

# Biffa Waste Services Ltd

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 50697

**Name of lead inspector:** Gerard McGrath HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 24 September 2010

**Type of provider:** Employer

**Address:** Biffa Waste Services  
Hoods Close  
Beaumont Leys Lane  
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**Telephone number:** 01162 161900

## Information about the provider

1. Biffa Waste Services Ltd (Biffa) employs around 5,000 people across the UK. It provides waste collection, treatment, re-cycling and disposal services to local and national customers in the industrial and commercial collection sector and to local authorities. It is also a significant provider of renewable energy in the UK.
2. Biffa has undergone a number of major changes to its business in order to move from a waste management towards a waste-to-energy, which has resulted in the re-organization of the company.
3. Biffa holds a contract with the National Employer Service (NES) for Train to Gain learners. The company offers two schemes for NVQ at level 2: Frontline Health and Safety (FHS) and Waste Management Operation (WMO) – collection. The majority of learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in Frontline Health and Safety. Biffa uses the programme to improve knowledge and understanding of supervisors to support the company's 'H&S Culture' scheme.
4. Biffa provides funded qualifications through the company's NVQ centre, which is part of the training department of the safety, legal and corporate section. The Biffa NVQ centre has three full-time staff: the NVQ centre manager, an NVQ administrator and an assessor/verifier. A subcontractor provides off-the-job workshops and assessment.
5. Each learner attends three off-the-job training workshops and gathers evidence in their work place to demonstrate their learning and competence.
6. Government funded training makes up a small minority of all company training provision.
7. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
  - Creative Training

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for adult learners:	114 part-time learners

## Summary report

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>		<b>Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>		<b>Grade 2</b>
		<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners		2
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		3
Equality and diversity		3
<b>Subject areas</b>		<b>Grade</b>
Business administration		2

## Overall effectiveness

8. Biffa's overall effectiveness is good. The number of learners who gain their qualifications is very high and has been consistently well above national averages since 2006. Learners make good progress, gain confidence and improve their work practices. The promotion of health and the well-being of learners has a high priority and learners feel very safe. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Tutors and assessors give good advice, guidance and support whilst providing individual coaching that help learners build on their existing skills and experience. The planning and management of the programme are good. However, the discussion and reinforcement of relevant equality and diversity topics in reviews are insufficient.
9. The company's strategies to improve outcomes and the quality of the provision are already having a positive impact on learners. The quality and effectiveness of subcontracted provision is good. Biffa recognises that the initial assessment and support for literacy and numeracy as well as use of management information to plan improvements are areas for improvement.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good with very high overall success rates. Overall success rates have increased each year and at the time of the inspection are very good at 99%. The proportion of learners that complete by their target end date is consistently above the national average and was 88% in 2008/09.
- Assessment is good. It is well planned and the awarding body consistently risk assesses Biffa in their lowest risk banding. Verifiers carry out good robust and timely checks on learners' work. Assessors' feedback to learners is helpful, clear and concise. Biffa has five qualified work based assessors who often work alongside learners and are able regularly to assess their work place competences.
- Learners enjoy their learning and progress well. Learners are well motivated and many gain promotion within the company. Learner's increases in confidence and self-esteem provide them with significant motivation to progress to higher levels of responsibility.
- Learners develop good personal and occupational skills. Learners increase their confidence, communication and vocational skills well during the programme. The increased knowledge and understanding gained from training leads to improved performance at work. Learners are able to challenge others appropriately if they are not operating safely or failing to follow safe working procedures.
- Learners feel very safe. They are highly aware of relevant company policies and procedures and the high priority placed on health and safety. Learners change their behaviour in the work place to protect better the well-being of others as well as themselves. The amount of work time lost due to accidents across the company has reduced.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors have good knowledge and presentation skills and use them well to make training sessions relevant to the work place. Teaching sessions provide good learning through group work and challenging tasks that stretch learners. Well-planned teaching actively involves learners and regular changes in activities engage and maintain their interest.
- The use of initial assessment results is insufficient. Learners receive the results of literacy and numeracy tests carried out at the start of the course. However, no information is recorded on individual learning plans to inform tutors, assessors and programme reviewers about learners' abilities and possible support needs. This was recognised in the self-assessment report.
- The tracking and monitoring of individual learner's progress is insufficient. Managers do not receive clear evidence about the work completed by learners and what they still need to do. Without the detailed information, managers are not able to accurately monitor a learner's progress and plan the timely collection of outstanding portfolio evidence.
- The design of the well-managed training programmes is particularly good. Effective provision of initial course information, through a web based interactive seminar (Webinar), allows learners to stay at their normal work

place. Careful planning of training minimises disruptions to work duties. The very well designed training materials provide learners with clear and easy to understand workbooks.

