

Bridge Training Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50827

Name of lead inspector: Russell Jordan HMI

Last day of inspection: 14 October 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Bridge Training Limited (BTL) is a private training provider based in central Gloucester. It was established in 1989 and became a limited company in 2002. In January 2009 it moved to a new site. BTL provides Foundation Learning programmes funded by the Young People’s Learning Agency. It holds contracts with local schools to provide vocational learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11. This provision was not in scope for this inspection. Government-funded training accounts for around 80% of BTL’s income. In 2010/11 around 40% of learners were aged 17. Around half of these learners had literacy or numeracy skills at level 1, and around 40% of learners had achieved fewer than five GCSEs at grades A* to C or equivalent qualifications on entry to BTL. The majority of learners were male and around 8% were listed as of minority ethnic origin, a higher proportion than in Gloucester, a city with a population of some 600,000. Learners were on programme in eight subject areas, including construction, health and social care, motor vehicle engineering, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and information and communication technology. For these learners, some 50% of their learning aims were in the preparation for life and work subject area. Most learners follow courses in at least two vocational areas and have individual learning plans for each area of learning.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners: Foundation learning	315 learners

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 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	
Foundation Learning	2

Overall effectiveness

2. The overall effectiveness of BTL’s Foundation Learning programme is good and the provider delivers good value for money. Learners’ progression into further education or employment is good. Their achievement of qualifications has been below average, although each learner gains at least one qualification, and not all groups of learners achieve at the same level. However, the provider is taking appropriate steps to rectify these issues.
3. Enthusiastic teaching inspires learners to complete their qualifications and acquire new skills. However, teachers make insufficient use of the thorough initial and diagnostic assessment information to plan to meet learners’ individual needs. Opportunities for learners to acquire and practise literacy and numeracy skills in lessons in a vocational context are insufficient. Assessment feedback is supportive and encouraging but does not focus enough on ensuring that learners know what they need to do to improve their performance. These aspects contribute to frequently imprecise individual learning plans and target setting for learners, and insufficiently clear coordination of the elements of learners’ overall programmes. BTL works successfully with a range of partners to provide a curriculum that is broad and responsive to learners’ and partners’ needs. This assists learners’ progression into BTL and in their next steps into further education, training or employment at the end of their programme.

4. Excellent arrangements for safeguarding contribute to outstanding care and support for learners. BTL gives this support directly and, where appropriate, through working in close and highly productive partnerships with specialist agencies. Learners work together productively in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance towards others. The provider acts swiftly and effectively to challenge inappropriate attitudes or behaviour, and works well with partners to remove barriers to learning. However, teachers do not plan sufficiently well to promote and reinforce equality and diversity in lessons.
5. All staff are committed to improving the provision. The provider demonstrates a good record of improvement since the last inspection, and shows good capacity to improve the provision further. BTL's own quality improvement processes found areas for development which align closely with those found by inspectors. Self-assessment is highly evaluative and reliable but does not evaluate all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework in sufficient depth.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of learners moving into further education, training or employment has shown an improving trend over the past three years and is now good.
- The majority of learners are enrolled on several qualifications but the success rate for these has been below average. However, BTL is aware that many learners have been entered for more qualifications than they are able to complete successfully and has taken appropriate steps to rectify this area for improvement.
- BTL has taken effective action to close the achievement gap between male and female learners. Well-focused actions to improve the underperformance of white male learners have been implemented, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.
- Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory, although inspectors judged a significant proportion of lessons to be good in carpentry and motor vehicle maintenance. Inspectors found lesson planning to be too general, making insufficient use of the information arising from thorough initial and diagnostic assessment to ensure that lessons and individual learning plans meet learners' individual needs closely.
- Assessment feedback informs learners what they have done well, and is supportive and encouraging. However, it does not consistently provide sufficient guidance on how learners may improve their performance and contributes to imprecise target setting in individual learning plans.
- Opportunities for learners to acquire and practise literacy and numeracy skills in lessons in a vocational context are limited, reflecting insufficiently precise coordination of the elements of learners' overall programme through their individual learning plans.

