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Ms R Fidler
Managing Director
Hospitality Training Partnership
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Dear Ms Fidler

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in apprenticeship training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, learners and employers, during my visit on 10 November 2009 to look at good practice in hospitality and catering apprenticeship training.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with learners, employers and key members of staff, and the observation of training and review. A range of documents, case studies and data were reviewed.

Features of good practice

- Exceptionally good focus on continuous improvement to further improve the already high success rates for learners.

There is a strong focus on, and culture of, continuous improvement at Hospitality Training Partnership (HTP) and the particularly high success rates for apprentices identified at the previous inspection have continued to improve. Apprenticeship success rates for 2007/08 were 70% and data for 2008/09 indicate that this has improved to around 79%. Advanced apprenticeship success rates for 2007/08 were 71% and data show that this has improved further to 78% for 2008/09. Success rates for HTP learners on the Isle of Wight are generally higher than for learners on the mainland and managers continue to tackle this through the sharing of best practices. Measures taken to improve timely success rates are working with steady improvement over the last year.

- Highly skilled and professional staff contribute to good training and support that enable learners to succeed.

Staff are highly qualified and particularly knowledgeable about the hospitality industry. Many have worked in some of the best establishments in the industry. They understand the complexities and issues of the industry and this helps to foster good working relationships with employers who appreciate the very good training provided for their learners. Where learners are unable to complete a full qualification with their employer, HTP has excellent provision available in Albert Cottage, their own hotel and restaurant. This is a unique facility where particularly high standards of training are provided for learners. They are able to work across a range of catering jobs in a supportive learning environment. HTP staff provide good support for learners who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Key skills are contextualised well with learners who see their relevance. Many learners take advantage of the reduced-price bus passes that HTP have negotiated on the Isle of Wight to resolve concerns raised about the high cost of public transport to attend work.

- Excellent employer engagement to ensure a high-quality learning experience for apprentices.

HTPs' employer engagement and business development teams work particularly hard to ensure they meet employers' needs and provide a high-quality experience for learners. Learners are able to start their programme at any time during the year following a thorough initial assessment. Initial assessment prepares them well for the catering industry and includes a well-designed in-house skills scan before starting. Employers are fully engaged in the learning process at all stages. Communication with employers is excellent. Examples include a well-produced and informative newsletter, regular employer meetings and forums, and a help-line. The useful and constructive feedback given to employers following observations of learning in the workplace helps them to improve the quality of training. There is good training for employers through HTPs' in-house training programmes and many employer staff have gained assessor awards and basic teaching qualifications, leading to a better understanding of learners' needs.

- Outstanding leadership and management with a strong focus on widening and improving provision.

There is an extremely good focus on staff recruitment and training to ensure learners receive good training and assessment. New staff are supported particularly well through a 'buddy' mentoring scheme. Staff have a particularly good programme of continuous professional development. Many staff have been trained or are about to start training for teaching qualifications. The exceptionally good work undertaken with local schools on the development of programmes for students aged 14 to 16 has led to high numbers of students progressing into hospitality apprenticeships or other further education programmes. In particular, young apprentices succeed well and are prepared thoroughly for the catering industry before starting an apprenticeship. HTP is the island lead for the new diplomas in catering. There is a good focus on monitoring learners' progress and continual improvement of the use of data

to inform management decisions. HTP uses a wide range of promotional materials to celebrate learners' success well. These include good-quality posters and leaflets displaying learners who have been particularly successful on their programme and in their careers.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop access to electronic learning resources for learners.

HTP provides a good range of learning resources for apprentices including books, magazines and handouts. Learners speak highly of the support they receive from their training consultants who ensure they have good access to learning materials throughout their programme. However, currently no materials are available through the company intranet that could be accessed by learners from home or work.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop apprenticeship training in your organisation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Neil Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector