

Rocket Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

19–21 July 2016

Overall effectiveness**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- The managing director and senior managers have taken effective action since the last inspection to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners.
- Most apprentices and learners make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. During the current year, a high proportion of apprentices have completed their programme successfully within the planned time.
- Learners and apprentices quickly acquire the personal, social and work-related skills that they need to be successful in the workplace.
- Learners on study programmes quickly improve their English and mathematics skills, and a large majority achieve qualifications in these subjects.
- Managers work closely with a wide range of partners, including other providers, community organisations and employers, to ensure that provision meets local needs successfully.
- Good careers guidance enables learners to make informed choices about their next steps.
- Most learners progress successfully into employment, an apprenticeship or learning at a higher level on completion of their study programme.
- Learners benefit from very good individual support which enables them to overcome barriers that might impede their progress.
- Managers and teaching staff prepare learners well for life and work in a diverse society.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Managers do not use self-assessment well enough to identify accurately all actions for improvement.
- Male learners on study programmes achieve less well than female learners because a significantly higher proportion leave their programmes before completing their qualifications.
- Although recent actions that managers have taken to improve attendance have had a positive impact, attendance is still low in too many lessons.
- In too many instances, the feedback that apprentices receive on their written work does not help them to understand fully what they need to do to improve its quality and accuracy.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Rocket Training Limited is a privately owned independent learning provider that delivers training and education across Merseyside. It operates from two centres in Liverpool and the Wirral. Provision includes apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced level, and 16 to 19 study programmes at level 1 and level 2. At the time of the inspection, 58 apprentices and 68 learners on study programmes were enrolled with the provider.
- In Merseyside, unemployment is higher than the national rate, and the proportion of the population with qualifications below level 2 is higher than that found nationally. Sectors experiencing economic growth in the Liverpool City Region, which includes all the boroughs in Merseyside, are the knowledge and innovation economy, the visitor economy, low-carbon technologies, and logistics and transport.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that managers and staff use the self-assessment process to identify accurately all actions for improvement by:
 - taking more account of learners' achievements and the outcomes of lesson observations when identifying strengths and weaknesses
 - making better use of data to evaluate progress towards key performance targets such as improved attendance.
- Identify the reasons why more male learners than female learners leave their study programmes early, and take action quickly to improve retention among male learners.
- Rigorously implement the current strategy to improve attendance. Monitor closely its impact on improving attendance. Intensify the emphasis on encouraging learners to attend lessons regularly.
- Improve the skills of staff whose feedback to apprentices is not helpful enough. Monitor closely the quality of feedback through the lesson observation process.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The managing director and senior managers have taken decisive action over the last 18 months to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. They have refocused their operation on meeting local needs and have ceased working with underperforming subcontractors. They have put in place a successful strategy to improve the achievement and progression of learners and apprentices. As a result, outcomes for learners and apprentices have improved during the current year and are now good.
- Managers improve the performance of teaching staff through regular reviews of the quality of their teaching and the progress of their learners. Tutors have clear actions for improvement that relate to organisational priorities and their own developmental needs. Managers have acted swiftly to remove tutors with the weakest performance, and have improved the management arrangements on the apprenticeship programme and the study programme. Staff benefit from a wide range of professional development to improve their teaching skills; this includes training on challenging learners to achieve well and improving learners' English and mathematics skills.
- Rocket Training works closely with a wide range of partners, including other providers, community organisations and employers, to ensure that provision meets local needs well. The study programmes provide good opportunities for young people from disadvantaged communities to gain quickly the skills that they need for work. The apprenticeship programme enables employees in small and medium-sized companies across Merseyside to improve their skills and contribute to the success of their companies. Managers participate actively in local groups such as the Wirral Provider Network, and this enables them to identify local needs accurately and respond effectively.
- Close liaison with other local training providers ensures that school leavers and other prospective learners receive helpful information and advice about opportunities to follow apprenticeship programmes and study programmes. Learners and apprentices benefit from good careers guidance during their programmes that enables them to make informed choices about their next steps. As a result, a high proportion progress successfully into employment or further training and education.
- Leaders and managers have established a culture in the organisation that is inclusive and welcoming. Learners on study programmes demonstrate a high level of respect for their peers and their tutors and their behaviour is good. Managers ensure that tutors place a strong emphasis on improving learners' and apprentices' understanding of life and work in a diverse society; they promote fundamental values such as tolerance and democracy effectively.
- Managers identify accurately many actions that they need to take to improve the quality of provision and the achievement of learners and apprentices. For example, they have taken swift action to increase the rate of learners' attendance on the study programme, which has resulted in an improvement during the current year. However, self-assessment does not identify all areas for improvement. For example, managers have not put in place actions to reduce the significant achievement gap between male and female learners. In a few instances, lesson observations do not identify fully the improvements that tutors need to make to their practice, and action plans following observation are not reviewed consistently.
- Managers have improved the system for gathering and analysing data on learners' progress, and they receive accurate and detailed reports on in-year rates of achievement. However, they do not use this data well enough to identify aspects of provision where they need to make improvements. Summary reports of progress towards achieving the organisation's targets, including the target attendance rate, do not provide a consistently clear analysis for managers of current rates and trends, and data in different reports is occasionally contradictory.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Rocket Training is a private training provider that is owned by the managing director. There are no individuals with governance responsibility. The managing director holds managers to account well for the performance of the organisation.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Learners and apprentices feel safe. Managers and staff implement appropriate safeguarding procedures fully and consistently. Staff participate in a wide range of training on keeping learners safe from all risks, including radicalisation and extremism and use of the internet.
 - Tutors make good use of their understanding of safeguarding to increase learners' and apprentices' awareness of how to stay safe by using a wide range of relevant activities and resources. However, a few apprentices are not yet fully aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
 - Managers maintain a detailed and comprehensive risk assessment and action plan related to their

responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. Over the last year, they have identified and carried out improvements that include the introduction of a firewall and filtering systems to prevent access to inappropriate online materials. They have developed more effective communication with employers to raise awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

- Leaders make stringent checks on staff working for the organisation, on visiting speakers, and on employers to ensure that there are no potential risks to learners and apprentices. Arrangements to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are rigorous.
- Concerns and disclosures from learners and apprentices about safeguarding issues are handled sensitively and effectively. Managers and staff work closely with a wide range of external agencies, including the local authority, the police and social services, to protect and support learners and apprentices who are at risk of harm. Where necessary, they report safeguarding concerns appropriately to relevant agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Tutors have high expectations for learners and apprentices. They are well-qualified and use their subject expertise well to plan learning activities that interest and motivate learners and consolidate previous learning. They make good links between theoretical and practical aspects of the subjects that they teach, and this enables learners and apprentices to understand the relevance of their new learning to the requirements of the workplace.
- Learners and apprentices follow programmes that meet their individual needs and aspirations well. Tutors assess learners' and apprentices' starting points accurately and make good use of this information to agree individualised programmes with specific targets.
- Tutors assess and monitor the progress of learners and apprentices carefully. Learners and apprentices participate in frequent progress reviews that provide them with comprehensive feedback about their progress towards their targets and guidance on what they still need to do to complete their programme. However, the feedback that apprentices receive on their written work is not consistently effective in helping them to understand fully what they need to do to improve its quality and accuracy. In a few instances on study programmes, tutors do not check rigorously enough that learners understand fully the content of lessons.
- Learners and apprentices benefit from very good individual support. Tutors know their learners well and, as a result, are able to provide support that enables learners to overcome barriers to their learning. Learners who need extra help receive good additional support that helps them to make rapid progress. Tutors and managers meet frequently to evaluate the progress of all learners, and they intervene quickly to provide further support when necessary.
- Most tutors improve learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics skills well. They integrate the development of English and mathematical skills successfully within vocational lessons and off-the-job training. As a result, most learners and apprentices make good progress in developing these skills.
- Tutors improve learners' and apprentices' understanding of diversity well. They use a wide range of topical subjects to broaden learners' awareness. Teaching includes discussions about different cultures and religions to raise learners' awareness of life and work in a multicultural, diverse society.
- Employers are positive about the impact of training on the attitudes, behaviours and skills of apprentices and how this improves apprentices' performance in the workplace. In a few instances, employers have promoted apprentices to more responsible jobs as a result of the training that apprentices have received. However, not all employers are fully aware that apprentices are their employees, despite this being clearly specified in the employer handbook and the apprentice agreement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Learners and apprentices quickly develop the personal, social and vocational skills that they need for work. Learners on study programmes benefit from purposeful and relevant work experience that improves their understanding of the demands of the workplace and enables them to apply the skills they have gained in real work settings. Apprentices improve their skills quickly through training in the workplace and off-the-job training and, as a result, make a valuable contribution in their job roles.
- Learners and apprentices enjoy their learning. They demonstrate a high level of pride in their work and in their achievements, and increase their self-confidence. Learners on study programmes confidently articulate how they use their improved skills in English and mathematics in their lessons and at home.

- Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of the fundamental values of respect and tolerance. Tutors use activities well to promote understanding of equality, diversity and democratic values at the beginning of many lessons. Learners on study programmes show a good awareness of a range of cultures and religions. In classrooms and in the workplace, learners and apprentices demonstrate high standards of behaviour. They respect their tutors and their peers, and they listen respectfully to the views of others during discussions.
- Impartial careers guidance enables learners and apprentices to gain a thorough understanding of potential progression opportunities upon completion of their programmes. As a result, they are able to make informed choices about their future careers.
- Learners feel safe and have a good understanding of how they can raise any safeguarding concerns. Most learners and apprentices are aware of how to keep themselves safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism and to recognise the signs of potential radicalisation in others. Tutors advise learners how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism during induction, and they reinforce understanding during reviews so that learners remain alert to the risks. Apprentices know how to keep safe in the workplace. They are aware of the main risks at work and follow safe working practices closely.
- Learners on study programmes learn how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Tutors use interactive activities and resources about healthy living well to encourage learners to improve their health. Learners attend sessions from guest speakers to raise their awareness of the dangers of the abuse of substances such as illegal drugs, alcohol and cigarettes.
- Although attendance has improved during the current year, it is still low in too many lessons. Managers have improved the monitoring of attendance and take swift action to contact absentees, including by making home visits, to encourage learners to improve their attendance. They provide extra support for learners who have missed essential parts of their programme to help them catch up.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Most apprentices make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. They acquire the technical skills that they need to work in their occupational area, and produce work of a high standard that demonstrates their increased knowledge and understanding.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within the planned time has increased significantly during the current year and is now well above the rate for similar providers. The few apprentices who have yet to complete their programme during the current year are on schedule to achieve by their target completion date.
- Learners on study programmes make good progress in improving the skills they need for employment. Most have faced significant barriers to learning and begin their programmes with few or no qualifications. A high proportion of learners achieve vocational qualifications and functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Learners on courses in English for speakers of other languages make good progress in improving the language skills that they need for work.
- Managers gather comprehensive and detailed information about the destinations of learners and apprentices who complete their courses and of those who leave before the end. Most learners on study programmes progress into employment, an apprenticeship or learning at a higher level. Learners who leave their course early continue to receive good support from managers and staff to enable them to find alternative learning opportunities or employment, and many successfully re-engage in learning or secure work. The majority of apprentices continue in employment on completion of their programme, and most of those who leave their employment progress into further training or education.
- Tutors identify accurately learners who are at risk of withdrawing from their programme or not achieving their qualifications because of difficulties in their personal lives or because they miss too many lessons. They provide extra help for learners who are at risk, including additional coaching and support to overcome barriers to learning. As a result, a high proportion of these learners make good progress. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers.
- Male learners on study programmes achieve less well than female learners. A significantly higher proportion of male learners leave their study programme before completing their qualifications. Achievement among apprentices aged 19 and over is lower than among 16- to 18-year-old apprentices. Managers have not identified fully the reasons for these achievement gaps or taken sufficient action to reduce them.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Rocket Training provides study programmes at level 1 and level 2. Learners follow programmes that include vocational courses in retail, customer services, business administration and motor vehicle engineering, employability training, English and mathematics. At the time of the inspection, 68 learners were enrolled on study programmes.
- Learners follow individualised study programmes that meet their needs very well. Managers and tutors have high expectations of their learners, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have low levels of prior attainment. Tutors ensure that programmes take full account of learners' starting points and enable learners to build quickly on their existing skills. The programmes have a strong focus on developing the personal, social and work-related skills that learners will need in their future employment. Learners make good progress in developing these skills and in increasing their confidence, and most of those who complete their programmes progress to further education, training or employment.
- Learners make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills and a high proportion achieve qualifications in these subjects. Learners gain a good understanding of the importance of English and mathematics in the workplace and know how they can apply their new skills in the job roles to which they aspire. Learners whose first language is not English quickly improve their language skills and achieve well. They make particularly good progress in understanding local accents and variations in language and this prepares them well for work that involves interacting with customers.
- Tutors use frequent and thorough reviews to assess learners' progress and to ensure that learners know precisely what they have achieved and what they still need to do to reach their targets. Tutors' feedback on written work helps learners to improve the quality and accuracy of their writing. In a small minority of instances, tutors do not check learners' progress well enough in lessons.
- Tutors provide very good support to enable learners to overcome any barriers to their learning. They quickly identify learners who are at risk of falling behind and provide extra support to help them catch up with missed work.
- Learners participate in a wide range of enrichment activities that enable them to explore social and political issues. For example, they regularly visit local museums and attend the crown court to listen to cases. They develop effective team-working skills through enterprise projects and raising money for charitable causes. Tutors successfully relate these activities to the promotion of fundamental values such as tolerance and democracy.
- Learners receive good guidance to help them make informed choices about their future career and education goals. They carry out a range of work experience placements that give them good insights into the areas of work in which they are interested. Learners benefit from visits by representatives of local employers and voluntary organisations who provide detailed information about different types of work and career opportunities.
- Learners gain a good understanding of life and work in a diverse society through a very wide range of activities that focus well on current issues and topics of local interest such as the history of the slave trade in Liverpool. They demonstrate a high level of mutual respect for each other and for staff.
- A significant minority of learners do not attend their lessons regularly. Male learners' attendance is lower than that of female learners, and this is reflected in their lower level of achievement.

