

# Babington Business College Ltd

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 50586

**Name of lead inspector:** Robert Hamp HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 18 November 2011

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Babington House  
Mallard Way  
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**Telephone number:** 01332 345450

## Information about the provider

1. Babington Business College Ltd (Babington) was founded in 1974. It provides training in accounts, business administration, customer service, management, providing financial advice and providing financial services. Babington's administrative centre is in Derby and it has training centres in Dewsbury, Sheffield, Lichfield, Stoke-on-Trent and a training suite in Nottingham. The Skills Funding Agency finances the majority of provision.
2. In 2009, Babington changed ownership. Its key investor, Bridges Ventures, provides non-executive representation at board level and it has introduced a social responsibility strategy into the company. Two executive board members are supported by six senior managers and 105 members of staff, 42 of whom are part-time. Twenty-one are assessors, eight have responsibility for internal quality assurance and four full-time and 13 part-time tutors provide training for accountancy qualifications.
3. Currently 921 learners are on business administration and law apprenticeships at levels 2, 3 and 4, all of whom are in employment. Of this, 65% are female and 28 have additional support needs. Thirty-four learners are on health, public services and care apprenticeships at level 2 and 3. This subject, was not part of the inspection.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of Babington:
  - Anglia Accounting Training (business administration and law)
  - Skills Source Care (health, public services and care)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships	1017 apprentices

## 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		2
Equality and diversity		3
<b>Subject Areas</b>		<b>Grade</b>
Business administration and law		2

## Overall effectiveness

5. Babington is a good provider of business-related training. Most learners succeed in their training and the majority complete within the planned duration of their programme. Success rates are consistently high. Women achieve slightly better than men. Learners enjoy their learning and are acquiring relevant work-related skills, knowledge and are becoming articulate and confident in the workplace. Most are expanding their job roles and taking on new responsibilities. Employers value the contributions learners are making to their businesses. Safe working practices have a high priority and learners feel safe.
6. Teaching, training and coaching are good. However, learners that are more able, do not always receive sufficient challenge. The provider manages learning programmes well. Staff monitor learners' progress effectively. Progress of learners on to higher level qualifications is good. The organisation of programmes for both learners and employers is flexible. Assessment arrangements are good. The range of courses and level of programmes meet the needs and interest of learners very well. Staff support learners well. However, information advice and guidance is not available to all learners consistently. Reviews are systematic but do not always include the employer.
7. Leaders and managers set high standards. Staff are well qualified and experienced, and committed to improving the provision. The quality of resources is good. Training programmes provide good value for money.

Babington works effectively with its partners to involve and include hard to reach and under-represented groups. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The provider has not fully embedded recent changes to quality improvement arrangements. The promotion of equality and diversity is under-developed.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners in business administration and law are good. The overall success rate and success rate for learners completing within agreed timescales are above the national average and are high. Learners are making good progress and the standard of their work is good. They enjoy learning. Learners are improving their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. They have high levels of competence. Most learners are widening their job roles and are progressing to higher levels of responsibility. Progression routes are good. Learners feel safe. Employers and Babington staff promote health and safety within the workplace well.
- The quality of provision is good. Assessors and tutors plan and co-ordinate programmes very effectively. Coaching, teaching and learning are good. Learning resources are of a high standard. Monitoring of learners' progress is very effective. Staff plan assessments well. Learners have a good understanding of assessment. Reviews are generally good but not all employers are aware of individual training plans and milestones.
- Provision meets the needs of the users very well. Progression rates for learners from lower to higher levels are high. Most learners continue their learning beyond their apprenticeship, gaining recognition from professional bodies. Assessment is flexible and responsive to learners' work pressures and patterns.
- Partnerships are good. Babington staff have good working relationships with employers. All learners are in employment and benefit from working with employers who provide jobs with good training. Most employers have a good understanding of training programmes. Links with professional bodies keep learners well informed of changes and developments.
- Assessors and tutors provide satisfactory support. Assessor visits are systematic and learners feel able to approach their assessors about programme or personal issues. Most learners receive good guidance and help with programme tasks from their employer. Not all learners receive timely advice from the provider about available programmes and how further training could develop their career prospects.
- Leadership and management are good. Babington has a clear vision and strategy for developing provision. It supports staff well. Babington has a collective ambition to provide high standard training. Staff development is good. Operational management is very effective. Internal and external communications are good. Review and evaluation of initiatives is not always comprehensive or effective.

