

Nova Training

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		2–6 December 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good- 2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Staff provide high levels of advice, guidance and support which help learners overcome their personal barriers to learning and make good progress.
- Learners receive good teaching and learning, which increases their employability and helps them to develop practical skills required by employers.
- The good curriculum planning and extensive partnership links respond well to national and local priorities and lead to good work experience opportunities for learners.
- The strong promotion of equality and diversity encourages and supports learners from disadvantaged groups to enter training.
- The good performance management arrangements drive continuous improvement and benefit learners.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Success rates for learners on apprenticeship programmes, particularly in business, law and administration, are not yet consistently good.
- Attendance and success rates in functional skills are not yet sufficiently high for learners on study programmes.
- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding or consistently good.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff focus on planning and delivering more creative learning and assessment activities for learners, including the more effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and the use of directed questioning, to consolidate and extend learning so that all learners are engaged and participate actively in sessions, and individual learners are stretched and challenged to develop achieve their full potential and gain greater independence in their learning.
- Monitor individual learners' progress on apprenticeships more closely so that the rapid, recent improvements in outcomes for learners on business apprenticeship programmes are maintained, and learners achieve their qualifications within the planned period.
- Drive forward the continuing improvements in learners' attendance and achievement of functional skills on study programmes through the rigorous application of challenging individual targets.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. At the last inspection, outcomes were good for learners on employability programmes. Since then, the success rates for learners on foundation learning programmes have remained significantly above national rates and have shown further improvement. Learners' achievement of their learning aims and their progression into employment, further education or training is good.
- Since the previous inspection in 2010, the number of learners on apprenticeship programmes has increased substantially. Overall success rates for apprenticeships in 2012/13 are broadly in line with national rates. In the largest area of apprenticeship provision, transportation operations and maintenance, overall success rates have remained above national rates. Managers recognise that success rates for apprenticeships in business administration in 2012/13 are significantly below national rates. Consequently, managers have taken firm actions to address this position, and early indications are that success rates for learners in this area are now showing rapid improvement. Success rates for apprenticeships in health and care supported by Nova Training's subcontractors have remained above national rates for the last three years.
- Current learners across all apprenticeship programmes are making good progress. Learners on study programmes are making very good progress at this early stage of their programme. Many learners at Nova Training (Nova) arrive with significant barriers to learning or disrupted education. They quickly recognise the importance of English, mathematics and ICT to their future employability and enjoy their learning. They improve their self-confidence and ability to work with others. Success rates in functional skills have continued to improve over the last three years, although managers recognise that further improvement is still required. Many learners demonstrate good progress in the development of practical vocational skills and the achievement of the challenging individual targets agreed at the outset of their programmes.
- Staff monitor learners' attendance closely and follow up absences promptly and rigorously; however, managers recognise that attendance requires further improvement to reach the ambitious targets set by Nova. Learners on apprenticeship programmes develop good, independent and team working skills, and most learners make good progress in English, mathematics and ICT. These learners also develop very good practical skills to the commercial

and industrial standards required by employers. Learners on apprenticeship programmes demonstrate a very good understanding of health and safety within the workplace.

- Nova monitors the participation and achievement of groups of learners closely. Each training centre carefully analyses data on learners' retention and achievement each month by gender, ethnicity, and disability. The most recent analysis confirms that no significant differences remain between the achievements of different learner groups.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. This is reflected in the good outcomes for most learners and results in a positive experience for the large majority of learners at Nova. Experienced tutors set challenging, but achievable, individual targets for learners. Tutors plan their sessions well to meet the wide range of learners' needs. They make very effective use of a varied range of teaching approaches, and learners quickly appreciate the relevance of the teaching to increasing their future employability.
- Tutors help learners to develop their skills in English, mathematics and ICT firmly within the context of vocational areas and future employability, so that learners quickly recognise the value of these subjects. Many previously disengaged learners make good progress in developing their functional skills.
- Learners receive outstanding personal support. Initial assessment is thorough, and clearly identifies learners' individual needs. Tutors and assessors know their learners and plan effectively to meet their individual needs. Learners have a clear understanding of what is expected from them. This creates a positive and safe learning environment where learners show respect and work well together.
- Staff work closely with external agencies to help disadvantaged learners re-enter education. They build positive personal relationships with potential learners, sometimes by visiting them in their home. They support learners very effectively through induction so that they overcome their personal barriers to re-entering education.
- Learners on apprenticeship programmes make good progress in developing their vocational skills. Tutors assess learners' progress frequently and provide clear and comprehensive verbal feedback. For example, apprentices on motor vehicle maintenance programmes receive and record individual feedback immediately after completion of specific job tasks. Tutors work closely with employers to help apprentices to develop good practical vocational skills, extend their understanding of their specialist area, and increase their confidence and independence. Many learners are able to take on additional responsibilities in their employment as their professional skills develop through their training.
- The careful planning and integration of activities within the study programme lead to clear gains in confidence for the very many learners who begin their programmes with low self-esteem and a history of disrupted education. Learners benefit from the clear objectives set for individual learning. Tutors constantly reinforce with learners how much they have learned and the extent of the progress the learners have made individually. This results in learners growing in personal confidence, becoming proud of their achievements and learning to respect and work more effectively with others.
- Learners on study programmes also benefit from the wide range of work experience taster options available to them in different vocational areas. Many of these learners, who were previously disengaged from education, become enthused by their chosen vocational area and make rapid progress in their vocational work placement. They develop good, employability skills and many learners progress on to further training or apprenticeships.
- In a small minority of sessions, teaching and learning are less effective. In these lessons, tutors do not plan adequately to create more imaginative learning sessions. They do not make effective use of freely available resources, for example in technology, to make lessons more

