

B L Hairdressing Training

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50584

Name of lead inspector: Bob Busby HMI

Last day of inspection: 10 February 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. B L Hairdressing Training (BLHT) is a privately owned company established in 1984 to provide hairdressing training in the north-east of England. BLHT has a head office and training centre in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and a further five training centres in Middlesbrough, Darlington, Durham, Sunderland and Ashington. The company is managed by a board of directors. BLHT has 46 staff, 30 full-time, 13 part time and three self employed staff who work with local schools. An operational manager provides operational leadership to the six training Business Development Managers responsible for managing training staff and centres. Two additional managers are responsible for quality assurance and finance.
2. All of BLHT's training is funded by the Skills Funding Agency. All learners are employed in one of the 350 salons that BLHT contracts with. These cover a wide area of the North East from Berwick-upon-Tweed to North Yorkshire. These include areas of both relative prosperity and of high deprivation. The make-up of the population in these regions is similarly varied and diverse.
3. The provider offers apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced level in hairdressing at its six centres to a total of 343 intermediate apprentices and 155 advanced apprentices. This provision was the focus of this inspection.
4. B L Training provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Springboard (Foundation learning)
 - Sacred Heart Catholic High School (Vocational related qualifications level 2 in hairdressing)
 - East Middlesbrough Education Centre (Vocational related qualifications level 2 in hairdressing)
5. No other organisations provide training on behalf of BLHT:

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: 14 to16	85 part-time learners
Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	18 part-time learners 18 learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	455 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2

Overall effectiveness

6. BLHT ensures learners enjoy their hairdressing apprenticeships. Almost all current learners are making make very good progress. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships are consistently very high. The proportion of learners completing within their planned timescale has improved and is close to the national rate. The success rate for intermediate apprentices aged 16 to18 was low in 2009/10 but improved in 2010/11 and is just below the national rate. Learners gain confidence and develop good vocational skills, often working at a higher level than is required for the qualification. Many progress to further study and higher levels of responsibility within their salons. BLHT effectively monitors the progress made by different groups of learners.
7. The majority of teaching and learning sessions are good or better. Session planning is thorough and lessons are characterised by good pace and a variety of well balanced activities. Courses are carefully planned in conjunction with salon managers and additional programmes such as barbering and specialist hairdressing workshops provide excellent opportunities for learners to develop additional skills. Tutors know their learners well and help them quickly develop practical skills. Assessment practices are thorough. Tutors use technology well to enliven learning. Short courses for employers very effectively help improve the quality of on the job training.
8. BLHT makes excellent use of outstanding links with employers, local community groups, schools and provider groups to develop the provision, support learners

and promote inclusion. Links to agencies help effectively support learners' wider needs. Learners identified at risk of leaving the programme early are provided with prompt additional support.

9. BLHT leads and manages its provision well. Managers monitor performance well. All staff make good use of detailed management information. BLHT makes good use of learners' views but formal systems to gather feedback from employers are less well developed. The use of resources to secure value for money is very effective.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good overall. The success rates on advanced apprenticeships are good. Learners' success rates on intermediate apprenticeships were low in 2009/10 and have remained static since then. They are currently just below the national rates. Progression rates between levels and into further training are very good.
- Learners' acquisition and development of practical skills are good. They often work at a higher level than is required for the qualification, particularly in hair colouring techniques. Learners' high quality work is used effectively in high profile marketing materials, which inspires and motivates them. Learners have effective interpersonal skills and are professional and confident when working on clients. They quickly make a meaningful contribution in the workplace.
- The majority of teaching and learning sessions are good or better. Most sessions are well planned and are characterised by good pace and a variety of well balanced activities to engage learners. Tutors help learners quickly develop confidence in their practical skills development. Tutors use information learning technology (ILT) well to enliven learning. Assessment practices and planning are thorough. Learner progress reviews are comprehensive, thorough and consistent across the provision.
- Learners benefit from an excellent range of courses from foundation learning to advanced apprenticeships. Progression from intermediate level to advanced programmes is very good. Additional programmes such as barbering and specialist hairdressing workshops provide excellent opportunities for learners to develop additional skills to enhance and improve their employability. Short courses for employers very effectively help improve the quality of on-the-job training for learners.
- Outstanding links are in place with a variety of provider groups that provide excellent opportunities to share good practice and develop the provision. Links with local community groups to promote inclusion are good. Collaborative work with schools is very good. BLHT has worked well with schools in developing courses for 14-19 learners. Links with partner employers are excellent and are used very effectively to inform the planning of training.
- Learners are well supported in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, many gaining sufficient confidence to progress onto more advanced courses. They are provided with good information, advice and guidance throughout their training. Learners identified at risk of leaving the programme early are provided with additional support. Pastoral support for learners is good with business

development managers having access to a range of agencies to help support learners' wider needs.

- BLHT make particularly good use of a detailed business plan supported very well by a range of centre-specific strategic and quality improvement plans. These challenge staff to achieve targets aimed at raising the standards throughout BLHT provision. A very detailed communication plan ensures that all aspects of the delivery and management are monitored and relevant staff kept informed of progress to date in achieving targets and milestones.
- Detailed analysis of management information enables managers to identify areas needing improvement. A range of strategies support staff to address the key issues facing BLHT such as the impact of early leavers and the effect this has on their overall success rates and achievement within planned timescales.
- BLHT has a detailed single equality scheme for 2010/13 that provides a good focus on meeting all of the nine protected characteristics. A detailed action plan with targets for identified priority groups supports the plan well. Regular and frequent staff training is effective in raising understanding and awareness. BLHT contributes very well to a local consortium aimed at involving minority ethnic groups. Their approach to challenging stereotypes is particularly strong.
- Managers make good use of a well-structured learner involvement strategy to inform them of learners' views and suggestions. They encourage learners to participate in a learner forum and provide feedback to learners on BLHT's response to suggestions and comments. Formal systems to gather feedback from employers is less well developed with only a simplistic questionnaire to gather their views. BLHT staff also contact individual salons for feedback.
- BLHT systems for monitoring and evaluating performance are comprehensive and detailed. Comprehensive quality policies and procedures enable staff to ensure that all stages of the learner journey follow the quality strategy. All staff contribute well to self assessment during dedicated training weeks. The resulting self assessment report is evaluative and effectively and accurately identifies strengths and areas for further improvement.
- The use of resources to secure value for money is very effective in ensuring learners progress and acquire good levels of skills through their training programme. Good use is made of learners' views. BLHT invests in high quality equipment and resources to support training. The company's 'eco policy' ensures that resources are used in a sustainable way.

What does B L Training need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates for learners aged 16-18 on intermediate programmes, by setting and recording realistic targets and frequent detailed analysis of learner progress across all elements of their programme. Closely monitor retention rates and anticipate and respond rapidly to the changing needs of learners.
- Ensure that strategies to develop and improve teaching are effective in improving the amount of outstanding teaching within centres so that all learners experience stimulating and inspiring teaching.

- Enhance systems to gather more detailed feedback from employers to enable a more detailed review and analysis of the provision to guide BLHT in further improving the quality of the provision for all learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the friendly staff
- the good quality teaching sessions
- being treated like an adult and feeling valued
- the strong emphasis on practical work to develop skills which will help with career progression
- small class sizes allowing individual tuition and support.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more time at the training centres.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the effective communication
- the good support from BLHT staff
- flexible training arrangements to suit employer needs
- the personal touch promoting good partnership work
- the high level of responsiveness to employer requests for help or information.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the scheduling of additional activities to minimise disruption to salons
- the variety of models to improve assessment opportunities, particularly for advanced apprentices.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

10. BLHT has maintained high success rates for advanced apprentices since the last inspection. Success rates for intermediate apprentices have been less consistent, those for 16 - 18 year olds having declined in 2009/10. However, there is some evidence that actions taken are beginning to have an impact on the current learners. The number of early leavers is decreasing and learners who are still in learning are making good progress. BLHT has a clear understanding of the reasons for the higher levels of early leavers in previous years and has used detailed analysis to develop effective strategies to remedy the situation.
11. Staff make good use of management information to identify areas for improvement. Communication systems are effective in ensuring staff and managers are kept fully informed about progress towards achieving the targets for both overall success rates and for the percentage of learners achieving within their planned timescales.
12. Self-assessment and quality improvement procedures are comprehensive and well-managed. Systems to gather feedback from learners are good and well established. However, processes to gather feedback from employers are currently less effective. Following a staff restructuring in 2010, all staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and fully contribute to the drive for improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Learners enjoy their training and make good progress. Many are encouraged and supported to complete their qualification before their planned end date. Almost all learners are currently on target or ahead of target to achieve within their planned time. Almost one third of learners are making exceptional progress. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships are consistently very high. The proportion of learners completing within their planned timescale has improved since the last inspection and is close to the national rate. Success rates for intermediate apprentices have remained static since 2009/10 and are just below the national average. For learners aged 16 to 18 success rates were low in 2009/10.
14. Learners develop a high standard of practical skill and often work at a higher level than is required for the qualification, particularly in colouring techniques. Learners develop very effective interpersonal skills and are professional and confident when working on clients, increasing their employability.
15. The high quality work produced by learners is rewarded effectively in BLHT's high profile marketing materials, which inspires and motivates learners. Many learners progress to further study and higher levels of responsibility within their salons. A high proportion of learners' progress from the schools programmes

onto apprenticeships and from intermediate level to advanced level apprenticeships.