- Safeguarding arrangements are good and all staff give this area a high priority. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks on staff and health and safety vetting of employers' premises are thorough. Learners feel protected and secure during their training. The recently introduced strategy for the safe use of information and communication technology (ICT) focuses well on the learning process. Learners' protection from harassment, bullying and discrimination is satisfactory.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Babington makes good use of partners to engage with hard to reach and under-represented groups. They have an appropriate understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity is not sufficiently effective. Babington does not use data at programme level to compare the performance of different groups.
- Engagement with users is satisfactory. Babington successfully uses learners' feedback to improve learning resources and facilities. The provider has identified issues with its collection of feedback and recently introduced an improved process. Babington recognises that plans it has implemented does not effectively capture users' views at all key points in the learning journey. The provider does not routinely request feedback from employers.
- Self-assessment is satisfactory. Staff have been appropriately involved in the process. The associated report is succinct and self-critical with a development plan that managers use effectively to drive improvements. However, too few targets are specific or time bound. Quality assurance and improvement processes are adequate but managers have still to embed them fully across all the provision.
- Babington provides good value for money. Overall success rates for most learners are high and has been consistently so for the previous three years. The provider uses resources very effectively to support learners and it has significantly improved training centre facilities and ICT. However, the potential of newly introduced ILT staff have not fully exploited.

### **What does Babington need to do to improve further?**

- Further improve the effectiveness of progress reviews by specifying clearly what the requirements are for a good review and sharing of good practice.
- Ensure all learners benefit from good information advice and guidance by introducing a more systematic approach across all programmes.
- Improve learners' understanding of equality and diversity through the introduction of effective checking and reinforcement at key stages of their training.
- Introduce better informed strategies to identify achievement gaps through the analysis of data at programme level to compare the achievement of different groups.
- Better evaluate the quality of learning through further embedding of comprehensive quality assurance and improvement processes.

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

### **What learners like:**

- having responsibility in the workplace
- gaining new skills in the workplace
- progressing to the next level of training
- friendly and helpful assessors
- good one-to-one support provided by staff
- group training sessions.

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

- less use of paper handouts
- clearer targets
- more time to complete tasks.

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

### **What employers like:**

- flexible learning arrangements
- the convenience of training on site
- the increase in staff confidence and sense of achievement
- the opportunity to continue training
- training that is based on job role
- the good relationships with assessors.

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

- earlier information about changes to exams
- better awareness of key skills
- more use of electronic communications.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

8. Babington's capacity to improve is good. Outcomes for learners are good. Since the last inspection, Babington has maintained its high success rates and inspection grades with significantly increased numbers of learners. The provider has maintained the strengths identified at the last inspection and rectified most areas for improvement. Teaching and learning are good and managers lead the provision well. The provider sets high standards for its provision. Staff are well qualified, knowledgeable and have a good awareness of how they contribute to improvement targets.
9. Self-assessment includes fully the views of staff, learners and employers. The current self-assessment report is sufficiently judgemental. Managers monitor learners' progress closely. Although Babington has not fully embedded recent changes to quality systems it has maintained the quality of its provision. Staff understand well the company's development plan, which clearly identifies priority areas for improvement.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

10. The overall success rate for business administration and law has been consistently above the national average since 2007/08. The success rate for learners achieving within agreed timescales has also been consistently above the national average since 2007/08. Learners make good progress and the standard of learners' work is high. Learners from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve in line with the national average. Females perform slightly better than males.
11. Learners develop good personal, social and employability skills. They display high levels of competence and are confident and articulate. Well-developed vocational skills combined with enhanced literacy and numeracy skills significantly improve learners' employment prospects. Most learners are widening their job roles and are progressing to higher levels of responsibility. Progression routes on to higher level qualifications are good. Learners feel safe. The promotion of health and safety within the workplace is good.

### The quality of provision

**Grade 2**

12. Coaching, teaching and learning are good. Learning resources are good. Tutors and assessors plan and co-ordinate programmes very effectively. They have good subject knowledge and ensure learners are engaged and motivated. Learning provides effective, relevant knowledge and skills. Learners benefit from well-organised, fast-paced learning sessions which develop effectively technical knowledge and skills. In less effective sessions, the more able learners

have insufficient challenge. Learners receive good individual coaching in the training centres and at employers' premises. All learners undertake a satisfactory initial assessment, which identifies additional support needs. Assessors generally provide satisfactory literacy and numeracy support.

