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Mr Pat Edwards
Chief Executive Officer
Newham Training and Education Centre
1 Mark Street
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Dear Mr Edwards

Short inspection of Newham Training and Education Centre (NEWTEC)

Following the short inspection on 2–3 November 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in February 2013.

This provider continues to be good.

You and the trustees have developed a very clear vision and set of values for the organisation to keep learners happy, healthy and safe, and to provide high-quality education and training. There is a natural synergy between the different elements of your organisation, including NEWTEC's seven nurseries, the training arm of your business funded by the Education Funding Agency, the higher education provision you offer in partnership with local universities, the recruitment agency and the local café you have set up for the benefit of learners and members of the public. The carefully managed subcontracting arrangements with other organisations also provide additional opportunities for learners, as well as complementing your own provision and delivery model.

This network creates strong links between education, training and employment. It generates valuable opportunities for further education learners to gain high-quality work experience as part of their courses, and provides excellent progression opportunities for your learners into work or higher levels of study. It also enables your nursery staff and others to access higher education and continuous professional development with ease.

You and the organisation maintain a suitably high profile within the borough and you use your links with partner organisations extremely productively to respond to training needs in the area.

The organisation provides a valuable and high-quality nursery provision across the borough, for example via subsidised on-site nursery facilities for learners and staff at the local further education college. You also use your close partnership with the college well to create a cost-effective financial control model by utilising shared services with the college, including human resources, learner recruitment and financial management.

Your learners clearly enjoy their study. They work industriously in lessons, and are polite and courteous to visitors. They recognise the valuable opportunities they have to undertake high-quality work placements, primarily within NEWTEC's nurseries. Learners feel safe around the facilities and recognise the value of the support and guidance they receive from teachers and managers in lessons and within the nursery settings.

Staff have embraced the changing priorities brought about by the implementation of the study programme. Your organisation is particularly well suited to offering traineeships, and you maintain a consistently high focus on developing the employability skills of all your learners. Your teachers have worked hard to develop the literacy, numeracy and information technology skills of your learners with mixed success.

At the last inspection, the key areas identified that required improvement included raising attendance rates, developing methods to check learning more accurately, improving the quality of feedback to learners and increasing the information shared with external employers about learners' progress. I will address the progress you have made on these themes below.

Safeguarding is effective.

Trustees and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fully in place. The promotion of safeguarding to learners is effective and appropriate. Learning takes place in safe environments. Managers follow safe recruitment practices and carry out suitable pre-employment checks when recruiting new staff. Arrangements to ensure the safety of learners are effective, and managers ensure that all teaching staff and trustees receive relevant safeguarding training. Your staff undertake suitable checks of employers' premises prior to learners' work placements. Your team maintains close links with safeguarding professionals in the local borough and deals with any safeguarding concerns thoroughly and effectively.

Inspection findings

- Teachers and managers have successfully maintained high achievement rates since the last inspection on the significant majority of courses. Achievement rates on the vocational elements of the courses have remained consistently high, although the smaller proportion of learners at level 3 do not perform quite as well as those on at level 2. Learners undertaking functional skills English have performed well, and those taking GCSE English have performed adequately. Achievement rates in mathematics functional skills and GCSE are still too low.

- Managers have recently implemented a comprehensive strategy to improve learners' development of English and mathematics skills. This clearly identifies all staff as having joint responsibility for challenging learners to improve these skills. Learners benefit from detailed planning and a good range of support to develop their English and mathematics skills, which is helping more learners achieve their planned qualifications. The majority of teachers challenge learners to develop their English and communication skills in vocational classes well – for example, by learners presenting work to their peers. Learners' written work is of a good standard. However, a small minority of teachers fail to highlight errors in learners' grammar and punctuation. To date, the development of learners' numeracy skills has been less effective, reflected in the low achievement rates in tests. This is an area for development that you and your staff recognise and are working hard to address.
- Target setting on individual learning plans and at reviews continues to require improvement, as identified at the last inspection and in your self-assessment report. Learners at level 3 speak with clarity about their individual learning plans and the targets that staff set for them. However, practices are too variable. On occasions, teachers set targets for learners that are too broad, do not address their individual needs and are no more than general statements which fail to clarify what learners should do to progress. Teachers do not consistently record learners' development towards targets in sufficient detail. When visiting employers' premises, staff do not set suitably clear actions and targets to help employers develop learners' skills in line with their programme aims.
- Attendance data shows slight improvements compared with last year, but a minority of learners are still absent from lessons. Managers actively promote the importance of good attendance. They have a good understanding of the reasons why a minority of learners do not attend regularly – for example, due to housing difficulties. Staff have developed a number of strategies to improve the attendance of learners. For example, learners have access to free meals, they receive rewards such as gift vouchers for consistently high attendance and financial support in the form of means-tested bursaries. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact.
- Managers and staff ensure that all study programme learners and trainees receive extensive work experience that meets learners' individual needs, their career aspirations and course requirements. You and your team have developed effective links with a good range of employers in childcare and health and social care to ensure that learners can develop the knowledge and practical skills required to be successful in their chosen career. Teachers work effectively in lessons to link the theoretical aspects of qualifications to workplace practice. NEWTEC's recruitment agency also provides good access to paid part-time work to develop learners' skills further, as well as providing a range of job opportunities on completion of their programme.

- Staff promote e-safety well to learners who have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when working online. The partnership between NEWTEC and the local authority 'Prevent' officer is good and helps ensure that an effective referral process is in place if required. Managers support teachers well to embed the 'Prevent' agenda in their teaching and learning materials. Managers and staff receive suitable face-to-face and online training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. The impact of the training is highly effective in improving the confidence of staff to report and deal with any concerns efficiently. Learners receive effective training and information about extremism, radicalisation and British values. Learners feel able to discuss these topics confidently and know how to report any concerns they may have.
- The board of trustees adds significant value to the work of the organisation. Although only a small team, the trustees possess a broad range of expertise and maintain highly effective networks with other local organisations, which significantly enhances the work of NEWTEC. The trustees are passionate about the work of the organisation, and they keep a clear focus on the importance of providing the best possible experience for the learners. They maintain a close overview of the financial management and quality of provision, and provide suitable support and challenge to the leadership team. Trustees add significant value to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty as members have knowledge and insight into local priorities. They also ensure that these subjects maintain a consistently high profile across the organisation.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure the following:

- Managers and teachers should continue to explore new and innovative strategies that will help raise achievement rates, in particular on level 3 courses, mathematics functional skills and GCSE. They might consider utilising their links with the local college or other providers to explore any strategies that have been successful in other settings and share good practice.
- Leaders and managers should review the organisation's approach to how teachers set targets, monitor progress and provide suitably constructive feedback to learners. They should redouble efforts to improve these aspects of delivery.
- Staff should carry on reinforcing to learners the importance of regular attendance, and continue to focus on initiatives that are beginning to have a positive impact on raising attendance levels.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Nelson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Ofsted Inspectors visited the training provider for two days. The head of young people and higher education, as nominee, assisted inspectors. We met with you as the chief executive of the organisation, as well as meeting with trustees, managers, teachers and learners. We visited several of your nurseries where we met with learners on placement and nursery managers. We observed teaching, learning and assessment, analysed achievement data for 2015/16, and examined learners' work and individual learning plans. We reviewed policies and procedures – in particular, those associated with safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. We reviewed your self-assessment report and minutes of management and trustees' meetings. We also considered the views of learners and employers.