

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Jason Parnell
Chief Executive Officer
Steadfast Training Ltd
Welland House
30 High Street
Spalding
PE11 1UB

Dear Mr Parnell

Short inspection of Steadfast Training Ltd

Following the short inspection on 27 and 28 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in July 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, directors and senior managers have continued to focus on high-quality apprenticeships in health and social care, which constitutes the large majority of your provision. You provide good training and development for your apprentices that meets local and regional business needs through the productive links you continue to develop.

You have maintained the good quality of provision seen at the previous inspection. You have set a very clear strategic direction that includes a restructuring of the board of directors and the senior management team to prepare the business for changes introduced by the employer levy and the introduction of standards in apprenticeships.

Robust performance management has helped you to manage and effectively support underperforming staff to improve or leave the business. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment continue to be effective in helping apprentices and adult learners to progress and achieve.

Since the last inspection, quality assurance processes are now in place to ensure that observations of teaching, learning and assessments are consistent and provide assessors with appropriate improvement actions that you monitor closely. You also monitor all aspects of learner and apprentice activity and progress. For example, you closely monitor off-the-job apprenticeship activity to ensure that programmes meet SASE requirements and you are well prepared for the introduction of the new

apprenticeship standards.

The proportion of apprentices who successfully achieve their qualifications has risen significantly in 2016/17 and is now high. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification within agreed timescales has remained consistently above the national rate. In 2016, you agreed to take 120 learners following the closure of Age UK training. These were health and social care apprentices, most of whom had become disengaged and needed time to readjust to their apprenticeships. Most achieved their apprenticeship but not within the agreed timescales, resulting in a negative impact on your achievement rates. Functional skills first-time pass rates in English and mathematics are good for the learners and apprentices who are required to sit them. Current learners are making good progress, enjoy their learning and appreciate the good support they receive from their tutors and assessors.

Safeguarding is effective.

Directors and managers have taken effective action to ensure that safeguarding arrangements keep learners safe in the classroom and in the workplace. The designated safeguarding officer has appropriate training and managers undertake disclosure and barring checks on all staff. Staff make regular checks of the health and safety in apprentices' places of work.

Managers are clear about their responsibilities and they have established effective practices for safeguarding learners. Tutors and assessors are confident in referring potential concerns to the designated safeguarding officer. For example, three recent referrals have been actioned appropriately and closed off satisfactorily. Identification of suitable agencies for those who need further help supports the referral process.

Managers have implemented their obligations under the 'Prevent' duty well, with effective and regularly updated staff training. Tutors and assessors integrate themes promoting the 'Prevent' duty, British values and equality and diversity well during off-the-job learning sessions and reviews. The majority of learners and apprentices can articulate clearly their understanding of these issues and values. They can explain the risks of radicalisation and know how to keep themselves safe from the dangers of extremism and are aware of how to stay safe when using the internet or social media.

Inspection findings

- Tutors and assessors use the learners' and apprentices' initial assessments well to plan the individual support they need to pass their functional skills tests. Induction is thorough and effective. Assessors provide apprentices with useful information on further qualifications that they can undertake. Most apprentices have a clear idea about what they want to do and how the programme will help them to fulfil their career goals. As a result, most apprentices remain in sustained employment and a significant minority progress to higher levels of training.

- Most apprentices make good progress in developing knowledge and skills that are relevant in their workplace. They benefit from regular reviews of their progress towards achieving their vocational qualification. As a result, apprentices demonstrate sound awareness of which elements of their vocational qualification they have achieved and what they still need to do to complete successfully. However, targets set at reviews focus on unit completion and not on apprentices' skills, and personal and behavioural development that could provide them and employers with useful information to aid progress.
- Employers are involved well in planning learning programmes that meet business needs and apprentices' interests. Learners can clearly state how their studies relate to their existing work. Most apprentices develop good work-related skills and become more confident in their job role. Employers and apprentices feel well supported and benefit from a highly flexible approach by assessors. For example, one large employer, which supports people with a learning difficulty, requires its apprentices to be supported through their apprenticeship in a wide variety of locations and settings and to fit shift patterns. However, in a few instances, employers are not fully involved in the review process.
- Adult learners develop their English and mathematics skills well and most achieve their qualifications. Assessors reinforce the importance of developing English and mathematics skills for those apprentices who have English and mathematics GCSE. Assessors correct grammar, spelling and punctuation in written work and challenge learners to extend their vocabulary, for example by not using the same word constantly. Assessors support learners well to pass their functional skills tests in English and mathematics. There is an insufficiently clear focus on the development of learners' and apprentices' ICT skills.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- Overall achievement rates for apprentices continue to improve and that the achievement rate for apprentices completing within agreed timescales improves and is more in line with the overall rate.
- Targets set for apprentices focus clearly on specific skills and behavioural development and discussions take place with apprentices and their employers during progress reviews.
- Development of adult learners' and apprentices' ICT skills takes place throughout their programmes.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bob Hamp
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Four of Her Majesty's Inspectors, assisted by your contracts and partnership manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of your most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and meetings to gather the views of learners and employers. They reviewed key documents, including those related to safeguarding, and learners' achievements and progression.