13. Staff plan purposfull and structured assessments well. Learners fully understand the scope of the assessment and the standards required. Assessors set particularly effective detailed short-term learning objectives. Good target setting acclerates learners' progress. Assessors are skilled in using effective questioning, without leading learners, to check knowledge and understanding. The use of a broad range of assessment strategies, such as case histories and professional discussions, meet the training needs of learners well. Robust internal verification secures consistently high standards of learners' work. Assessors make limited use of information technologies to assess training.
14. Reviews of learners' progress are generally good. Most assessors communicate information about learners' recent progress effectively to employers during regular monthly visits. However, learners are not always clear about the difference between reviews and assessment planning. In the best progress reviews employers are able to assess learners' progress against individual learning plans and milestones and contribute to planning workplace training. In less effective reviews, employers' involvement is restricted to signing off the completed review.
15. The provision meets the needs and interests of the users very well. Progression for learners is good. A good range of programmes enables learners to progress to higher-level qualifications within their subject and into higher education. An average of 85% of the accounting learners progressed to higher level qualifications over the last three years. Most learners make good use of training provided by employers, gaining professional body recognition and further professional development. Training centres provide learners and employers with a good range of modes of training . Assessment is flexible and responsive to take into account work pressures and working patterns. Babington deploys trainer and assessor teams well to meet individual learning styles, particularly for employers with large numbers of learners. The provider has promptly implemented new qualification changes with little disruption to learners.
16. Partnerships with employers are good. Babington has many longstanding and well-established relationships with employers to provide learners with effective training at work. Good links with employers and external agencies provide a high standard of employment and training opportunities for learners. Links with local schools and education and training providers are effective. Babington has recently given this a broader national priority. Good partnerships with local authorities ensure communities' needs have a high priority. The provider uses links with professional bodies effectively to update staff and learners.
17. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Assessors and tutors provide effective pastoral and on-programme support. Most assessors respond promptly

to email requests and respond well to additional coaching sessions and visit requests by learners. The assignment of workplace mentors improves support for learners. Staff provide satisfactory initial advice and guidance for learners to ensure that the programme meets their work role. Most learners have a good understanding of how their programme will support their longer-term career goals. Accountancy learners often receive useful, additional professional career advice from their employers and this helps them plan their progress to further training. However, not all learners receive timely advice about further programmes and a few are unsure about how further training could develop their career prospects.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

18. Babington has a clear vision for the development of its provision, which effectively supports both local and national priorities and its social responsibility strategy. Managers have supported staff well through the current organisational change. Senior managers have established a shared ambition among staff for consistently high quality training. All staff have a good appreciation of how their work role contributes to achieving performance targets. Staff training and development are good. Operational management is very effective. Internal and external communications are good. Babington appropriately uses data for operational performance reviews. However, review and evaluation to identify progress and future actions is not always comprehensive or effective.
19. Safeguarding is good. Babington gives safeguarding a high priority. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. The company keeps and monitors a detailed central record of CRB checks of staff. Babington places a strong emphasis on staff developing a sound understanding of safeguarding through training and discussion. Health and safety vetting of employers' premises is thorough and the company keeps appropriate records. However, it does not record near misses. Learners feel well protected during training and know whom to contact if they have a concern. All training takes place in an appropriately secure environment. Learners' good understanding of health and safety is appropriately reinforced throughout their programme. The recently introduced safe use of ICT strategy focuses well on the learning process.
20. Babington satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity. The provider's good use of partnerships engages hard to reach and under-represented groups. It has established an appropriate strategy to introduce young people to the benefits of training while working. Babington continues to explore constructive initiatives to resolve stereotypical recruitment and under-representation on programmes. The provider has satisfactory arrangements to protect all learners and staff from harassment, bullying and discrimination. Learners have an adequate understanding of their rights and responsibilities. However, learners do not benefit from systematic checking or reinforcing of their understanding at key stages of their workplace training. The provider does not sufficiently

analyse data at programme level to compare the achievement of different groups.

21. Babington satisfactory engages with users to inform decision-making and quality improvement. For example, it has made good use of learners' feedback to identify and respond to shortfalls in the quality of training centre facilities and ICT. The provider has identified areas for improvement in its feedback arrangements and recently introduced an improved user engagement strategy. The provider recognises that its implemented plans do not effectively capture users' views at all key points in the learning journey. Babington does not routinely request or analyse feedback from employers. Actions resulting from feedback the provider does not effectively communicate to users. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of proposed and recently introduced initiatives to rectify these problems.
22. Satisfactory self-assessment appropriately involves staff. The associated report is succinct and self-critical. The self-assessment development plan effectively drives improvements which clearly links to the achievement of strategic and operational objectives. However, too few targets are time bound or specific enough to aid effective monitoring. Quality assurance and improvement processes are adequate though these are not embedded effectively across all the provision. Babington supports and communicates well with its new accountancy subcontractor. Vetting of the subcontractor is very good. However, Babington has not fully implemented the comprehensive quality assurance of the training process.
23. Value for money is good. Overall success rates for most learners is high and has been consistently so for the previous three years. Babington has recently established an organisation structure to better meet its goals of improved efficiency and effectiveness. It has significantly improved training centre facilities and both learners and staff have benefitted from Babington's investment in ICT. However, the potential of newly introduced ILT staff have not fully exploited.

## **Information about the inspection**

24. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's learner support and quality 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 funding body, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. 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 the aim subject area the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**
**Babington Business College 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	955	955
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2	
<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?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*</i>	n/a	
<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?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
<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?	2	
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?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
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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