

Key Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates	5–8 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Require improvement
Outcomes for learners	Require improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Learners' achievement of qualifications is not yet good, particularly in English and mathematics and by apprentices in child development and well-being, sales and those subcontracted to Exordia Training Limited.
- Apprentices' and traineeship learners' development of mathematical skills, and study programme and traineeship learners' development of English skills is too narrowly focused on the requirements of external tests rather than their application in a wide range of contexts, including at work.
- Training consultants do not plan learning sufficiently to ensure learners gain a broad range of knowledge, have the opportunity to apply and reflect on their learning or have enough challenge for those that are more able.
- Although managers have identified the improvements required for assessment well, their systems to judge the quality of teaching and learning are underdeveloped and do not enable them to prioritise improvement and staff development fully.

The provider has the following strengths

- The majority of learners on study programmes and almost all traineeship learners progress on to apprenticeships, employment or further education and training because they receive highly effective and relevant advice and guidance.
- Learners develop good vocational and employability skills which they use productively at work and in gaining employment.
- Learners and training consultants make good use of technology which gives learners instant access to interesting and good-quality learning and research activities.
- The majority of learners make good progress towards achieving vocational qualifications as a result of the diligent monitoring of their progress by managers and training consultants.
- Learners receive good-quality training in the workplace through the highly effective partnerships that managers and training consultants have forged with employers. Staff match learners to specific employers very carefully to meet their individual needs and aspirations.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Key Training Limited (Key Training) offers apprenticeships, traineeships and study programmes, largely in business management, customer service and administration. The company has seven training centres, with a head office in Bracknell. Study programmes are offered at two training centres, in Wellingborough and Northampton. The companies where apprentices and learners on traineeships are based are across the whole of England, with a large number of learners in the north east. Around a third of all learners are from areas with high levels of deprivation.
- The provision is larger than at the previous inspection. Approximately 83% of learners are on apprenticeships, 12% on traineeship programmes and 5% on study programmes. Key Training subcontracts 13% of its apprenticeship provision to Exordia Training Limited (Exordia). The traineeship programme, which is of a six to 12 week duration, was not inspected separately, but inspectors' judgements are included within this report.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Analyse more incisively the reasons why learners do not achieve all their planned qualifications to better inform actions for improvement.
- Ensure all learners benefit from good-quality English and mathematics teaching by:
 - developing more effective and varied learning activities
 - supporting training consultants to make mathematics teaching and learning relevant to learners' workplace and personal situations
 - sharing the better practice in English and mathematics teaching across the organisation
 - reviewing the impact of the functional skills support centre and its role in improving achievement rates
 - ensuring training consultants provide English and mathematics tuition for all traineeship learners.
- Plan teaching and learning better to increase the depth and breadth of learners' knowledge through activities that help them apply and reflect on their learning and challenge the more-able learners.
- Develop suitable arrangements for observing and judging more critically the quality of teaching and learning. Make better use of the findings from these observations to plan staff development and in self-assessment of the provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Although managers review the quality of assessments thoroughly, their arrangements for observing, judging and improving the quality of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. As a result, they have judged the quality of teaching and learning inaccurately in the self-assessment report and take little account of the impact of learning on learners' achievements. Managers do not have a sufficiently clear focus on what needs to improve to help them prioritise staff development.
- Leaders and managers identify some, but not all, of the reasons why learners' achievement rates are not improving sufficiently or why there are regional differences. They have not taken effective or timely action to improve learners' progress and achievement on the early years and playwork programme or the provision subcontracted to Exordia. As a result, achievement rates have improved but have yet to reach their previously good level.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. Too many training consultants do not promote equality and diversity, including the values associated with living in modern Britain, effectively with learners. However, learners are very clear about their rights and responsibilities, including who to contact if they are being bullied or harassed.
- The management of English and mathematics has recently improved following the introduction of the functional skills centre, but is not yet good. The traineeship programme has insufficient management oversight to ensure all learners receive English and mathematics learning. Managers have not established suitable arrangements for the few study programmes learners who are capable of taking GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics to do so.
