

Develop

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Description of the provider

1. Develop is a privately owned limited company offering nationwide technical skills training for the utility and regulated business sector. Develop is the trading name for the Longhirst group of companies which was established in 2003. Develop provides a full range of advanced apprenticeship training including funded learning programmes in repair and replacement, network maintenance and first call operatives. Develop has a contract with the Learning and Skills Council in Tyne and Wear to deliver apprentice training in the North East and has a small number of learners following this programme. The LSC contract accounts for approximately 5% of the overall business. In addition Develop train other government-funded learners through a contract with the National Grid to provide apprenticeship training nationally. The largest part of government funding is currently through this route. Develop currently employ 350 staff. In addition to government funded training Develop offer a range of courses that are privately funded. Learners are recruited directly from employers and all learners are employed.
2. Develop is owned by four principal shareholders. The operational aspects of the company are managed by the managing director who is responsible to the board of five directors. Each of the programmes has a business unit head responsible for their respective programme. Quality improvement is the responsibility of a quality manager. All training and assessment within the company is carried out by a team of six full-time trainer assessors and four part-time trainer assessors. In addition there are five internal verifiers. Learners attend off-the-job training at one of the four Develop Training centres situated throughout the UK. Develop contract with two other external providers for speciality provision for a small number of learners.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are good. Provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is also good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

4. Develop has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. The overall strategies for improving the provision are well developed and clearly understood by staff. Develop have a strong focus on continuous improvement and many aspects of the provision have been improved to benefit learners' experience. Develop make good use of feedback from learners and employers and respond quickly and effectively to opportunities to improve. The development plan is well constructed with realistic targets and closely focuses on the learners' experience. Develop have worked with employers to improve and gain new programmes to ensure that learners have good employability skills that are valued by employers.
5. The self-assessment process is very effective at identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Staff understand the self-assessment process and can identify its importance in driving continuous improvement. The self-assessment process covers all areas of the government-funded provision including that which is subcontracted. The views of employers and learners have informed the overall report. The report is largely accurate and reflects the provision well. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. However, many of the grades awarded by inspectors were above those appearing in the report. Some of the weaknesses within the current report have already been satisfactorily addressed. The self-assessment report is sufficiently critical. The self-assessment is closely linked to the highly relevant development plan, which is frequently monitored and updated to reflect progress.

Key strengths

- Strong strategic direction with a clear focus on training
- Very effective continuous improvement
- Achievement of key skills and level 2 national vocational qualifications (NVQs)
- Strong employer engagement
- Good support for learners

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient assessment of some NVQs
- Ineffective target-setting in learners reviews
- Insufficient monitoring of subcontracted provision

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

6. Achievement of key skills and NVQ level 2 is good. All of the 30 directly-funded advanced apprentices have achieved their key skills and NVQ level 2 by their planned programme date. Of 170 subcontracted advanced apprentices, 94% achieved their key skills and NVQ level 2 by their planned programme date. Of 28 First Call (Emergency) advanced apprentices that started their training in 2004, 89% have achieved their NVQ level 3, however, a delay in being able to access the technical certificate examinations is preventing these learners from achieving their full qualification early. Retention for all advanced apprentices is good, with 97% of all starts since 2004 being retained on programme.
7. Learners acquire satisfactory workplace skills. Most apprentices make satisfactory progress and gain confidence and self-esteem, quickly becoming effective members of the team. Learners work to a high standard in health and safety and have a good understanding of the requirements for gas safety. The learning of these skills is further supported by the good individual mentoring provided by employers and assessors. Employers recognize and value the range and quality of work that learners carry out. Apprentices are well motivated, are keen to learn and are very positive about their training.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

8. Training facilities are good and available to all apprentices. Practical resources to support training are of a high standard. Most teaching rooms are well equipped and laid out. Resources for practical activities such as pipe-work repair, domestic installations and diagnosis of potential and actual gas leaks are very good. Apprentices' practical knowledge and understanding are assessed using good quality realistic simulation before formal assessment in the community. Employers provide good facilities for learners to experience a wide range of tasks.
9. Employer engagement is good. Details of NVQ and key skills programme requirements are provided to all employers. Learner reviews are carried out 10 weekly and involve the employer and mentor. Employers are fully engaged in the apprentices' programmes and provide assessors and mentors to assist in the learners' training programme. Some of the apprenticeship frameworks are new to this industry and the development of the appropriate training to deliver some of these is still ongoing between the employer and Develop.
10. Learners receive good support from Develop and their employers. Learners value the support received during workplace training by mentors and during

assessments completed in the workplace. Mentors report monthly on learners' performance and very effectively contribute to the review process. Learners speak highly of the open and approachable style that the assessors adopt. Develop offer good and impartial advice to apprentices about their further progression and most learners are fully aware of the training and assessment requirements of their framework. Develop provide learners with a designated member of staff who is able to support them with a wide range of issues such as accommodation and travel.

