

Inspection of Norman Mackie & Associates Limited

Inspection dates: 17–19 September 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Norman Mackie & Associates Limited, locally known as Works4U, is a small independent specialist college based in Stalybridge, Tameside, Greater Manchester. The company offers programmes to young people, many of whom have significant barriers to learning and have disengaged from education. Many learners face multiple barriers to learning, including emotional, social and behavioural difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, there were 41 learners enrolled on provision for learners with high needs from entry level to level 1. Most learners study qualifications in personal and social skills and vocational skills in construction (carpentry), catering, art and animal care. For most of their education and training, learners attend the main centre, the farm and industry-standard facilities at a local football club.

Learners come from Tameside, Manchester, Salford and Stockport. The company also provides alternative provision for local schools.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners enjoy and participate fully in their learning programmes. Learners are proud of the new knowledge and skills they gain and the positive attitudes they develop. They work hard to improve their communication and team-working skills. Learners are well prepared for their next steps in learning and employment.

Learners develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours through well-planned programmes. Learners respond well to staff who support them to overcome the barriers they face. As a result, they gain the confidence to apply, practise and improve their skills in a range of settings, as well as in their personal lives. Learners become more employable because of their studies.

Learners work well with each other in a calm and orderly manner. They demonstrate ever-improving behaviours that help them to progress. Learners understand what tutors expect of them. They have high expectations for themselves and for what they can achieve. Learners are proud of their achievements.

Learners feel safe and are respectful of each other and others they meet through training or through project work in the community.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and staff have high expectations of what learners can achieve. This ensures that learners have plenty of opportunities to gain employment, internships or move to further education and training. Challenging and ambitious programmes of study develop and improve learners' attendance, confidence, self-esteem, communication skills and team work. Leaders review the curriculum frequently and make changes to benefit learners and meet their needs.

Tutors use their subject knowledge and expertise effectively to plan and teach the curriculum in a logical order. They help learners to build essential life, work and vocational skills. For example, as an initial project in construction, learners developed new joinery skills and used these to build a goat house for Max, one of the goats at the farm. As well as learning practical skills in how to construct the goat house, learners worked collaboratively, which also developed their communication skills.

Tutors ensure that learners have lots of opportunities to practise new skills. This enables learners to build a strong foundation, so that they can progress in their learning. Learners increasingly learn more and remember more. For example, in catering, learners build their skills preparing small batches of bakery products for the canteen. They then progress to preparing large batches of food for hospitality events at the local football club.

Tutors provide good one-to-one support that helps learners improve their personal effectiveness. Learners act on clear feedback from tutors. This helps them to

improve the quality of their work. For example, learners in art use developmental feedback from their tutor to produce exhibition work at a very high standard.

Tutors are considerate of their learners' differing needs. They plan engaging activities to ensure that no one is disadvantaged. Learners' self-confidence, resilience and self-awareness improve. They become motivated and ready to learn. Learners make substantial and sustained progress from often very low starting points.

Learners talk confidently about how their studies help them to express themselves and become more self-reliant. Teachers carefully plan and deliver activities which develop learners' independent-living skills, such as cooking, budgeting and shopping. These prepare them well for life and work.

Learners respect each other and their tutors. They are tolerant and increasingly democratic; most comply with the provider's rules. Too many learners lack a clear understanding of the dangers associated with gang culture and extremist views.

Leaders work effectively with local partners and employers to develop projects which benefit learners and the wider community. For example, learners work with the owner of a small building business to dismantle and rebuild a fishing pontoon at a local angling club. Some learners experience being in the countryside for the first time. They are rightly proud of the regeneration work they do and talk passionately about how they are helping their community.

Leaders ensure that staff have the appropriate occupational skills and expertise. Leaders link new staff with a mentor. New staff benefit from shadowing experienced team members. This enables them to learn a range of essential skills, such as dealing with learners displaying disruptive behaviour. Leaders do not always support tutors well enough to improve their teaching of vocational skills.

Staff give learners good careers advice and guidance. Leaders, managers and tutors work closely with schools, the local authority and parents to ensure a successful transition onto the most appropriate programme of study. External careers advisers provide specialist impartial advice and guidance to learners and work with them to develop job application letters and curriculum vitae. Learners are prepared well for their next steps. The range of work placement and work experience opportunities is too narrow.

Governors support and challenge leaders effectively to improve the quality of education. They hold leaders and managers to account. For example, they challenged leaders to provide a wider selection of work and intern placements. As a result, leaders have successfully begun to source new partners to provide placements and increase the range of opportunities available to learners. However, leaders recognise that the range is not yet extensive enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority. Leaders and staff are extremely vigilant about the safety and well-being of their learners. Leaders provide each young person with a key worker at the start of their programme. This ensures that their welfare needs are well-catered-for. All staff, as well as the designated safeguarding leads, receive appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff and learners fully understand reporting arrangements and follow them correctly. Leaders have established strong relationships with external agencies such as the police, hospital and child and adolescent mental health services. This helps to keep learners safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Support tutors to further develop the quality of their vocational teaching.
- Ensure that a greater proportion of learners move successfully into sustained employment, internships or further education and training.
- Increase the range of opportunities for work therapy and work placement for learners.
- Ensure that learners gain a firmer understanding of how to protect themselves from gangs and extremist views.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58507
Address	Ambleside Stalybridge SK15 1EB
Contact number	0161 303 1069
Website	www.works4u.org.uk
Principal/CEO	Wendy Mackie
Provider type	Independent specialist college
Date of previous inspection	28-30 November 2017
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by Wendy Mackie, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions and community projects, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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