- Management of Key Training's own training programmes is largely effective. Managers track learners' progress very thoroughly and because of this, the majority of current learners make good progress. They manage training consultants' performance very effectively and take swift and decisive action where needed. Management of the subcontracted provision at Exordia is less effective and these learners make slow progress.
- Key Training offers a highly inclusive and nurturing learning environment for learners. This helps many learners overcome significant barriers to learning, particularly those who live in areas with high levels of deprivation. Leaders and managers readily agree to take on provision from less successful providers; this has worked well for most learners who recently transferred to the study programme.
- Leaders and managers listen to, and use, learners' and employers' feedback well to ensure their needs are met. They invest significantly in new initiatives, such as the electronic learning and assessment system which learners enjoy using and which fits well around their workplace commitments. Key Training offers a wide range of business-related subjects and qualifications, developed in response to demand from employers and changing job roles.
- Leaders and managers work very productively with employers. They offer a very successful recruitment service where apprentices and learners on traineeships are matched carefully to employers. This has helped increase the number of apprentices who remain with their employer during, and after, their apprenticeship and has contributed towards good progression by traineeship learners.
- **The governance of the provider requires improvement**
 - Directors have not done enough to challenge the effectiveness of actions taken to improve achievement or the quality of teaching and learning.
 - Leaders have restructured the senior and regional management roles to meet business needs and growth in learner numbers and to aid succession planning, but this has yet to demonstrate sufficient impact.
 - Leaders have set a clear direction for the provision, with a strong focus on increasing participation by 16 to 18 year olds and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Managers and staff receive good safeguarding training which they use to identify very effectively those learners potentially at risk and subsequently to take suitable action to ensure their safety and well-being.
 - Managers use their well-established links with specialist agencies and organisations to good effect, particularly in supporting learners with multiple barriers to learning.
 - Learners and training consultants do not have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism; their use of learning resources to raise awareness of these issues is at an early stage of development.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- Training consultants do not plan teaching and learning sufficiently. They set actions that focus too narrowly on what learners need to complete for assessment rather than broadening their understanding beyond their current work environment or job role. They do not challenge the more-able learners sufficiently to reach their full potential or achieve more swiftly.
- The teaching and learning of English for learners on study programmes and traineeships and mathematics for learners on apprenticeships and traineeships require improvement. Learners on traineeships have too little coaching to improve these skills within the short duration of their programme. Training consultants do not teach mathematics in a way that is meaningful to apprentices or relevant to the workplace. Training consultants do not prepare learners on study programmes well to sit English tests.
- Apprentices subcontracted to Exordia receive insufficient training and assessment. As a result, they make slow progress and many have exceeded their planned end date.
- Training consultants do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently. Learners complete interesting learning activities at the start of their programme that challenge their perceptions about subjects such as stereotyping. Training consultants do not build on this or extend learners' understanding during coaching sessions or progress reviews, where discussions about equality and diversity are too superficial.
- Most training consultants use the results of learners' initial assessment of their starting points well and the vast majority of learners are on stimulating programmes that meet their future career needs. However, staff place a few learners inappropriately on the traineeship programme when an apprenticeship would be more suitable based on their prior experience and GCSE qualifications.
- Highly skilled and experienced training consultants provide useful and up-to-date coaching for learners. They use questioning techniques very effectively to help learners apply their learning at work; for example, by identifying the key features of successful negotiation then using this in a sales environment. Study programme learners benefit from good individual coaching tailored to meet their needs and to improve their confidence and self-esteem.
- Training consultants set high expectations which help learners develop good skills and behave professionally. They build productive and purposeful working relationships with learners, resulting in the majority making good progress.
- Apprentices receive good training in English and information and communication technology (ICT). Training consultants coach learners expertly to improve their skills and confidence in using business terminology correctly. They choose learning activities and exercises that meet learners' interests well and are relevant for work, such as setting learners projects where they prepare publicity materials for their employer.
- Learners and training consultants make good use of learning and assessment technology. In particular, apprentices enjoy the flexibility they have to choose from a wide range of readily available e-learning modules, learning activities, factsheets and webinars. Learners and employers appreciate how well this mode of learning fits business needs and priorities.
- Training consultants assess learners' work thoroughly. They give learners very detailed and motivational feedback about how they can improve their work. Learners have good access to assessment and feedback through the well-devised telephone and online assessment service.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

require improvement

- Learners subcontracted to Exordia do not develop sufficient new skills and knowledge during their apprenticeship. Training consultants do not encourage these learners to extend their often extensive existing experience and skills.
- Learners on traineeships and apprenticeships do not gain sufficiently good mathematical skills. Too often, they gain the knowledge needed solely to take external tests at the expense of developing mathematical skills they can use at work. However, current study programmes learners acquire good mathematical skills.
- Most learners do not understand the dangers of radicalisation or extremism or how this is relevant to their own situation. Training consultants do not introduce these topics effectively during training sessions or progress reviews. They now discuss the risks of radicalisation and extremism during induction, which has raised awareness with learners who have started learning programmes more recently.
- Only a minority of learners appreciate the values required for living in modern Britain. Where teaching of

this has been effective, training consultants hold interesting discussions with learners relating to topical news stories, such as the referendum on Britain staying in the European Union.

- The attendance and punctuality of learners on study programmes require improvement. Despite recent improvements, too many learners who transferred from another training provider attend infrequently.
- Apprentices make good use of the English skills they develop. They become more competent in speaking with customers and responding to complaints. Training consultants inspire learners who have good GCSE results in English to refresh and extend these skills during the apprenticeship, which many choose to do. However, learners on study programmes and traineeships do not develop their English skills sufficiently.
- The majority of learners develop good workplace and employability skills and knowledge that often exceed what they need to demonstrate or acquire for their vocational qualifications. They become confident in using these skills at work and in work placements. Higher-level apprentices become proficient in expressing proposals, responding to competitors' initiatives and motivating colleagues at work.
- Learners are well motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Many develop good independent study and research skills. Training consultants create a caring and calm learning environment for learners on study programmes, whose behaviour is generally good.
- Learners feel safe and know who to contact should they have welfare concerns. Training consultants discuss learners' health and safety with them effectively during progress reviews.
- Learners receive comprehensive advice and guidance, which is particularly good in preparing them to start their programme. Specialist recruitment staff support them well into their first job, through telephone coaching, recruitment training days and mock interviews. Learners on study programmes and traineeships have a particularly good awareness of progression opportunities and their future careers.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Learners' achievement of qualifications requires improvement. Although achievement by apprentices in business management, administration and customer service has improved, it is still too low for learners in child development, well-being and sales. Too many apprentices leave without completing their programme and/or not passing mathematics functional skills tests. Study programmes and traineeship learners' achievement of mathematics and English qualifications is poor.
- Although learners of different age groups, levels and gender achieve at a similar rate, learners with learning difficulties and/or disability achieve less well. Apprentices' achievement varies too much across England, being particularly good in the north east and east Midlands but much lower in London. Managers have not fully analysed the reasons why these learners achieve less well.
- Only a small minority of apprentices progress from intermediate to advanced level; this is better in the north of England than the south. A better proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 than those aged over 19 go on to the advanced-level apprenticeship at the end of their programme.
- Progression by learners on study programmes is good, with the large majority successfully moving into further education and training, apprenticeships or employment. They achieve employability, personal and social development qualifications well, which improves their self-confidence and self-belief and aids their progression.
- Progression by learners on traineeships is excellent, as almost all learners advance on to an apprenticeship. Many do this very rapidly because training consultants work collaboratively with host employers to plan learners' progression before they start their traineeship.
- The majority of current learners make good progress, particularly towards achieving vocational qualifications. Apprentices achieve English and ICT qualifications well, with many passing these tests at their first attempt. Managers have strengthened systems for identifying learners who fall behind and giving them more online, telephone and individual support. A minority of learners, including those subcontracted to Exordia, make slower progress.
- Many employers give learners extra responsibilities or promotion while studying for their apprenticeship. This has led to learners being seconded to team leadership roles or temporarily taking over responsibilities from colleagues.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Key Training Limited has 72 learners on study programmes. Learners attend either the Wellingborough or Northampton training centres. Learners study English, mathematics, employability and personal and social development qualifications.
- Learners' achievement of English and mathematics qualifications is poor. Training consultants do not prepare learners well to take external tests. Too many learners do not take the full qualification; for example, many learners do not complete the speaking and listening assessment needed to achieve the functional skills qualification in English. Key Training Limited does not offer the few learners who are developing their skills to GCSE level in English and mathematics the opportunity to gain this qualification.
- Although improving, learners' attendance is low and too many learners are late for lessons. This has been adversely affected by a group of learners who transferred from another training provider who attend sporadically.
- Not enough learners benefit from work experience to prepare them for employment. Newly appointed staff are starting to address this, but many current learners have yet to start a valuable work experience.
- The majority of learners make good progress, particularly towards achieving employability, personal and social development qualifications. Learners develop a good range of work-related skills and increase their confidence significantly. However, training consultants do not set the more-able learners enough challenging work to enable them to reach their full potential.
- Training consultants use their considerable skills and experience to help learners overcome significant barriers to learning. They create a supportive and safe learning environment through negotiating and setting clear boundaries. Learners' behaviour is generally good and they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- Learners benefit from good individual coaching which contributes well to their learning and development. They enjoy learning through using technology and interesting online learning activities. Mathematics learning is very effective, as it is planned well to meet each learner's different needs and ability.
- Learners develop good practical skills during additional training in traditional local skills, such as blacksmithing, shoemaking and building dry stone walls. They gain a good sense of achievement through the work they produce and become more effective team workers and communicators.
- Learners receive very effective information, advice and guidance including about progression opportunities. Managers and training consultants make good use of their strong links with employers to inform learners about locally available careers and employment. The majority of learners progress successfully into employment, apprenticeships or further education and training.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- Key Training has 1,481 apprentices, the majority being at intermediate level. Around half of the apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Apprentices take programmes mainly in business management, administration, customer service, sales, team-leading, recruitment, ICT, warehousing and distribution. A few apprentices study child development and well-being qualifications, but Key Training no longer offers this programme. Just over one tenth of the apprenticeship provision is subcontracted to Exordia.
- Learners' achievement of qualifications requires improvement, particularly by those in sales, child development and well-being. Too many learners with Exordia make slow progress and have yet to achieve, despite passing the planned end date for their apprenticeship. However, current learners on Key Training's own programmes make good progress.
- Training consultants do not plan learning sufficiently well to ensure learners develop a broad enough knowledge beyond the company or department where they work. Learners complete tasks that focus too narrowly on what they need to submit for assessment rather than extending their knowledge. Training consultants often attempt to cover too much within coaching sessions, giving learners little time to absorb, and reflect on, what they have learned. Learners with Exordia do not get enough training because too much emphasis is placed on accrediting existing skills rather than on new learning or skills development.
- A minority of learners do not receive sufficient training to develop good mathematical skills. Training consultants do not set learning activities that make mathematics relevant by linking it to the learners' workplace or personal situation.
- Training consultants use a wide range of activities that help learners improve their English and ICT skills. They encourage learners to proof-read and critique their own work for errors. Learners develop good

