

# John Laing Training

Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 52638

Name of lead inspector: Elizabeth Warriner HMI

Last day of inspection: 20 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Jubilee House  
3 The Drive  
Great Warley  
Brentwood  
Essex  
CM13 3FR

Telephone number: 01277 725000

## Information about the provider

1. John Laing Training (JLT) began as a subsidiary of the John Laing Partnership and was set up in 1987 to provide construction training. This organisation offered New Deal and apprenticeship provision which was inspected and found satisfactory by the Training Standards Council in 1999 and the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2004. It became independent through a management buy-out in November 2008, retaining the name but no formal connection with John Laing Partnership. Following changes to the Department of Work and Pensions' contract arrangements, and college subcontracts, it closed its training centres in 2008 and 2009. It now offers only Train to Gain in construction through a contract with South East of England Learning and Skills Council. Based in Brentwood, it provides training at work for learners across south east England. The largest contract it holds is to train prisoners and ex-offenders. These 588 learners are not within the scope for this inspection. The company employs 22 staff.
2. Thirty-five learners are working towards qualifications in construction crafts and work supervision. Twenty two learners are working at Level 2 and the rest at Level 3. Most work for a range of employers from national contractors to locally based companies. Some learners are self-employed. Training and assessment is delivered in the workplace by JLT's assessors. Learner induction and progress reviews are also undertaken in the workplace. All Train to Gain learners are men, and about one third are from Eastern Europe.
3. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Prevista Ltd – Train to Gain construction.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Train to Gain	119 learners

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Construction Crafts	3

## Overall effectiveness

- Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The management provides strong leadership, which has rapidly developed an independent and inclusive culture in the year since the management buy-out. The board provides strong support to develop the infrastructure of the new company. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory as is the quality of provision. However, the capacity to improve is good. JLT has dealt with most of the weaknesses identified in previous inspections. The promotion of equality of opportunity within the Train to Gain programme is satisfactory, but JLT is working closely with a number of partners to develop programmes to reach out to learners in deprived communities.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Timely and overall success rates are close to the national average. Learners demonstrate a satisfactory level of skill at work. They produce well-structured portfolios with a wide range of evidence.
- Health and safety are promoted well. Learners with many years of experience develop an increased understanding of health and safety and have embraced safer working practices.

- Very flexible assessment arrangements ensure the needs of the learners and employers are met. Assessors design their visits to workplaces well to gather evidence effectively with minimum disruption. Relationships with employers are good. However, assessors do not sufficiently reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews.
- Internal verification is very good. Verifiers use an effective sampling strategy based on assessor performance which is regularly reviewed. Assessors receive detailed written feedback on their performance and regular meetings are used well to improve standards.
- Learner progress is poorly planned and recorded. Targets on individual learning plans are vague. Progress is monitored against elapsed time, but not against units achieved so far.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Approachable assessors provide accurate and considered advice and guidance about opportunities within the industry. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy needs are identified and sign-posted to local provision. However, JLT does not formally measure the language needs of its learners, many of whom are from other countries.
- JLT has strong leadership. The company has developed a distinct and highly inclusive culture within a very short time. Very supportive governance from its board supplies an infrastructure that allows JLT to innovate and grow freely.
- Safeguarding is good and arrangements for safeguarding learners are particularly thorough. Comprehensive health and safety risk assessment is effectively acted upon. Staff are very proactive in raising learners' and employers' health and safety awareness. Arrangements to safeguard vulnerable adults are in place and further training is planned.
- JLT has a clear vision to promote inclusion through a wide range of partnerships. It works effectively with many specialist agencies to support its prison work. Innovative initiatives with other partners are developing projects in deprived communities.
- Information systems are ineffective in measuring the quality of training. Managers cannot easily monitor the programme or measure differences in performance between groups.

### What does John Laing Training need to do to improve further?

- Improve individual learning plans to contain more detail and to enable realistic plans for completion to be achieved.
- Develop a central learner tracking process to record learners' NVQ progress accurately to ensure timely achievement.
- Improve initial assessment and support for learners with limited ability in spoken and written English to improve their success further.
- Improve the coverage and recording of equality and diversity within progress reviews to improve learners' understanding further.

