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Mrs Sally Marsh
Director
Oracle Training Consultants Limited
65/67 Silver Street
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Dear Mrs Marsh

Short inspection of Oracle Training Consultants Limited

Following the short inspection on 6 and 7 March 2018, 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 August 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

Since the previous inspection, you and your senior managers have continued to provide a high standard of training for apprentices on frameworks-based programmes. Apprentices on the newly introduced standards-based apprenticeships also benefit from high-quality programmes. In 2016/17, the proportion of apprentices completing their programmes in the planned time was very high and had improved year on year from the already high rate at the time of the previous inspection. Apprentices over the age of 19 and apprentices on advanced-level hairdressing programmes achieve particularly well.

You have ensured that managers and staff are very responsive to the needs of local employers. Managers are particularly adept at using employers' knowledge of the very latest industry developments to ensure that apprentices receive off-the-job training that closely matches current industry standards. For example, assessors train hairdressing apprentices in the latest babylights, balayage and ombré techniques, and beauty apprentices learn how to use chroming, stamping and reverse techniques for nails.

You and your managers have a sound understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and have maintained the high quality evident at the time of the previous inspection. Where managers identify areas for assessors to improve, they ensure that they provide them with appropriate support and training. However, too often managers set assessors improvement targets with no clearly measurable outcomes or strict timescales for completion. As a result, assessors do not improve the quality of their teaching as quickly as they could.

You and your managers have, for the most part, addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, a few new areas have emerged, such as the recording of safeguarding concerns and the improvement needed in the quality of programmes for adult learners meeting the cost of their courses through advanced learner loans.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers have implemented an appropriate range of policies, procedures and risk assessments designed to keep learners and apprentices safe. All staff recruited to the organisation have safe recruitment checks and have regular and effective updates on the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding. Learners and apprentices at the Doncaster centre know how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism, but those at the Rotherham centre have a less well-developed understanding.

Learners feel safe and know to whom they should speak in the event of any safeguarding concern. Managers responsible for safeguarding deal well with individual safeguarding cases. They work well with external agencies, such as the local authority, to keep learners and apprentices safe.

Managers do not consistently record all safeguarding concerns in a single safeguarding log. Therefore, there is a risk that managers may miss crucial evidence when dealing with safeguarding issues. However, there was no evidence that this had happened, or was happening at the time of the inspection.

Inspection findings

- Staff, with the close involvement of employers, carry out regular and effective reviews of apprentices' progress. As a result, apprentices develop a wide range of skills for working in hair and beauty, and interpersonal skills, that improve their effectiveness in the workplace and enhance their long-term career prospects. Apprentices are able to articulate clearly the technical skills that they are learning as they develop into competent hairdressers or beauty therapists.
- Learners develop their English and mathematics skills well. They work on vocationally relevant tasks to improve their mathematical skills, such as the timing of beauty therapy treatments, the dilution of chemicals and using angles when cutting hair. Those who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics receive effective individual support to help them achieve their qualification.
- Apprentices benefit from a long-standing exchange arrangement with hair and beauty learners from Milan. As a result, they develop a sophisticated understanding of life and work in another culture.
- Leaders, managers and assessors give a very high profile to the importance of professional behaviour and British values. Consequently, apprentices are respectful, courteous and professional, and prepared well for life in modern Britain. They are able to articulate clearly the meaning of fundamental British values and

adapt their hairdressing and beauty practice skilfully to meet the needs of clients from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. However, in a few sessions, assessors' definitions of British values are too wide, incorporating, for example, basic health and safety, and this diminishes the impact of this important message.

- Apprentices benefit from good practical training at the well-equipped salons in Doncaster and Rotherham. Employers provide apprentices with a good range of informal additional training in the workplace, and a few apprentices benefit from useful training provided by product manufacturers.
- Managers respond well to learner representatives to improve the quality of resources and equipment available to apprentices. However, they are less effective in using the views of learners to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that apprentices receive. For example, managers did not respond effectively to advanced apprentices' concerns regarding the lack of challenge in their theory lessons.
- Appropriately qualified recruitment officers provide learners and apprentices with effective and impartial careers advice and guidance. This ensures that learners are able to make informed decisions about their future careers. As a result, the very large majority of them remain in employment or progress onto other positive destinations.
- Recruitment officers have strong links with a wide range of partners and networks and have detailed information on provision at other organisations. Where appropriate, if Oracle Training cannot meet learners' needs, staff refer learners to other suitable provision.
- Where assessors teach apprentices on different levels together in theory lessons, they do not provide sufficient challenge for those on advanced-level programmes. As a result, although apprentices on advanced-level programmes are currently on track to complete their programmes successfully, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- While adult learners with advanced learner loans are very positive about their programmes, too many do not have the basic hairdressing and beauty skills required for them to benefit from an advanced level of study. Additionally, too many learners with advanced learner loans do not access appropriate work experience. As a result, the progress that these learners make on their courses is often too slow, and they are not prepared well enough for work in the hair and beauty industry.
- Managers recognise that the quality of courses for adult learners with advanced learner loans is not of the same high standard as the rest of the provision and they have begun to introduce changes to address this. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these changes.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers maintain and review effectively a central record of all safeguarding concerns

- managers provide assessors with clear targets relating to areas of their practice that need to improve, and monitor progress towards achieving these targets closely
- staff have an accurate and nuanced understanding of British values which they are able to pass onto their learners and apprentices
- assessors develop their teaching practice so that they are able to challenge advanced-level apprentices sufficiently in mixed-level theory classes
- the quality of courses for learners with advanced learner loans is improved to the same high levels evident in other parts of the provision, by enabling learners to participate in appropriate work experience and to develop the basic skills in hair and beauty that they need to progress onto higher level courses.

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

Yours sincerely

Richard Ronksley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the welfare and pastoral care manager assisted inspectors by acting as nominee. Inspectors met with senior leaders, managers, staff, employers and apprentices, using both face-to-face and telephone interviews. They reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. Inspectors visited training centres and workplaces to observe sessions, scrutinise work and talk with learners.