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Mr I Collins  
Apprentice and T-TEP Training Manager  
Toyota Academy  
Jesse Boot Avenue  
Nottingham Science Park  
Nottingham  
NG7 2RU

Dear Mr Collins

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in apprenticeship training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 November 2009 to look at good practice in motor-vehicle apprenticeship training.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with key members of staff, learners and key partners.

Features of good practice

- The good selection and recruitment processes for apprenticeship programmes.

Selection and recruitment processes are organised well and provide employers with young people suitable for the Toyota apprenticeship programmes. Applicants complete an online application form and a test that includes basic skills, mechanical reasoning and core curriculum areas. This acts as an initial screening tool to ensure that applicants are able to cope with the required studies and technical aspects of the apprenticeships. It also provides employers with information for an interview. Employers are sent the information about candidates in their locality to interview and make the final choice. Once on the programme, all apprentices complete an initial assessment to identify any learning support needs and, if necessary, support is arranged by the learning support manager. Support is also provided for dyslexia by a suitably qualified tutor. One apprentice interviewed said that the dyslexia support is very helpful and it is allowing him to progress at the same rate as others in his group.

- The setting and maintaining of standards to promote a professional approach to apprenticeship training.

Good standards of dress code and conduct are required for all apprentices attending the Toyota training academy. All apprentices are required to arrive at the training centre in a shirt, tie and trousers. Training centre staff also adhere to a corporate dress code and project a professional image. The Toyota training academy is clean, modern, well equipped and well managed. This adds to the overall professionalism expected during off-the-job training. Learners enjoy working in an environment where standards are high. They feel that this helps to create mutual respect between themselves and Toyota staff and promotes a more adult and mature environment. Learners in the training centre conduct themselves very well and show a keen interest in learning and achieving. They say that the dress code and conduct standards make them feel more respected and regarded as a professional technician in an ever more complex working environment. Apprentices recognise that the high quality of training they are given is providing them with good career prospects and they are proud to be Toyota apprentices.

- The excellent training workshops and classroom facilities providing well-planned and well-managed training.

Apprentices attending the Toyota training academy work on the latest up-to-date vehicles and use first-class training equipment. Courses are arranged in blocks and the apprentices stay in a good-quality hotel while they are away from home. Food, travel and evening entertainment are provided and paid for as part of the course. An experienced and knowledgeable team of training staff provides courses that are planned and delivered very well. The tutors are highly trained and experienced on Toyota products and provide good-quality training. Learners enjoy the training and have a high regard and good respect for their tutors. They are highly motivated by the way they are treated and by the facilities available to them at the training academy. The block-release process provides good opportunities to embed theoretical and practical training on complex vehicle systems that learners are likely to have to repair at work. Specially made teaching aids and training rigs from Toyota for their worldwide product-training courses are used. Apprentices work in training workshops that are equipped to the same standard as the workplaces, ensuring training is very relevant to their work needs. Toyota specialist-technician training modules are also embedded into the apprenticeship that have been mapped to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) standards and provide both product and NVQ evidence. Toyota apprentices complete several additional accredited courses as part of their apprenticeship beyond that required for the standard apprenticeship frameworks.

- The good support and involvement of employers in the training programmes.

Employers pay for their apprentices to be trained at the Toyota academy and they are fully involved in the training processes. Employers are given a copy of the Toyota Academy's training plan. Following each block-release training period, employers are sent a report on the progress their apprentice is

making. The report contains details about progress against set milestones. If progress is less than expected, the employer is sent a separate letter highlighting what action is required to tackle any shortfalls, such as additional training. Employers are informed about the type of work evidence their apprentice needs and what assessments will be expected to be covered during the workplace training period. Pre-course training materials are sent for apprentices to complete at work between each off-the-job training module. This provides them with an opportunity to recap on previous work and to prepare for work to be covered on the next block-release training module. Currently, Toyota trainers are also responsible for visiting apprentices at work to assess the application of their knowledge and skills. They are considering dividing these roles so that tutors and assessors can be specialists in each area.

■ The good monitoring of progress and the good use of electronic portfolios.

The electronic portfolio system is simple to use and allows assessors to take photographs of key stages using a mobile telephone. Job-card evidence and other required documentation is also photographed in the same way and uploaded to the electronic portfolio. Completed tasks are entered on a simple grid using a laptop computer and the software calculates the percentage of the NVQ completed. Assessors make good use of professional discussions as part of the evidence and this can be videoed, recorded as an MP3 file or written up and photographed depending upon the assessors' and learners' preferences. The system is web-based and so access to apprentices' progress is available to Toyota, apprentices and employers using a password system. Overall progress results are available for individuals and groups by assessor at the press of a button. This provides programme managers with easy-to-access progression information to ensure that learners are on course to complete within the predicted timescales.

#### Areas for development

No significant areas for development were identified during this visit.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop apprenticeship training in your organisation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

John Grimmer  
Her Majesty's Inspector