workers, managers and staff. It has improved the rates of positive outcomes to 53%. This momentum has been maintained in the current year and the rates of positive outcomes are 52%.

Learners have made substantial improvement in the levels of achievement of qualifications in literacy and numeracy at Level 1. These have improved by 19% and 27% respectively and now stand at 53% and 55%. However, the overall rates of achievements at Level 2 have not improved. The rate of achievement of key objectives has also improved to a good level from 13% at the time of the inspection to 43%.

Attendance and retention levels also have improved. Learners are engaging well in learning and making good progress. Learners continue to develop good levels of practical skills.

Quality of provision

What progress has the provider made to improve the weak target-setting in the individual learning plans and progress reviews?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, target-setting and progress reviews were weak. Learners did not have an individualised programme based on their personal and social development needs and barriers to progress. Key objectives were not being identified correctly.

ART has worked hard to improve this area but the level of progress is variable and the full impact of the work is not yet fully evident. Staff have been trained well by the consultants in target-setting and reviews. Recently introduced electronic initial diagnostic assessment has improved the initial assessment and target-setting. Key workers act as advocates for learners and keep them on track. They review learners' progress frequently and effectively in consultation with the vocational staff. Learners however, do not take full responsibility for their progress and achievement when evaluating their own progress. Although the quality of the target-setting overall has improved, some of the targets set in the individual learning plans are very challenging such as to achieve a Level 2 in numeracy. Some of the targets for personal development, literacy and numeracy are not accurately measured or recorded. Learners are developing skills but the extent of the progress they have made is not clear.

What improvements has the provider made to improve the level of work experience for the learners?	Significant progress
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ART has made significant progress in improving the employability strand of the programme.

During the inspection period, only 20% of the learners were on work experience and the method of organising of work experience was rigid. Employability and employment related skills were not being developed well.

ART has established a dedicated job club room with computer facilities and appointed three well qualified key workers to support learners with their curriculum vitae development and job seeking skills. The module on preparation for work has been substantially improved to include the core skills and employment opportunities available in construction and motor vehicle sectors. This has motivated the learners very well. The number of active placements as well as overall number has increased substantially to 140 placements. All learners undertake work experience when they are ready. Learners are fully familiar with the core skills that the employers are looking for and they strive to reach that standard before they are placed with the employers. In the current year, 84% took part in either one or more work experience opportunities.

Leadership and management

What progress has the provider made to improve the setting and measuring of the strategic objectives?	Reasonable progress
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In January 2008, the inspection team found that strategic and business planning of ART lacked measurable objectives. Trustees focused narrowly on the overall direction and financial matters and did not measure the achievement of the aims of the organisation.

ART has made reasonable progress to deal with the above area of improvement. Trustees have conducted a detailed, thorough and honest appraisal of the core business of ART after careful scanning of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the organisation. The business plan has key strategic objectives and targets against each of these. Trustees use their broad knowledge, skills and experience to provide valuable guidance and support to the chief executive. They understand the requirements of the programme well and have spent considerably more time to get to understand the organisation. They obtain detailed reports on a formal and informal basis and check progress against each of the key objectives. They have set challenging targets to improve the provision substantially and are monitoring them thoroughly.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progresses has the provider made to deal with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and maintain the strengths?	Significant progress
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The inspection team at the previous inspection identified a number of areas for improvement. These included use of management information, weak impact of quality improvement, overall decline in the performance of the organisation and ineffective response to deal with some of the weaknesses identified at the inspection in 2005.

ART has made significant progress in redressing these areas for improvement and maintaining the strengths identified at the inspection. The post inspection action plan is robust and has been developed in close consultation with all staff, line managers and trustees. The board is monitoring performance very thoroughly against the clearly set objectives. Trustees have fostered a culture of accountability as each manager has an individual action plan and targets aligned to the strategic objectives. Staff are working well as a team to raise the performance levels. The rates of positive outcomes and achievement of qualifications has improved. Some of the roles of the staff have been reviewed and enhanced and some new appointments have been made. Investment in resources is substantial. For example, ART has acquired new information communication technology resources and established a purpose-built job club. Learners have flexible access to online assessment facility for essential skills, motor vehicle and construction. Examination and accreditation is available on demand. Data are collected and used well. For example, unknown destinations have been reduced from 30% to 12% in 2007/08 through better liaison with parents and Connexions. More learners are entered for qualification on time and kept on track. Staff have much improved understanding of progression routes for learners. ART has further strengthened its partnerships by adding two new valuable partners to whom it can refer learners. One of the newest partners, a local college, made a motivational presentation on site and recruited a substantial number of learners onto their programmes. The quality of teaching and learning is good and has been maintained as evidenced through the thorough observations of teaching and learning. ART has plans to observe other aspects of the programme. Processes such as progress reviews, monitoring and updating of quality action plans have improved to good degree but the quality of some of them remains variable.