Apprenticeships

are good

- Rocket Training provides apprenticeships in business administration, customer services and horticulture. There are currently 58 apprentices on intermediate-level and advanced-level programmes of whom around a half are aged 16 to 18.
- Apprentices make good progress in improving the skills that they need at work; during the current year a high proportion have completed their programmes within the planned time. Apprentices quickly acquire the personal and social skills that they need to progress in their chosen careers.
- Apprentices follow programmes that meet their individual needs well and prepare them well for sustained employment. Staff assess apprentices' starting points accurately and use this information to design individual programmes that build on apprentices' existing knowledge and experience.
- Staff use their expertise well to develop apprentices' skills. For example, they use case studies of specific work-related scenarios to extend apprentices' skills and understanding. Apprentices extend their learning

through additional internet-based activities and independent research. Staff and employers provide good opportunities for apprentices to apply and develop their skills further in the workplace. Staff provide particularly good support to increase the motivation of apprentices who are finding their programme challenging due to their personal circumstances. When staff identify apprentices who are at risk of falling behind, they quickly increase the level of support and frequency of workplace visits to enable apprentices to increase the pace of their progress.

- Staff work closely with employers to monitor apprentices' progress through frequent progress reviews. They assess apprentices' progress accurately and provide feedback that helps apprentices to understand which skills they need to improve further. However, the feedback that apprentices receive on their written work does not always help them to improve the quality and accuracy of their writing.
- Most apprentices make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills. Those without English and mathematics qualifications at the appropriate level quickly achieve them. Staff successfully develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills during training sessions.
- Apprentices develop a good understanding of diversity in the workplace. For example, they develop effective and appropriate strategies for communicating with customers whose first language is not English. Apprentices display a high level of respect for staff, colleagues and customers. In minority of progress reviews, staff do not pay sufficient attention to how well apprentices develop their understanding of equality and diversity.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	289
Managing Director	Mr Vahid Lavasani
Website address	www.rockettraining.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)	52	N/A	16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	23	20	4	11	N/A		N/A	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 							

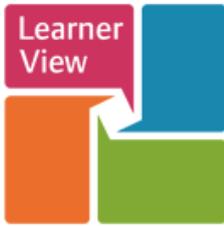
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Steve Hailstone, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Longworth	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the quality and operational manager 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.

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