stimulating for learners, or to make theory in vocational areas more accessible for all learners. Tutors do not involve learners sufficiently and focus too much on giving information. In a few cases, tutors do not encourage all learners, for example quieter learners, to participate sufficiently, or encourage them to take greater personal responsibility for their own learning. Tutors do not always stretch more able learners sufficiently to achieve their full potential. They do not use question and answer techniques effectively. For example, tutors use closed questions which do not engage learners, and do not direct questions sufficiently to extend the more able learners or to consolidate learning in others.

- Staff promote equality and diversity very effectively. They foster good relationships and mutual respect within their learner groups. Learners reflect the positive approaches and attitudes of staff, and this reduces the potential for bullying and harassment. Learners feel safe within the training locations. Lessons are inclusive and support learners' individual needs on sensitive issues. However, tutors do not always make use of opportunities which arise to reinforce equality and diversity within the context of the learners' own vocational areas or possible future employment.

Transportation operations and maintenance

Good

Apprenticeships

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, which is reflected in the good overall success rates for learners on apprenticeship programmes. Apprentices make good progress in the workplace, undertaking more complex work and accepting more responsibility as their skills develop.
- Tutors with significant industry experience plan sessions well to meet the needs and interests of learners. In one workshop practical session, learners used motor vehicle lifting equipment and hand tools correctly and with confidence to dismantle vehicle braking systems to measure component wear. In another practical session, learners used diagnostics successfully to trace and identify an electrical fault on an advanced braking system. In the workplace, an apprentice skilfully replaced worn vehicle suspension components with the minimum of supervision. Employers comment on the good skill levels of their apprentices and value how the training the apprentices receive effectively meets their business needs.
- Theory lessons provide good underpinning knowledge for learners' practical activities. However, in a small number of sessions, tutors tend to lead sessions too much, which results in insufficient active participation by learners. Tutors make insufficient use of ICT to engage learners and improve their understanding, for example by showing computer simulations of vehicle systems in action.
- Training centres provide equipment to industry standards comparable to modern independent garages. Learners understand the importance of health and safety, wear personal protective equipment and routinely carry out essential risk assessment in the workplace.
- Most tutors use questioning skilfully to stretch learners and to check their understanding. Learners are encouraged to reflect independently on their work tasks in order to develop their problem solving skills. In a few instances, tutors do not direct their questions to learners effectively, so that a minority of learners dominate the session.
- Learners benefit from well-contextualised functional skills sessions and make good progress in English, mathematics and ICT. For example, in one workplace session, an apprentice demonstrated good ICT skills as part of a business presentation to a bank by using a spreadsheet to calculate gross profit margins of a small garage and produce a graphic representation of the results.
- Tutors and assessors know their learners well and give their time freely to ensure the training meets learners' needs. Learners complete a comprehensive initial assessment to identify their

support needs. They progress to an extended induction programme designed to ensure that they are on the right vocational course.

- Learners' progress is continuously monitored, and assessments of their progress are rigorous, timely and fair. However, in a few learners' reviews, the recording of individual action plans is not sufficiently challenging and does not stretch more able learners to achieve their full potential.
- Learners work well collaboratively in groups and pairs. They share ideas willingly, help each other, and show respect to their peers and tutors. Although tutors create an inclusive atmosphere among learners, they do not always help learners sufficiently to understand the wider needs and diverse nature of the customers they will encounter in the workplace.