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and meet the needs of learners and employers. Some lesson planning and in-class assessment is underdeveloped. Theory lessons are supported well by good learning resources and practical activities, and learners are appropriately challenged to learn and interact. Support for visiting specialist teachers is insufficient. They are given too little information about the learners they teach and their lesson planning lacks information on methods of delivery, use of teaching resources and preferred styles of learning. However, visiting specialist teachers bring a high level of commercial expertise to learners' programmes.
12. Assessment of some NVQs is insufficient, although the assessments that are carried out are to a satisfactory standard. In some of the more complex frameworks, assessors find the NVQ standards maps difficult to use when monitoring learners' progress with the monitoring and review process. In some cases assessors fail to identify assessment needs, although internal verifier sampling reports comment of the need for learners to progress their assessment. Some learners are unsure of what training and assessment they need to complete their training, and some portfolios contain out-of-date assessment records.
13. Target-setting and action-planning for learners are weak. Recorded targets on review forms are vague and insufficiently linked to learning goals. Learners receive little guidance on what they need to do to improve their skills. Targets lack detail, do not have adequate deadlines, and do not record short-term objectives. Reviews do not sufficiently discuss framework progress and are not used to motivate and challenge learners to achieve more quickly.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Develop have a comprehensive and clear strategic plan that is understood well by senior managers. The senior management team is effective and provides clear direction and leadership. The strategic focus is on good quality training with a strong emphasis on continuous improvement. There is a good development plan which has key performance indicators to enable assessment of progress. Business planning processes are sound and have clear rationales

for developing the provision. Communication is effective and staff morale is high. The apprenticeship scheme has a clearly stated role within the overall strategic plan and is a significant part of the company's overall development plan.

15. Develop have strong links with employers. Senior management work in partnership with employers to ensure that training meets the needs of both employer and learners. Develop take a flexible approach to training to best meet these needs. It provides a good mix of publicly-funded and private training which combine very effectively to meet the development needs of a range of national companies. It has a good commercial understanding of the companies they work with and how to best meet their training needs. Many employers have worked with the provider to develop new training programmes to a high standard that meet the current needs of their industry. Most employers also commission private training with Develop as well as the public funded learning.
16. Continuous improvement is very effective. A detailed development plan clearly identifies targets. These are monitored very effectively by the quality manager, senior managers and at staff meetings. Develop make good use of feedback from learners and employers to improve the overall standard of the provision. Regular meetings are held with employers to assess progress being made and to discuss how best to improve the programmes to meet the needs of learners and employers. Improvements are well planned and communicated well to learners and employers. Significant improvements have been made in improving the provision of information to employers who value the information on their learners' progress. Progress is monitored regularly at a series of management meetings and the development plan is frequently updated. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive of all staff, learners and stakeholders. Staff have a clear understanding of the importance of the process and its links to continuous improvement. Staff are encouraged to identify ways to improve the provision and are confident to make suggestions. The development plan is well written and understood by staff. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification, with regular standardisation meetings. A good range of their work is included in the internal verification sample.
17. The strategy for providing literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. However, this support is insufficiently linked to the vocational area, particularly in numeracy. Progress in terms of literacy and numeracy does not feature sufficiently within individual learning plans and assessors and tutors have insufficient information on a learners' literacy and numeracy needs to help support learners in their vocational work.
18. Insufficient use of data is used to monitor subcontractors' performance appropriately. Service level agreements set sufficiently demanding targets. No overall analysis of their performance takes place. Analysis to provide comparative evaluation of performance for different subcontractors is not routinely carried out.

19. Develop have a satisfactorily comprehensive equality of opportunity and diversity policy. Policies are in place that cover harassment and bullying and clear procedures identify how this should be treated. Develop is sensitive to individual learner needs and has worked well at successfully challenging stereotypical views of gender differences within the industry. Equality of opportunity and diversity training for learners takes place at induction and is reinforced throughout the programme. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. Data is used to identify any differences in progress between under-represented groups on the programme. However, no targets are in place to monitor the effect of the equality of opportunity policy or how learners from under-represented groups will be increased. Staff training takes place to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues and learners generally have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Learners have a clear understanding of the appeals procedure and are sure about who they would contact should a problem arise.

What learners like:

- The teachers' technical knowledge
- The support from mentors
- The opportunity to be fast tracked
- The practical work on site
- The off-the-job training facilities
- The support from Develop staff
- The good hotels

What learners think could be improved:

- The base room at Esholt
- The blocks of off-the-job residential training could be shorter
- Better social facilities for off the job residential training