- Implement effective information systems to support management reporting.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- approachable, friendly and knowledgeable assessors
- updating their knowledge and skills
- learning to stay safe and work responsibly
- finding out more about the industry
- the flexible and responsive approach to assessment
- getting a qualification that helps them to get work
- proof that they can do the job to an acceptable standard

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- paperwork is too onerous
- clearer information about when assessors will visit

### Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

#### What employers like:

- good communication with JLT which keeps them informed about progress
- helpful and informative assessors
- getting a qualified workforce impresses customers
- well-organised visits that have been properly agreed with the foremen
- fast progress that does not interfere with their business
- JLT takes away the complexity and the work of getting qualified
- employers who had themselves trained with JLT were so impressed that they put their own workforce through

#### What employers would like to see improved:

- no aspects for improvement were identified

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 2

2. JLT's capacity to improve is good. Managers have developed an innovative, open culture in a very short time. Strong leadership from managers and governors has enabled them to take radical decisions to ensure sustainability without jeopardising outcomes for learners. JLT promotes its clear vision for inclusion through a wide range of community partnerships. Staff are closely involved in setting realistic targets. Resources are carefully planned and utilised. Train to Gain provision is new and satisfactory, but JLT has a good history of improvement in its extensive prison provision. Self-assessment is accurate and inclusive. Internal verification is very thorough and well planned. The 2004 inspection report identified inadequate assessment recording, ineffective progress reviews, incomplete quality assurance and insufficient qualified assessors. These are now all at least satisfactory. However, the use of data to plan and monitor training is still ineffective. JLT is aware of this and has purchased a new system, not yet fully implemented.

### Outcomes for learners Grade 3

3. Success rates are satisfactory. Success rates in 2008/09, overall 80% and timely 64%, are around the provisional national average for all sectors. However, national construction success rates are usually higher than other sectors. 2008/09 average success data for construction are not yet available.
4. Progress is satisfactory. Most learners achieve their qualification within six months. All current learners are experienced craftsmen with good skills in construction. JLT is working on ways to shorten the assessment process.
5. Learners' portfolios are structured well and contain a good range of evidence. Photographs are used well to supplement observations of learners' work and records of discussions. However, learners take insufficient ownership of gathering evidence and compiling portfolios.
6. Health and safety are particularly well promoted. Learners and most employers demonstrate high safety standards. Assessors effectively promote safe working practices, particularly to learners from abroad, for instance emphasising accident reporting and safe lifting techniques. Learners with many years of industry experience develop an increased understanding of health and safety and have embraced safer working practices. Learners and employers value the programme particularly for its guidance on how to protect their health.

### The quality of provision Grade 3

7. Assessment is satisfactory. Individual assessments are planned well and make best use of all available workplace evidence. Assessors use their industry experience well to support learners. Assessment is fair, accurate and reliable,

although some learners are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own progress. Overall, assessment records are satisfactory. However, some are incomplete and do not provide sufficient written feedback to learners.

8. Internal verification is very good. Verifiers use an effective sampling strategy for each assessor based on his or her experience and performance. Each strategy is evaluated monthly and adjustments made where necessary. Assessors receive detailed written feedback on their performance and regular meetings are used effectively to improve standards.
9. Training resources are satisfactory. All learning is on the employer's site. Learners receive comprehensive training packs to enable them to acquire additional knowledge or learn new skills and techniques. Assessors support learners well to develop their understanding. However, the quality of materials varies and some images are difficult to interpret owing to poor reprographics.
10. Learner progress reviews are satisfactory. Target setting is satisfactory.
11. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners take a standard literacy and numeracy test. Those requiring support are appropriately referred to local providers, but very few take up this option. However, there is no effective identification of learners' linguistic diversity. A third of the learners are from Eastern Europe. Staff lack the skills and knowledge to identify and diagnose language needs and learners with limited ability in spoken and written English are insufficiently supported. Some assessors provide translations of key documents, but there is an ad hoc approach to this which depends on the assessor's judgement.
12. Learning is poorly planned and recorded. Individual learning plans list units to be covered but do not record targets for completion or any progress milestones. Learners' progress is not recorded centrally in a format that allows staff to track and monitor individual performance. Tracking sheets monitor the proportion of elapsed time but not what has been achieved. They do not include any reference to the NVQ units.
13. Assessment arrangements are very flexible and responsive to employer and learner needs. Assessors plan visits well to be as productive as possible. Assessment planning is highly individualised to reflect the learner's job role and meet commercial priorities. NVQ assessments are carefully designed around daily activities to minimise disruption. The number of assessment visits is kept to a minimum.
14. JLT maintains positive partnerships with employers. Assessors keep them well informed about learners' progress. Managers regularly visit to ensure they are happy about the service they receive. JLT has recently worked closely with a large retailer to customise qualifications to suit its small work department.
15. Care, guidance and support are good. Assessors are good at recognising learners' needs and use their experience well to establish a trusting relationship