technical vocabulary that enables them to talk confidently with clients and colleagues about complex scenarios, such as wealth management.

- Learners make good use of technology. Their needs are met well through good-quality e-learning modules alongside readily available online and telephone support from training consultants. This fits in well around business priorities. Learners make frequent use of electronic learning plans to review their own progress and the next tasks they need to complete, which is helping the majority make good progress.
- Training consultants assess learners' work thoroughly. They use highly effective questioning techniques during assessment sessions to help learners identify pertinent examples from work that demonstrate their application of skills and knowledge. Learners receive good-quality feedback from training consultants which they use to improve the quality of their work.
- Employers contribute well to their apprentices' learning programmes. They provide extensive opportunities for learners to develop their skills at work, which builds on, and complements, training given by training consultants. Many learners take additional qualifications funded by their employers which help them sustain employment and support their future careers, such as professional accounting qualifications and first aid training.
- Employers value highly the contribution that their apprentices make to their business. Many learners have been promoted or given extra responsibilities at work, such as managing the reception area or covering for senior colleagues during long-term absences.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	3,816
CEO	Jim Clarke
Website address	www.keytraining.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	68	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	607	441	105	257	0	71		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	183		6		189			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following subcontractor:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exordia Training Limited 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Janet Rodgers, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Beaumont	Her Majesty's Inspector
Carolyn Brownsea	Ofsted Inspector
Kathy Tyler	Ofsted Inspector
Penny Horner	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Elliott	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the quality director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk



Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

