

Central Training Group

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51072

Name of lead inspector: Anthony Ward HMI

Last day of inspection: 28 May 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 44 Alexandra Street
Southend-on-Sea
SS1 1BJ

Telephone number: 01702 331648

Information about the provider

1. Central Training Group (Central Training), established in 1983, is a private limited company with seven training centres based in London and Essex. It offers work-based learning in hairdressing, customer service, team leading, administration and entry to employment (E2E). Central Training works with various schools and agencies to deliver hairdressing and graphics provision for 14 to 16-year-olds in Essex. It holds a regional contract with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) delivering apprenticeship training in hairdressing and E2E in London. The E2E provision is sub-contracted to another provider, which was inspected in 2009. Central Training contracts via the NOVA Consortium for Work Based Learning and E2E in Essex, which was inspected in 2008. Central Training also provides college-based hairdressing and graphics national vocation qualification (NVQ) training via its collaborative partnership with South Essex College. It employs 106 staff. The group managing director has responsibility for contract management, London sub-contractors, quality assurance, the self-assessment report and the quality improvement plan. The director of quality and managing director (London) has overall responsibility for training and quality improvement and has a team of three senior managers.
2. Twenty-five per cent of Central Training's apprenticeship provision is sub-contracted. Minority ethnic groups make up 25.4% of the population for outer London. London's labour market performance, measured by the employment rate, is among the United Kingdom's worst, with over 30% of working-age Londoners jobless and 600,000 Londoners of working age having no qualifications at all. In London East, Central Training's centre is on the border of the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, which are recognised as two of the United Kingdom's most economically and socially deprived areas.
3. Central Training provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - South Essex College
 - The Nova Consortium
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - Lifeskills Solutions Ltd
 - Falltricks The Academy
 - Haringtons
 - Jays Training Services Ltd
 - Best practice Training and Development Ltd

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16 Entry to Employment	84 part-time learners 198 full-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	455 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Commercial services	2

Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of Central Training's provision is good. Strategic and operational management is good and Central Training has implemented significant improvements. All the aspects identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection in 2006 have improved. Outcomes for learners are good. Learners develop very good skills through good teaching and learning both in training and with their employers. Assessments do not always keep pace with the learners' acquisition of these good skills to enable them to complete early. Success rates for learners are satisfactory but their progression into employment is very good. Overall, the quality of provision is good. Employers offer learners very good opportunities in their salons. Learners enjoy their training and the support they receive is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding are good, and equality and diversity are promoted well. Learners feel particularly safe, secure and valued and benefit from good promotion of healthy living.

Main findings

- Learners develop very good practical hairdressing skills. They work confidently when completing a variety of hairdressing processes. Most learners receive particularly high standards of training in their own salons.

- Success rates for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications is average for London. Most of these learners achieve in their planned time. These rates are affected adversely by previously high drop-out rates which have been addressed successfully. Learners' progression into employment is very good.
- Employers offer learners very good opportunities in the workplace. Salons are well located in busy shopping areas, with some in highly prestigious locations, and all have a plentiful supply of clients. All salons are modern and very well equipped and some have outstanding resources.
- Learners enjoy their training and a wide range of enrichment activity. They make a positive contribution to the community. Health and safety are promoted well and learners work safely. Good promotion of healthy eating is part of the learners' programme and they recognise the benefits. Tutors promote sexual awareness and the dangers of alcohol abuse and learners have good access to external support agencies to ensure their well-being.
- Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned and learners are encouraged to learn independently. Tutors use learning technologies, including interactive whiteboards, well. Central Training closely maps the NVQ units to employers' own training schemes, which are of a high standard.
- The assessment process is good and rigorous and assessments are planned effectively. The review process is broadly satisfactory; however, longer-term targets are insufficiently used to enable learners to plan their own progression and learners are not always sufficiently involved in target setting. Assessments do not always keep pace with the learners' skills development.
- Support for learners is outstanding. A very effective mentoring programme offers learners very good individual support to overcome personal or work-related issues. Additional learning support is very good. Information, advice and guidance are good. Support materials are well written and easily accessible. The provision of literacy and numeracy support is also good.
- Strategic and operational management is good. Senior managers have a clear understanding of national and local training priorities. Communication is particularly effective with staff, learners, sub-contractors and employers. Target setting is good and staff are clear about their roles in meeting targets. Staff development and training are good. Engagement with users is good.
- The analysis of leaver data is insufficient. Some learners are identified to be at risk during the recruitment process; however, when learners leave the programme early, data are not checked against the recruitment, progression and success criteria for common links or causes to minimise early leavers.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are good. All appropriate systems are in place with a clear focus and accountability. Safeguarding training for staff is good, as is awareness by learners and employers, promoted by an excellent booklet. Arrangements are monitored carefully in close cooperation with the local safeguarding board. Learners feel particularly safe, secure and valued.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well. Learners have good training and awareness, as do staff and sub-contractors. Success is celebrated very well and

staff work hard to overcome learners' barriers to employment and training. However, although alternative arrangements can be made, some premises have restricted access for people with limited mobility.

