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15 March 2017

Mr Adrian Gunner  
Managing Director  
South West Regional Assessment Centre  
Merley House  
Merley  
Dorset  
BH21 3AA

Dear Mr Gunner

### **Short inspection of The South West Regional Assessment Centre (SWRAC)**

Following the short inspection on 23 and 24 February 2017, 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 June 2013.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Since the previous inspection, your managers have successfully carried out the recommendations made at that inspection. Consequently, learners continue to receive high-quality support and training.

Managers have designed new programmes that meet the needs of the local communities that they serve, mainly Merseyside and Dorset. These programmes include traineeships and courses on employment skills to get learners into work. Your managers work closely with partners such as Jobcentre Plus, Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership, Dorset Local Authority and employers to ensure that their learners are well prepared for work.

Your managers closely monitor the progress of learners and a high proportion complete their qualifications to a high standard. Learners receive good support for their personal needs.

Learners now receive good advice and help in choosing suitable courses as a result of changes you have made to improve the quality of advice and guidance. For example, well-trained staff direct learners appropriately to different providers that are able to meet their needs more effectively than SWRAC.

The board of directors has increased its expertise with the appointment of new

members who make sure that learners receive good guidance about employment opportunities. The board has clear plans in place to make sure that its members are able to continue to provide appropriate support and challenge to managers.

Your managers' supervision of and support for tutors has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Consequently, learners benefit from good teaching and support.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Learners feel safe, adhere to health and safety expectations and know whom to speak to if they have a concern. However, learners are less confident about the full extent of issues around terrorism and extremism.

All staff and the governing body have regular and effective training on both safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff are recruited following the guidelines of safer recruitment and appropriate checks are undertaken. Managers responsible for safeguarding sensitively handle referrals and make improvements when they receive information from the local authority.

### **Inspection findings**

We agreed on seven key lines of enquiry, including safeguarding of learners, and the following are the inspection findings from the other six lines of enquiry.

- Managers have made significant progress in establishing an effective self-assessment process. All staff contribute effectively to the process, leading to a clear and helpful quality improvement plan. This plan helps staff to make improvements quickly. However, managers do not routinely review the impact of actions undertaken.
- All learners receive particularly good support from their assessors and employers. As a result, learners work to a high standard and gain additional qualifications and skills. For example, at the 'dive shop' apprentices are able to gain additional qualifications to enhance their future employment prospects.
- Learners become well motivated, interested and gain a good insight into the hospitality industry through attending the sector skills academy. Tutors prepare learners well for their familiarisation visits to hotels. For example, learners dress appropriately and ask and answer pertinent questions relating to hotel and event management work.
- Learners are now making good progress due to improved monitoring of their performance by tutors and their managers. More regular and focused individual meetings with learners have enabled tutors to improve their teaching and assessment of learners.
- Tutors improve their teaching and learning as a result of the support they receive after being observed. They receive good feedback and clear actions

to improve their teaching further.

- Managers support tutors well. Tutors receive regular and effective training to assist in their professional development; this training is of a high quality and well designed to meet the needs of the tutors.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance before they start their courses. Tutors provide appropriate advice with regard to not only their next educational steps but also social issues such as housing, help with drug and alcohol misuse and other personal matters. Learners continue to receive good support after they have completed their courses.
- Trainees understand their next steps as a result of good support from their tutors during reviews and professional discussions. Managers have ensured that tutors support learners into their chosen careers through the training all staff have received about local employment opportunities.
- Managers and tutors have developed productive relationships with a range of external agencies resulting in highly effective support for learners, who are often vulnerable, which enables them to complete their programmes successfully.
- Managers and tutors have improved information on what learners can do when they have completed their courses. For example, learners attend a 'job club' after finishing their courses to support them into employment. However, managers do not use this information to make improvements.
- Tutors now assess learners' starting points accurately and use this information well to plan suitable activities for each learner throughout their programme. Consequently, learners develop good skills relevant to their vocational interests and qualifications.
- Learners develop good skills in English and mathematics through effective teaching from their tutors. However, learners do not benefit sufficiently from clear written feedback from their tutors on how to improve their English and mathematics skills. For example, tutors do not highlight incorrect spelling of key vocabulary, use of correct punctuation and capital letters in sentences.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they improve the training and support for learners to increase their understanding of how to protect themselves from extremist behaviours and radicalisation
- tutors provide more accurate and helpful feedback to enable learners to improve their English skills
- they evaluate the impact of quality improvement activities to improve the training and experiences of learners
- they use the information on what learners do when they have completed their courses to help learners to gain employment or further education or

training.

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

Tracey Zimmerman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection we were assisted by the managing director of South West Regional Assessment Centre, as nominee. We met you and your senior leaders, tutors, other members of staff and two other directors. We visited sessions to collect information about learners' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. We spoke to learners during sessions and informally. We reviewed key documents including those in which South West Regional Assessment Centre leaders evaluate the quality of provision and standards achieved, the provider's evidence of safeguarding and reports on learners' satisfaction with their courses.