Business, administration and law

Good

Apprenticeships

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Current learners are making good progress, which is reflected in early indications of rapidly improving success rates. Business administration success rates for apprentices were high in 2011/12, but fell significantly below the national average in 2012/13. Outcomes in the first quarter of 2013/14 show rapid improvement towards national rates.
- Learners enjoy good teaching and learning and make good progress. In classroom sessions, tutors use employment-related examples very effectively to broaden learners' understanding of the customer service environment.
- Initial assessment accurately identifies learners' development needs. Tutors know their learners well and they monitor their progress closely. Employers and tutor assessors work closely together so that learners develop good vocational skills in the workplace. Learners confidently demonstrate and explain the tasks they carry out regularly at work.
- Tutors and assessors make good use of ICT resources to encourage learners to develop independent learning skills. For example, tutors capture learners' interest by referring them to specific mobile phone 'apps' which support their progress in gaining technical certificates. Learners routinely access online learning resources to help them develop their functional skills, for example in handling percentages and punctuation.
- Tutors support learners very effectively to improve their skills in English within the vocational context of customer service and business administration. Tutors give learners useful, practical tips to help them become more effective in the workplace, for example by using the synonym tab when word processing.
- The strong support for functional skills helps learners to make significant progress from often very low starting points. Tutors encourage learners to complete functional skills at a higher level than that required by their framework, so that they can progress more rapidly on higher level programmes. Tutors review learners' progress frequently, together with their employers. They agree detailed action plans to help individual learners overcome any personal barriers to their progress.
- Learners have a good understanding of all the aspects of their programme. Induction is very thorough and prepares learners effectively for the different forms of assessment on their programmes. Tutors agree detailed plans and clear targets with each learner. Learners are clear on their independent learning tasks and the evidence they must produce from their workplace. The targets in learners' reviews act as an effective prompt for learners and employers, but the reviews do not always provide a sufficiently detailed record of the discussions between learners, tutors and employers.
- Current assessment reviews do not encourage learners to sufficiently take ownership of the work they have achieved. For example, tutors give learners insufficient guidance on how to file the evidence collected or how to link this evidence to the appropriate national standards.

- Learners feel safe in the classroom and in their workplace, and have a good understanding of health and safety. Tutors use relevant examples, including information on cyber safety, to ensure that learners gain a good understanding of safeguarding. Tutors promote equality and diversity well and provide good examples for learners to broaden their understanding of diversity, bullying and harassment. However, tutors do not always make full use of naturally occurring opportunities to deepen learners' understanding of the diverse range of customers they will meet in the workplace.