- Links with a wide range of partners are strong and productive. Central Training is a key member of partnerships in Essex and London. It is seen as being an experienced and flexible partner in 14 to 16 vocationally orientated learning. Employers value the flexible and responsive service Central Training provides to them. The company works well with its sub-contractors.

What does Central Training need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop and strengthen measures to improve learners' success rates.
- Focus the review process more on the individual learner and their progress to speed their success.
- Improve analysis of individuals' recruitment, progression and success to minimise early leavers.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- very supportive tutors
- being listened to
- great tutors and mentors
- having a lot of fun
- the teaching throughout the course
- enjoying learning
- the smart board and the posters
- tutors' knowledge.

What learners would like to see improved:

- a better way of getting models
- funding for the adult level 3 course
- more frequent visits to salons.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the staff always going the extra mile
- very professional staff
- dedicated assessors
- great working relationships
- very good support
- all their needs being met.

What employers would like to see improved:

- some learners completing their NVQ more quickly.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. Central Training has good capacity to improve. All the aspects identified as weaknesses at the last inspection in 2006 have improved. The management of literacy and numeracy support, judged to be insufficiently established, is now good. Success rates in hair, low at the last inspection, are now satisfactory. Teaching and learning have improved from being satisfactory to good, as have the arrangements for information, advice and guidance. Personal and pastoral support was satisfactory. It is now outstanding.
7. Management is good, with clear targets for improvement, a good understanding of learners' and employers' training needs and very responsive arrangements for addressing them. The company works well with partners to develop and improve. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic and have a realistic view of their role and what needs to improve. Salons are of a high standard and employers provide excellent role models. Learning resources are at least satisfactory and in some cases are very good.
8. Self-assessment is effective in informing improvement. All staff take an active part in the thorough and timely process. Central Training gathers feedback systematically. Quality improvement planning is realistic in addressing areas for improvement. The company clearly recognises the need to improve learner success rates and data for 2009/10 suggest that actions for improvement, particularly in retention, are having a positive effect. Inspectors agreed with the company's grades in all aspects reviewed in the latest self-assessment report. However, unlike the quality improvement plan, the report inadequately considered areas for improvement, which the company recognises.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Outcomes for learners are good. Learners develop very good practical hairdressing skills which are above the required level for their qualification. Learners work confidently when completing a wide variety of hairdressing processes. Many previous learners have become part of prestigious styling teams. Learners benefit from working with existing stylists to prepare models for shows and photo shoots. Learners' progression into employment is good. Of those who complete their apprenticeships, 99% stay in employment.
9. Success rates are satisfactory. In 2008/09 58% of learners achieved the full apprenticeship, a slight dip from 2007/08; however, in 2009/10 the rate is 64%, slightly below national rates but equivalent to the London average. These rates are affected adversely by high drop-out rates in 2006/07 and 2007/08 which have been addressed successfully. For example, in-year leavers with a full apprenticeship rose from 52% in 2007/08 to 64% in 2008/09 and the success rate is currently 74% in 2009/10. Most of these learners achieve in

their planned time. The performance of different groups shows no significant variation.

10. Health and safety are fully promoted by teaching staff and learners work safely both at the academy and in their own salons. For example, attention is focused on learners' posture when cutting their clients' hair. Learners gain good awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Learners feel safe and are enjoying their training.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned with a focus on the learner activity. Learners enjoy their lessons and are encouraged to learn independently. Tutors use information and learning technology very well. They closely map the NVQ units to employers' own training schemes and most learners also receive particularly high standards of training in their own salons. Tutors strongly promote healthy eating as part of the programme, and learners recognise the benefits. Tutors also make learners aware of the dangers of alcohol misuse and promote sexual health. Learners have good access to external agencies to ensure their well-being.
12. The assessment processes are good. Assessments are planned effectively and learners understand what is required to achieve a successful outcome. Although assessments do not always keep pace with the learners' acquisition of the good skills developed in their salons to enable them to complete early, some learners who have prior learning experience of salon work are fast tracked through their NVQ. The review process is broadly satisfactory. Employers are fully involved and short- and medium-targets are planned and recorded well. Longer-term targets, however, are insufficiently used to enable learners to plan their own progression and learners are not always sufficiently involved in target setting. Reviews are often insufficiently linked to the individual learning plan. Central Training identifies this area for improvement.
13. The provision is very effective in meeting the needs and interests of users. Enrichment activities for learners are good. Learners have access to subsidised entry to exhibitions. They take part in photographic shoots, attend manufacturers' training sessions and meet leading hair stylists. Learners make a positive contribution to the community by taking part in a wide variety of charity events. Employers consider the company to provide a responsive and good quality service. Literacy and numeracy support is good. It is well integrated into learners' programmes of study. Learners are encouraged to develop their written, oral and numeracy skills through well-planned activities. Key skills are partly embedded into the learners' hairdressing qualification and the more challenging parts of their qualification are taught through well-written case studies and work sheets. Learners are encouraged to develop their communication skills through discussion and group work. Central Training has

worked well in partnership with other providers to facilitate the integration of functional skills into the curriculum.

14. Support for learners is outstanding. Every learner has a mentor who is readily accessible and, where necessary, works on a one-to-one basis to overcome personal or work-related issues. Central Training also plans very good additional learning activities if learners are struggling in any aspect of their studies. Information, advice and guidance are good. Materials are well written and easily accessible. Learners value this support highly and say it helps them to complete their apprenticeship. In the classroom, very effective team teaching is a regular occurrence and learners receive good one-to-one support. Central Training recognises this strength.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

15. Strategic management is good. The company is led with enthusiasm and commitment by senior managers with a clear understanding of local and national training priorities and who communicate particularly effectively. Target setting is good, with high expectations closely linked to the company's objectives. Operational management is good. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to their learners and feel well managed and supported. Central Training has strong and productive links with a wide range of partners. The management of sub-contractors is good, with close monitoring and effective sharing of mutually valuable expertise.
16. Central Training uses data well. The company collects and analyses a wide range of data providing staff at all levels with timely and accurate information. Staff have confidence in data and use them effectively. However, although some useful analysis has been carried out matching the profiles of learners on entry against their overall outcomes, the analysis of leaver data is insufficient. Some learners are identified to be at risk during the recruitment process but when learners leave early, data are not checked for common links or causes.
17. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements and are well managed. Well-written policies and procedures are in place including e-safety. All appropriate systems are established with a clear focus and accountability. All staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures and relevant details are recorded on a single central register. Safeguarding training for staff is good and thorough. Awareness by learners and employers is good, promoted by an excellent booklet they have found particularly useful, informative and easy to understand. All safeguarding issues are carefully monitored and staff take effective action to remedy them. Arrangements are monitored carefully in close cooperation with the Local Safeguarding Board. Risks are assessed carefully and learners feel particularly safe, secure and valued.

18. Equality and diversity are promoted well. Central Training provides its staff, learners and sub-contractors with good training which is reinforced regularly, and their understanding is good. Equality and diversity are promoted well throughout the learners' programme. For example, in one lesson learners were asked to select from a variety of books on different cultures and beliefs from around the world and highlight the main aspects of those beliefs. The tutor encouraged them to feed back to the rest of the class in an open discussion. Success is celebrated very well to motivate and reward learners. Central Training offers outstanding support to overcome learners' barriers to employment and training. Thorough arrangements to eliminate discrimination and harassment are promoted well through information to staff and learners, learners' inductions and staff training. A strong culture embracing equality and diversity is evident through the whole organisation. Central Training analyses the performance of different groups of learners and monitors this carefully. Learners from Black and other minority ethnic heritages make up nearly one sixth of learners, and males account for 15%, which is significantly higher than the industry average. Although alternative arrangements can be made, some premises have restricted access for those people with limited mobility. Central Training recognises this.
19. Engagement with users to promote improvement is good. An open and supportive learning environment effectively encourages dialogue between staff, learners and employers. Employers comment on the responsiveness of the company to concerns or comments they raise. Learners feel comfortable and willing to provide feedback, and they quote examples where improvements have been made.
20. Central Training makes effective use of self-assessment to improve its provision. The process develops a good quality improvement plan and makes good use of learners' views and performance data. Managers have implemented effective systems to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Internal verification is thorough, the sampling plan comprehensive and it is coordinated effectively across the whole organisation.
21. The use of resources is satisfactory in providing value for money. Many learners benefit from small class sizes and team teaching. Staff are appropriately qualified and resources are well managed. The management of health and safety is thorough. The resources used for staff training and development are good and match business need. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and in some cases they are very good. Accommodation is at least satisfactory and centres are appropriately positioned and equipped. Salons are well located in busy shopping areas, with some in highly prestigious locations, and all have a plentiful supply of clients. All salons are modern and very well equipped and some have outstanding resources.

Information about the inspection

22. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality director, 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) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence for leadership and management from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Central Training Group

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners Full-time learners	455	455
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
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?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	n/a	
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?	2	
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

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010