16. BLHT monitors the performance of different groups of learners closely and takes appropriate action when necessary. Women learners generally achieve better than men but the gap is closing. There are no significant, sustained differences in achievement between learners from different backgrounds.
17. Learners feel safe and appreciate the arrangements which BLHT have in place to ensure their safety. Learners employ safe working practices and safe systems of work. BLHT offers good learning opportunities for apprentices to make informed choices about their health and well-being and encourage them to make a positive contribution to the local community.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

18. The majority of teaching and learning sessions are good or better. Sessions are mostly well-paced and contain a variety of well balanced activities. Tutors are skilled at linking theory to commercial practice. ILT is used very effectively to enhance learning. Staff are well qualified and experienced. Practical teaching is delivered in salons which are of a good commercial standard. Assessment practices are thorough. Learners enthusiastically take part in professional photo shoots, which are used very effectively in the provider's marketing materials. Learners are motivated, inspired and encouraged to develop additional skills. Learners' progress reviews are comprehensive, thorough and consistent. Individual learning plans provide clear targets for learner progress. BLHT has focused well on improving the quality of teaching and learning. A detailed process for the observation of teaching and learning is in place. The quality of teaching has improved. Staff development and performance management is linked well to the findings from observations.
19. Learners benefit from an outstanding range of activity to improve their employability within the hairdressing industry. Courses range from foundation learning to advanced apprenticeships. Additional programmes such as barbering and specialist workshops effectively develop additional skills. Activities such as a professional photo shoot, competitions and hair-shows build learners' confidence. Targeted programmes engage learners who have disengaged with learning. Courses for learners aged 14 to 19 have significantly increased and provide excellent opportunities for learners to gain qualifications and make informed choices on hairdressing as a career. The extensive range of training for employers improves the quality of in-salon training.
20. BLHT have established outstanding links with provider groups to share good practice, develop the provision and also to enable referrals of learners who chose to leave the hairdressing industry. Partnership links are used effectively to ensure that grades awarded are accurate. Links with partner employers are excellent and used effectively to inform planning of training. Many employers undertake additional training to improve the quality of in-salon training and increase the number of work-based assessors. BLHT works very effectively with schools in developing courses providing a good introduction to the hairdressing

industry. Good partnership links have been made with community groups and the local council to target disengaged learners.

21. The results from initial assessments are used effectively to plan learning and additional support. Learners receive good individual and group support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and are confident to progress onto more advanced courses. Tutors skilfully link literacy and numeracy to vocational settings. Learners who are identified as at risk of leaving the programme early are provided with prompt additional support. Pastoral support is good with good access to specialist agencies to help support learners' wider needs. Learners are provided with good information advice and guidance throughout their training. The number of learners receiving literacy and numeracy support who left their programme early has reduced and their success rates improved in recent years.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

22. BLHT has good systems and processes to motivate and involve staff in achieving business plan targets and its vision of achieving excellence. Communications are extremely well developed and staff are fully involved in the decision-making processes. A well-structured business plan addresses all aspects of the business. A comprehensive strategic plan supports the business plan extremely well. Detailed quality improvement plans support each centre. All staff use management information well to analyse their own and centre performance. Regular one-to-one and group meetings with centre managers and monthly meetings with a director review progress against priority targets. A strong focus is placed on strategies to support learners identified as a 'cause for concern'.
23. Arrangements for safeguarding are strong and exceed government legislative requirements. Criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are in place for all staff and a register is maintained centrally. All staff have been trained in safeguarding and this is refreshed annually. Many managers have been trained to higher levels including training in safer recruitment. Risk assessments are in place to ensure learners are safeguarded in all aspects of their course and on employer's premises. Employers and learners understand safeguarding well. The reinforcement of learners' understanding is effective through reviews but discussions are not well recorded in review documentation.
24. BLHT have a detailed single equality scheme for 2010/13 that very effectively addresses all aspects of equality and diversity including the nine protected characteristics. A detailed action plan includes impact measures targeting priority under-represented groups. A well-qualified director leads on all aspects of equality and diversity and is actively involved in a range of groups which aim to improve engagement with priority communities. BLHT provides annual staff training as well as additional in-year training which is very effective in improving staff understanding of equality and diversity. BLHT challenges existing stereotyping through very good promotion of successful male learners in a high quality company magazine and sponsorship of a local female soccer team. Staff have attended a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender forum and received training to develop their knowledge and understanding of these issues.

25. BLHT has good learner-engagement systems to support improvements. BLHT makes good use of learner satisfaction surveys and encourages all learners to participate in a learners' forum to discuss suggestions to improve quality. Centres promote actions taken using posters. Observation of teaching reports included suggestions from learners. The formal systems to gather employer feedback is less well developed. A simplistic questionnaire alongside staff feedback from salon visits provides a less effective system to collect employers' views on the quality of provision.
26. BLHT's self-assessment systems and processes are effective in evaluating, monitoring and improving the quality of provision. The detailed quality strategy includes a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that ensure consistent approaches to quality assurance. The quality cycle very effectively follows the learner journey and is overseen very well by the operations manager.
27. BLHT makes very good use of management information. Two management information systems provide staff at all levels with accurate and reliable information to monitor their individual progress against targets. Detailed review and monitoring of individual staff caseloads takes place at frequent meetings. Centre quality improvement plans are detailed and accurately capture the key areas for improvement.
28. BLHT ensures use of resources secures good value for money. They have invested significantly in improving resources in centres for learners and have developed an effective 'eco policy' designed to reduce the company's carbon footprint.

Information about the inspection

29. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)		
B L Training		
<p>Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Leamer responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships</p>		

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	205	205
Part-time learners	101	101
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	-	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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