

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 58507

Name of lead inspector: Shahram Safavi HMI

Inspection date(s): 8 February 2017

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: The Peacock
Ambleside
Stalybridge
SK15 1EB



Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This was the second monitoring visit to Norman Mackie & Associates Limited, following publication of the inspection report on 1 November 2016 that found the provider to be inadequate overall. At the inspection, outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and the effectiveness of leadership and management were judged inadequate. Inspectors judged the provision for learners with high needs to be inadequate.

This monitoring visit focused on the improvement action plan, governance arrangements, the quality of additional support, the suitability of study programmes for individual learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in producing and implementing a robust action plan in response to the weaknesses found at the previous inspection? Reasonable progress

Following the previous visit, managers have revised and re-written the post-inspection action plan. The plan now links more clearly to the weaknesses identified at the inspection. Managers have set timescales in which improvements are to be made, and have started to review more effectively their progress towards completing key actions. They have included a detailed list of the actions they have taken since the previous visit and also a range of impact measures to evaluate the effectiveness of their work. However, many of the actions and their corresponding impact measures are too broad, and it is therefore difficult to assess how managers' actions will improve learners' experience. For example, an impact measure included in the plan is 'staff being more skilled and better able' with no clarity on exactly how this will be measured and monitored. The plan does not allocate specific staff responsibilities to each action; too many actions identify all staff and the senior management team as being responsible for their successful completion. However, tutors have been set individual action plans that are displayed prominently so that managers and other staff can identify when actions are not completed. For example, individual tutors have targets to complete individual learning plans for all learners.

Managers have sought and used external help to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have introduced a new management structure and employed a new business manager to improve communications and increase the pace of developments. For example, staff attend weekly meetings to discuss operational issues and suggest improvements. However, managers have yet to define clear lines of responsibility and accountability. As a result, senior staff spend too much time reacting to daily issues and do not focus enough on strategic

development and improvements in the quality of the provision. They have not developed clear quality improvement arrangements to evaluate and monitor the quality of all aspects of learners' experience. For example, the information that learners receive from their tutors in the daily monitoring forms is not clear enough.

What changes have been made to ensure the organisation has effective governance arrangements?

Insufficient progress

Leaders have set up an advisory board to improve the governance arrangements of the provision. The chair of the board is highly qualified, and has good relevant experience and expertise to challenge managers to improve the provision. However, not all of the board's members offer independent support and challenge to managers.

The roles and responsibilities of the board have been defined. However, the terms of reference are too broad and governance and operational management are not clearly separated. For example, the board has responsibility for reviewing arrangements for the appropriateness of learners' individual targets. The board met for the first time very recently; however, the minutes of this meeting do not indicate that the terms of reference were discussed and agreed. The board has not received an accurate report about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, therefore board members have not been able to challenge the pace of improvement in the quality of the provision. Managers have been too slow to provide board members, particularly the chair, with data and reports that will enable them to support rapid improvements.

What progress have leaders and managers made to engage external partners responsible for multi-agency support services to provide learners with effective specialist support?

Reasonable progress

Managers have engaged more successfully than at the time of the previous inspection with external partners, such as experts in mental health issues. They have sought and employed experts in counselling therapy for one day per week to help learners improve their emotional well-being and readiness for learning.

Managers and tutors work well with parents and carers to improve the attendance, punctuality and behaviour of learners. Managers have developed good arrangements with an independent charity to provide free, confidential and impartial information and advice on the support they can access. Since the previous monitoring visit, an organisation that holds the contract to provide information, advice, guidance and employability support for young people in Tameside has continued to advise learners about their future education, training and employment options.

What progress have managers made to ensure that all components of individual learners' study programmes reflect their ability level and potential, so that they make good progress and achieve?

Reasonable progress

Following the previous visit, managers, in consultation with tutors, have developed a clear visual map of the learner's journey, from initial enquiry and enrolment to developing an individualised programme of study. Tutors and learners use the information to develop a programme of study to meet learners' individual needs. Each learner has now had their range of courses reviewed and adjusted, but these changes are not always clearly noted in learners' records.

Managers and tutors have revised and developed individual learning plans. The new documentation requires further improvement and simplification to be meaningful and useful. Learners now have a better understanding of how the different courses, project work and activities they are doing will help them to develop skills for their future aspirations. These revised individual plans indicate clearly the path that learners will take through their study programme. As a result, learners have a better knowledge of how different parts of their study programmes link together, and they feel more motivated in their lessons. Tutors have set each learner both short- and long-term targets. Learners' progress against these targets, is monitored more regularly so that tutors can support learners if their progress is too slow. As a result, most learners' progress and skills development, including their self-esteem and confidence, often from a low starting point, have improved. Tutors include information about learners' progress and any changes to their circumstances in their individual learning plans. However, the detail and usefulness of these records varies considerably and depends on which member of staff has completed them. The expectation of how the documentation needs to be completed requires further staff training.

All learners benefit from work experience. Managers and tutors, who have a good knowledge of learners' significant emotional, health and behaviour challenges, work hard to ensure work placements meet the needs of individual learners. Learners now attend weekly sessions to search for employment and receive one-to-one support to help them to evaluate the suitability of the available employment opportunities against their attributes. However, not all learners are following programmes at a high enough level; consequently, they do not always achieve their full potential.

What has been done to ensure that tutors use the starting points of learners to plan and deliver teaching, learning and assessment to meet effectively the needs of learners, including the need to improve their use of English and mathematics and protect them against harm?

Insufficient progress

Managers have used external support to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. All tutors have been observed by managers. However, the records following the observation of lessons are too general and do not provide tutors with detailed information about how to improve their teaching practice. The link between observation records, staff development and performance management is unclear. For example, tutors have not discussed the outcomes of their observations to identify exactly what training they need to improve their practice. Staff have not had sufficient opportunities to observe and share good practice in teaching and learning with staff in similar organisations. Consequently, the quality of learning has not improved sufficiently; the pace of learning is often slow as staff do not have sufficiently high expectations of what learners can achieve and learners become bored. In too many sessions, too much attention is given to managing learners' personal and behaviour issues.

Tutors have received training on setting personalised targets for individual learners. However, this training has had little impact on improving tutors' practice. Managers have introduced daily monitoring forms to record and monitor learners' progress. Tutors' setting of targets in a minority of lessons has improved and the targets are more precise. However, in too many cases, tutors do not ensure that they plan sufficiently suitable and challenging activities for each learner so that they reach their full potential. The link between learners' targets and the activities that tutors set for them is not good enough; too many learners have the same tasks to complete, or their tasks do not build on what they have learned previously to extend their learning.

Tutors do not set learners clear timescales to complete learning activities. They do not expect learners to take on challenging tasks; too often, they complete the more demanding activities that learners would benefit from completing themselves. As a result, too many learners do not develop the vocational and mathematical skills of which they are capable. Many learners improve aspects of their use of English, particularly spoken English, and are better able to communicate with others.

Managers and tutors have continued to develop learners' understanding of the risks of bullying, radicalisation and extremism.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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