early in the programme. Learners have good access to assessors and can quickly contact them when they need their support. Assessors provide accurate and considered advice and guidance to learners on progression opportunities within the industry. Some learners are advised on 'skills for life' literacy and numeracy programmes offered by other providers. Information advice and guidance materials provide learners and employers with useful information on other courses offered by JLT.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are good. The company has developed a distinct identity in a very short time. Managers have a clear vision and mission which is understood and agreed by all staff. They have taken tough decisions to ensure sustainability but without compromising their vision or losing the goodwill of their workforce. Plans are realistic, practical and regularly reviewed, and involve all staff. Strong support from the board provides the infrastructure to set up the new company, including personnel functions and financial help and advice. This has enabled JLT to develop innovative projects to regenerate its capacity to reach out to deprived communities. Key new appointments have enhanced this capacity.
17. Safeguarding is good and arrangements for safeguarding learners are particularly thorough. Systems to monitor and promote health and safety are very comprehensive. Staff are well qualified and experienced in assessing risk and are supported by an independent consultant, who cross-checks a sample of workplaces. Assessors challenge poor practice with employers, and managers check that improvements have been made. Arrangements to comply in due course with the Independent Safeguarding Authority's vetting and barring scheme are in place for staff working with vulnerable adults, and safeguarding training is planned for all staff to support plans for future projects.
18. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The company's mission and its policies and procedures clearly state its commitment to equality of opportunity. Substantial partnership working to support learning in prisons and young offender institutions, within the scope for this inspection, generated high success rates for nearly 600 learners. The company has clear plans to develop projects to attract and support under-represented learners through a range of partnerships with community providers. Its recent purchase of a mobile unit will support flexible learning in areas where training opportunities and/or transport are sparse. It also provides expert advice to an initiative to train people in southern Africa.
19. Equality of opportunity is promoted well during staff training and learners' induction, and assessors ensure that employers have suitable policies and procedures. Staff have access to an independent confidential helpline. There is a clear ethos of respect between company staff, employers and learners. JLT assessors act effectively as intermediaries with employers when learners are at risk of bullying or discrimination. However equality and diversity are insufficiently reinforced during learners' programmes. Review forms do prompt



assessors to test learners' understanding of equality and diversity, but assessors rarely record what has been discussed.

20. The self-assessment process is accurate and inclusive, involving staff and users. The resulting plans are clear and set realistic targets for development. They are regularly reviewed and have led to improvements.
21. However, JLT uses data ineffectively to manage training. Information systems record and monitor contract information regularly but hold insufficient programme details to monitor performance adequately. Managers regularly discuss progress and set targets, but use reports based on learners' length of stay, not their NVQ progress. Systems to set and monitor targets for different learner groups are underdeveloped. Demographic information is stored but not effectively used to plan or assess the impact of actions. Users' views are sought and individually acted upon, but not formally analysed.
22. JLT manages its resources well. Staff are well qualified and have good access to training and development. Its training centres were popular but changes in Department of Work and Pensions funding arrangements and declining college subcontracts reduced their allocation of places, despite high demand. Managers took the hard decision to close two centres and allow a college to take over the other. This enabled them to develop a flexible mobile training facility. Despite some redundancies, staff morale remains high.

## Information about the inspection

23. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's consultant, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
24. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**John Laing Training**  
 Learning types: Employer responsive: Train to Gain

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	35	35
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	-	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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