- Leadership to improve the health, safety and well-being of learners is strong. The company launched a new 'H&S culture' scheme in 2008 to raise the health and safety awareness and practices of staff. The current FHS programme the company introduced to improve work practices. A robust system of internal governance for health and safety is reducing the number of working days lost through accidents across the company.
- Satisfactory formal safeguarding arrangements are in place. Although few employees and no current learners are aged 16 to 17, the company has an appropriate range of policies and risk assessments for this age group. A company-wide group of harassment and bullying counsellors are available to any learner who has concerns about their treatment in the workplace.
- Reinforcement of equality and diversity are insufficient. At company induction, learners receive a relevant introduction to equality and diversity and have the opportunity to declare any concerns during programme reviews. However, the curriculum content and learning checks throughout the training programme to raise learners' awareness of relevant equality and diversity topics is too little.
- Observations of group training sessions are insufficient. Biffa carries out regular and frequent internal verification observations of formal learning sessions and provide verbal feedback to the sub contracted provider. However, no systematic, criteria-based system is in place for observations to assess accurately the quality of key parts of teaching and learning.
- Analysis of management information to plan improvements to the programme is not enough. Biffa has a wide range of available data, which it uses well to ensure compliance with funding body and financial requirements. Little analysis takes place on the performance of all groups of learners and assessors to identify trends.

## **What does Biffa Waste Services Limited need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure the results from initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy abilities tutors, assessors and reviewers receive and use to plan appropriate support.
- Improve the tracking of learners' progress to provide managers with clear evidence of work still needed to complete qualifications. Managers then need to ensure that learners have sufficient time and resources to complete the NVQ within the planned timescales.
- Increase the analysis and use of available data to identify accurately trends in performance by different groups of learners and plan improvements.
- Develop systematic arrangements to assess the quality of teaching and learning, including subcontracted parts of the programme.

- Revise the curriculum content and delivery to include more opportunities for learners to explore relevant equality and diversity issues.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- very supportive tutors that put things across well
- a course which is useful in helping with job roles and progression opportunities
- good support from workplace supervisors
- enjoyable training
- substantial increases in confidence and knowledge
- useful and enjoyable group working.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- an increase in time to prepare to give presentations
- increase in time to complete the course
- webinar should be made available at all times.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

10. Biffa's capacity to make further improvements is good. Senior managers offer clear leadership and focus on improving the health, safety and well-being of its staff. Biffa has good arrangements for monitoring its own provision and that of its subcontractor. Overall, outcomes are good, and consistently above national averages.
11. Biffa engages well with a number of schools and community groups to raise awareness of sustainability and environmental issues. Biffa's NVQ centre has developed good working relationships with partners and work place supervisors to provide effective personal support and work place support for learners.
12. The provider's internal verification, audit and quality systems are rigorous, however, the arrangements for observations of teaching and learning are informal and unsystematic. The quality of subcontracted provision is good. Management structures are very effective and well established. Learning resources are good. Biffa carries out an annual self-assessment of its provision, which is inclusive of the views of users. The associated report is broadly accurate and managers and staff use it effectively to agree appropriate improvement plans.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

13. Outcomes for learners are good with very high overall success rates. Overall success rates have improved each year and the latest published outcome data for period 12 of the 2009/10 year are very high at 99%. The proportion of learners completing by their target end date at the time of the inspection are 72%, which is slightly above the national average. This compares favourably with the same point in previous years. The percentage of learners completing by their target end date has been above the national average for the last four years and reached 88% in 2008/09.
14. Learners enjoy their learning and progress well. Learners are well motivated and many gain promotion within the company. A minority of learners say that the confidence gains and increases in self-esteem gained through their success with the qualification significantly motivate them to progress onto higher levels of responsibility at work.
15. Learners develop good personal and occupational skills. Their confidence, communication and vocational skills increase well during the programme. They use their increased knowledge and understanding gained from the training to improve their performance at work. Learners support good health and safety practice by challenging others if they are not working correctly within company policies and procedures.

16. Learners feel extremely safe. Biffa place a great emphasis on improving the health and safety of all their employees and visitors to their sites. Learners are highly aware of relevant company policies and procedures and the high priority placed on health and safety. Learners change their behaviour in the work place to protect better the well-being of others as well as themselves in highly challenging environments. Learners have a good awareness of the company procedures for dealing bullying and harassment and the associated support services.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

17. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors plan off-the-job, group training sessions well and use pace particularly effectively to promote learning. They make lessons interesting by including a good range of activities to maintain learners' interest during training sessions. Attendance at sessions is very good.
18. The well-planned assessment is good. The awarding body consistently assesses Biffa in their lowest risk banding. Monitoring of learners' progress takes place at key stages of the programme and verifiers carry out good robust checks on learners' work. Assessor feedback to learners is helpful, clear and concise. Well-organised portfolios contain good clear evidence of individual learner's competence against the awarding body standards. Biffa has five qualified work based assessors who often work alongside learners and to provide convenient access to support and assessment in the work place.
19. Learners enjoy learning and benefit from working with others in off-the-job training sessions. Learners are well motivated and most go on to gain promotion within the company. Learners often improve their confidence and increase their self esteem. Achievement of qualifications is very motivational and encourages learners to progress onto higher levels of work responsibility.
20. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactory. Learners receive good feedback on their progress. Action plans identify what remaining evidence learners still needs to collect. However, monitoring and reinforcement of learner's understanding of equality and diversity topics is insufficient during formal progress reviews.
21. Learners develop good personal and occupational skills. They demonstrate a clear understanding of risk assessment and good working practices. Learners increase their confidence, communication and vocational skills well during the programme. Their increased knowledge and understanding gained from the training improves performance at work. Learners challenge others if they are not operating within working procedures.
22. The NVQ courses are outstandingly relevant to the needs of learners and their work duties. The programme supports the company training plan and contribute very well to the achievement of corporate strategic objectives. Biffa considers health and safety extremely important. The basis of the supervisory qualification is around health and



safety, which very closely suit the company's business requirements. The provision of training and assessment is flexible to meet work schedules and learners benefit from the new knowledge and understanding.

23. Biffa has satisfactory partnership arrangements that benefit the local community. The company has developed good school links. Groups of local school children visit Biffa sites to learn about recycling and sustainability issues. This helps children influence their parents to recycle waste effectively.
24. Support arrangements are satisfactory. Biffa staff provide good help and advice on personal and workplace issues. Learners assessed as requiring additional support for literacy or numeracy are encouraged to attend local. Assessors and workplace supervisors provide additional assistance to learners on interpreting and understanding underpinning knowledge questions.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

25. The management of training courses is good. Programmes are well planned and very well designed. Learners receive initial course information through a web based interactive seminar that allows them to stay at their normal work place. Careful planning of training minimises disruptions to work duties. The design of training materials is particularly good and workbooks are clear and easy to understand. The use of the company's intranet and web conferencing is good, which helps to reduce staff travel time and costs.
26. Directors and senior managers provide strong organisational leadership to improve the health, safety and well-being of learners and other staff. The company launched a new scheme in 2008 to raise the health and safety awareness and practices of staff safety. The current programme on health and safety is improving staff awareness and knowledge. The programme is an integral part of the corporate training plan. Biffa has revised job descriptions and person specifications for all supervisory posts to include the requirement to successfully complete this programme. A robust system of internal governance for health and safety is reducing the number of working days lost through accidents across the company.
27. The company-wide formal safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Few employees and no current learners are aged 16 to 17. The company has an appropriate range of policies and risk assessments for this age group. A company-wide group of harassment and bullying counselors are available to any learner who has concerns about their treatment in the workplace.
28. Reinforcement of equality and diversity is insufficient. Biffa has a range of appropriate, well-established equality and diversity policies and procedures. The profile of staff generally reflects the population. Learners are successfully recruited from all parts of the company. The proportion of female learners accurately reflects the numbers of staff in the company. Learners from minority ethnic groups have consistently high success rates. Female and white British learners are less likely to succeed in a timely

manner. The provider recognises these trends, although the numbers of learners in these groups are small and individual progress can affect the trend analysis disproportionately. The proportion of learners completing by their target end date varies in different geographical regions. The introduction to equality and diversity topics to learners during the company induction is clear and during the formal progress reviews they have the opportunity to declare any concerns. However, the curriculum content off-the-job sessions and programme workbooks have little relevant to raise learners' awareness of this area. Staff often miss opportunities to check learners' understanding of relevant equality and diversity topics throughout the training programme.

29. The systematic observations of group training sessions is insufficient. Biffa carry out regular and frequent internal verification observations of formal learning sessions and provide verbal feedback to the sub contracted provider. However, no systematic, criteria-based system for observation to assess accurately the quality of key parts of teaching and learning and record trends is in place.
30. The analysis of management information to identify trends in performance is insufficient. Biffa has a wide range of available data, which it uses well to ensure compliance with funding body and financial requirements. Analysis of the performance of different groups of learners and assessors to identify trends is not enough.

## **Information about the inspection**

31. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), assisted by the provider's NVQ centre manager, 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 National Employer Service, and data on learners and their achievement.
32. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and staff had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in one of the subject areas the provider offers.

### Record of Main Findings (RMF)

#### Biffa Waste Services Ltd

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner 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

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	18	18
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
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?	1	
<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>	n/a	
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
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?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
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>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
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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