Employability training

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the high achievement rates on foundation programmes over the past three years. A substantial number of learners achieve their main objectives and progress on to positive destinations. Learners gain confidence, build on their existing skills and make good progress in gaining new knowledge and skills. Most learners use these skills to good effect to improve their employability.
- Experienced tutors plan skilfully to address the needs of learners with widely varying abilities. Tutors deliver varied and stimulating activities which give learners good opportunities to engage in relevant practical tasks. For example, learners developed their skills in English and mathematics by planning to decorate a courtyard area, which involved calculating materials and seeking written approval and sponsorship for funds. In a few lessons, tutors do not manage groups effectively to ensure that all learners are engaged and progress as quickly as possible.
- Learners make particularly good progress in their personal development, improving their self-confidence and taking greater personal responsibility. For example, less confident learners begin to participate more fully in groups and present their ideas to other class members. Learners show respect towards their peers, staff and visitors.
- Tutors manage behaviour well. Many learners begin with complex needs, including behavioural difficulties. They achieve challenging targets for improvement in their behaviour and develop an appropriate and professional manner. Tutors monitor learners' attendance very closely, and their robust approach has improved overall attendance.
- The quality of personal support for learners is outstanding. This creates mutual trust and gives learners a strong sense of belonging. Learners value the care, guidance and respect they receive from tutors. For example, the very strong 'learner voice' process creates an environment where learners feel staff listen to them and respond positively to learners' suggestions for improvement.
- Tutors monitor learners' progress well and set clear individual targets for improvement. Most learners are aware of their progress. Although targets for learners are broadly challenging, they do not always identify sufficiently clearly the skills learners need to develop and improve.
- Assessment of learning is good. Tutors make good use of questioning techniques and individual coaching to check learners' understanding and challenge learners to make further progress. Although most tutors give detailed written feedback on assessed work to help learners improve, the quality of feedback is not yet sufficiently consistent.
- Staff provide good initial information, advice and guidance to learners. Initial assessment is good, and a comprehensive induction programme sets clear personal and academic standards for learners. Staff assess each learner carefully and allocate learners to classes which meet their personal needs and individual aims. Learners are able to revise their vocational aim subsequently as their interests develop.
- Equality and diversity are promoted very effectively throughout the programme. For example, in one session, learners discussed how employers could meet the health and safety requirements of employees with a range of disabilities within the workplace.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. The directors and senior managers set and implement clear, realistic and ambitious strategies that improve performance, develop skills for the workplace and engage employers. The expectation of high achievement permeates the organisation and staff are passionate about improving performance. Since the last inspection, leaders have managed the significant growth in provision well.
- Over many years Nova has assiduously developed a network of programme centres strategically located in the heart of deprived communities across the West Midlands. This gives learners easy access to a range of high-quality employability programmes and progression opportunities. Managers have developed a highly extensive network of strategic partnerships, with excellent employer links that respond well to local and national initiatives and provide good quality work placements and apprenticeship employment opportunities.
- The good management of staff performance is leading to improved standards of teaching and learning, which benefit learners. A recent management re-structure has resulted in very clear lines of individual authority and responsibility for quality improvements and curriculum development. Managers measure staff performance rigorously throughout the year against demanding business and quality indicators. Managers grade staff on their performance and reward the more effective staff. Underperforming staff receive good support for their improvement against a clearly agreed personal development plan.
- Quality assurance arrangements are good. A comprehensive process for the observation of teaching and learning, which includes short-notice graded observations and whole centre inspections, effectively identifies actions for improvement. Tutors routinely share best practice and benefit from individually targeted professional development. Most lessons observed by inspectors were good or better. However, in less effective lessons, teaching did not engage or challenge all learners sufficiently.
- Self-assessment is thorough and self-critical. It accurately reflects the organisation's strengths and areas for improvement. Inspectors agreed broadly with Nova's own self-assessment report. Leaders, managers, and staff contribute regularly to self-assessment through meetings and 'away days'. Learners participate very actively in an imaginative 'learner voice' process to suggest further areas for improvement. Managers respond promptly to the frequent feedback from learners, employers, and parents. Quality improvement plans are detailed and targets for improvement are rigorously monitored. Subcontracting arrangements are well managed and performance regularly reviewed.
- Learning programmes are well planned and respond well to the needs of the learners, employers and local and national priorities. Nova's recent study programme provides learners with a particularly coherent and flexible curriculum. Learners benefit from a good range of vocational taster options which lead to purposeful work placements. The study programme combines learners' work experience with careful development of their employability and functional skills. The early indications are that learners are gaining worthwhile practical skills and qualifications to improve their employability.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is generally very strong. A team of equality and diversity 'champions' successfully promote and foster a culture of tolerance and mutual respect among learners in a safe and inclusive environment. Staff and learners regularly organise well attended equality and diversity themed events which raise awareness of topical issues such as same-sex marriages. Managers successfully recruit learners to curriculum areas where they are under-represented. Staff and directors benefit from regular training and updating that provide an increased awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues. However, tutors do not always link equality and diversity themes sufficiently with each vocational area, so that learners see the relevance to their future employment. Tutors do not make sufficient use of naturally occurring opportunities in vocational sessions to broaden learners' understanding of

how equality and diversity applies in the workplace, for example in dealing with diverse customer groups. There are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups of learners.

- Nova meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and applied rigorously. Effective systems lead to the identification and monitoring of vulnerable learners or those at risk. All staff receive comprehensive training on safeguarding, which is updated regularly. Learners feel safe and are exceptionally well supported by empathetic and caring staff. Health and safety practices are thorough. Managers have developed excellent links with a range of partners and agencies, including the youth offending team, social services and the local authority, to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting the needs of learners who are at risk and to help other vulnerable learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Nova Training

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Transportation operations and maintenance	2
Administration	2
Employability training	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 951							
	Part-time: 22							
Principal/CEO	Mr David Bucknall							
Date of previous inspection	April 2010							
Website address	www.novatraining.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	563	109	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	5	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	5		10		15			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	161	109	19	75	-	-		
Number of learners aged 14-16	167							
Number of employability learners	7							
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"> ■ Eagles Consultancy ■ LJM Consultancy 							

Contextual information

Nova has its head office in Willenhall within the local authority of Walsall in the West Midlands. Nova has 16 sites across the West Midlands. Unemployment in Walsall is above the national average; 11.5% of the population aged 16 to 64 is unemployed, compared to 8.8% for the West Midlands and 7.8% nationally. The number of young people aged 16 to 18 not in education or employment or training is above the national average at 11.6% of the population, compared to national rate of 9.6%. Willenhall is among the 5% most deprived local authority areas in England. Some 17% of the population of Willenhall aged 16 to 64 do not have qualifications, compared to 13.6% in the West Midlands and 9.7% nationally. Most learners are male and of White British origin.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Alan Winchcombe HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Operations Director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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