

Birmingham Electrical Training

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 50713

Name of lead inspector: William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

Last day of inspection: 15 December 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider
Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd
34 Brearley Street

Address: Hockley
Birmingham
B19 3NR

Telephone number: 0121 661 6922

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Birmingham Electrical Training (BET) was established in 1991 as a training organisation to help young people gain access to the electrical industry and delivers advanced apprenticeship programmes including adult apprenticeships in electrical installation. Since the previous inspection, BET's recruitment has declined and the numbers of apprentices has halved. Significant changes to staffing have also occurred with a streamlined management structure and half the number of tutors and assessors.

At the previous inspection in December 2009, BET's outcomes for learners were good, but overall effectiveness and all other key aspects including the contributory grades of equality of opportunity and safeguarding were satisfactory. Inspectors graded the subject area of building and construction satisfactory. This report focuses on areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What is the extent of progress in resolving the underdeveloped aspects of quality improvement, noted at the previous inspection?

Insufficient progress

Since the previous inspection, BET has adopted new procedures for observing teaching and learning and implemented the observation of reviews and assessments. However, the policy underpinning these practices is not sufficiently detailed and the systems are not leading to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. The self-assessment process is unchanged and incorporates the views of staff, learners and employers satisfactorily. Nevertheless, the report is overly descriptive and insufficiently judgemental. The quality improvement plan highlights key actions to resolve areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection, but the updating of the plan is insufficient and managers do not monitor it well. Many actions are not sufficiently detailed or measurable and the plan does not clearly indicate the progress made against the actions. Too many areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not been resolved fully.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has BET made in improving learners' outcomes since the previous inspection?

Insufficient progress

Outcomes for learners was judged as good at the previous inspection with overall success rates eight percentage points above the national average. In the past two years, overall success rates have declined markedly and for period 12 of 2010/11 are 10 percentage points below the national average. Redundancies, due to economic factors, were responsible for an increasing proportion of learners leaving the programme early in 2009/10 and 2010/11. BET has worked hard to try to find alternative employment for those in this position, with only limited success to date. The numbers of learners completing by their target end date were well above the average at the previous inspection and whilst they have declined, they remain above the national average for the sector in 2010/11. Overall success rates for learners aged 19 to 24 compared to those aged 16 to 18 have fluctuated considerably over the last two years and are broadly similar in 2010/11.

Quality of provision

What progress has taken place in improving the quality of teaching in theory lessons?

Insufficient progress

At the previous inspection, although satisfactory overall, staff structured teaching in theory lessons around proprietary learning materials and slides with too little involvement of learners and insufficient planning for individual learners' needs.

Since then, BET has not made sufficient progress in improving the teaching in theory lessons. Not one of the current three teachers was at BET during the previous inspection. One is a fully qualified and experienced teacher; the other two have just completed a preparatory teaching qualification. The standard of teaching observed during the monitoring visit was the same as the previous inspection. Planning was too generic and did not identify the activities prepared for the lesson or take any account of individual learner's needs. Slide presentations were the basis of teaching with little involvement of learners and no clear checking of their understanding. Questioning techniques were ineffective. Teachers did not take opportunities to explore learners' knowledge or to extend and develop answers to questions. The observation of teaching and learning by managers does not improve the quality of teaching. BET's expectation is that teachers meet a satisfactory standard rather than aspire to a higher level. The criteria used by observers to judge teaching and learning are not challenging.

What progress has BET made in improving reviews and assessment recording?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, although assessment in the workplace was satisfactory, learners were not clear on the requirement to record evidence in the workplace and missed opportunities to gather valuable evidence for their qualification.

BET has made reasonable progress in improving the recording of evidence and assessment decisions. Assessors record assessment in the workplace well, making particularly good use of direct observation. Learners' portfolios contain an appropriate range of evidence, including work records, photographs, witness testimonies and learners' own records of their work. Learners now understand what they need to do to complete their qualification and the evidence they need to collect. Staff review learners' progress every ten weeks. Records of these reviews are clear and contain specific targets for learners, including targets to collect evidence.

What progress has occurred in improving the tracking of learners' progress?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection, records of individual learners' progress were on tracking sheets within their portfolio. However, BET did not have a central record of individual or group progress and managers were unable to gauge how learners as a whole were progressing.

BET has made reasonable progress in improving the tracking of learners' progress. Staff now have access to a central, electronic record for each learner which clearly identifies what progress they have made and what they have left to do. Managers regularly update the record which provides staff with a clear understanding of the progress each learner is making in relation to their planned programme. Each learner's programme includes milestones, or stages, which they are required to achieve. However, the system does not provide managers with a view of how well groups of learners are progressing or a way to identify formally those who may be at risk of falling behind. BET maintains a similar central electronic record for learners' progress with their technical certificate based on the achievement of unit examinations. Whilst this shows the progress each learner is making, managers do not systematically use these data to identify the aspects which learners find most difficult, or those examinations, which learners most frequently fail. A significant minority of learners continue to fail theory examinations and have to retake them, but managers do not have action plans to improve the teaching and preparation of learners for these modules.

Leadership and management

What progress is BET making in using available data to ensure all groups of learners succeed equally?

Insufficient progress

BET has made little improvement in analysing available data for different groups. It does not undertake its own analysis of the performance of different groups. BET covers this point in the post inspection action plan, but it has not acted to resolve the problem, which is now substantially beyond its target completion date. BET does not attempt to analyse learners' feedback by different groups. Minority ethnic learners make up 12% of learners. When taken as a whole, no difference exists between success rates of minority ethnic learners and white British learners. BET has recently appointed a new contracts manager with responsibility for management information with a brief to analyse and report regularly on the performance of different groups.

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