- The range of qualifications is broad and responsive, meeting the needs and interests of learners and partners well. BTL uses information from a wide range of sources, including local labour market intelligence, consultation with learners and information from its extensive range of partnerships. The range of courses promotes strongly learners' transition into BTL and their progression into education or employment at the end of their programme.
- BTL uses partnerships well to meet learners' needs. For example, successful consortium bids have increased regional social inclusion by gaining funding to provide progression into apprenticeships in a local residential care home. Partnerships with schools, colleges and work-based learning providers have been successful in working with disaffected young people.
- Excellent safeguarding arrangements contribute to outstanding care and support for learners. From the point of recruitment and throughout their learning, BTL provides a very wide range of support for learners, either directly or by referring them to specialist agencies. Learners are very well supported by their tutors.
- The provider uses quality assurance and improvement processes well to improve the provision and outcomes for learners. Lesson observations give a reliable account of the quality of lessons but BTL does not use the information sufficiently to raise standards. The self-assessment report is a highly evaluative and reliable statement of the provider's strengths and areas for improvement, but it does not evaluate all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework in sufficient depth.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners work well together in a harmonious atmosphere of respect and tolerance towards others. The provider acts swiftly and effectively to challenge inappropriate attitudes or behaviour. However, teachers do not plan consistently well to promote equality and diversity and often miss opportunities to promote and reinforce these aspects in lessons.

What does BTL need to do to improve further?

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to improve qualification success rates and the underperformance of white male learners.
- Plan lessons to meet more effectively the individual needs of learners, taking into account the results of initial and diagnostic assessment and ensuring that all learners are set clear and challenging targets consistently.
- Share throughout the range of subject areas the good practice in giving constructive and developmental assessment feedback to learners, to ensure that learners are clear about what they need to do improve.
- Implement a more coherent and precise approach to the planning of individual learning with clear and achievable long-term and short-term targets, including clearer coordination of the elements of a learner's overall programme.

- Ensure that self-assessment provides judgements on all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework in sufficient depth to improve standards and quality in all areas.
- Train teachers and staff to ensure equality and diversity are promoted and reinforced more effectively and consistently in lessons.
- Re-observe formally and routinely the teachers of satisfactory lessons in order to raise the quality of lessons to a more consistent high standard.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the support of approachable tutors
- how the tutors make learning fun and enjoyable
- feeling safe and respected
- lots of individual attention in lessons
- the relaxed but professional atmosphere for learning.

What learners would like to see improved:

in a few instances:

- that their learning programmes should fit their requirements more precisely through better planning to meet their individual needs
- clearer links between literacy and numeracy work and their vocational courses
- leisure facilities and use of a social space at break times.

Summary of the views of partners as confirmed by inspectors

What partners like:

- strong partnership working for the benefit of learners
- excellent communication with the provider
- responsive development of new curricula to assist learners' smooth transition into the next stage of their learning
- the high levels of individual support and care provided to learners
- flexibility in timetabling
- the improvements made to facilities and in widening the curriculum for a broader appeal to learners.

What partners would like to see improved:

- there were none reported.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. Management action to improve outcomes for learners has been very effective, as is evident from the improved levels of learners' progression into further education and training. BTL is very responsive and takes swift action to tackle areas for improvement and uses learners' views well to improve the quality of provision. The provider has made good progress in rectifying most areas for improvement from the last inspection. Quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive and are improving the quality of provision. Self-assessment is mostly accurate and is highly evaluative. Lesson observation provides a reliable and accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement in lessons, and is valued by teaching staff. BTL has taken effective steps to develop opportunities for learners to experience the world of work during a period of turbulence in the local economy. However, the precision of target setting for learners remains an area for improvement from the last inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

7. Learners' progression into employment, education or training has improved over the past three years, and in 2010/2011 progression was good. Data supplied by the provider for the current year to date suggest that the improvement trend continues. The majority of learners move on to courses at the local further education college. Almost all learners take more than one qualification, some as many as seven, and all learners leave with at least one qualification. However, BTL recognises that too many learners were being entered for more qualifications than they would be able to complete successfully, and this is reflected in below-average qualification success rates. BTL has taken well-considered steps to rectify this issue, but it is too early to judge the impact of this change. Learners begin a short course when they first join the programme, providing them with a short settling-in period before they decide the qualifications they should take.
8. BTL is aware of differences in the levels of achievement of different groups of learners and is taking suitable steps to reduce achievement gaps. BTL has been successful in reducing the gap in achievement between male and female learners over the past two years. White males perform least well. The provider has put in place additional, individual pastoral support for learners on motor vehicle and construction courses, which many of the white male learners choose to take. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of this support on learners' achievement.
9. Levels of attendance are satisfactory for these learners. BTL has appropriate systems to monitor attendance and has suitably challenging targets. Learners enjoy their learning at BTL and are very positive about their courses. In construction and motor vehicle courses they use tools well and develop good

10. employability skills. Overall, the standard of learners' work is satisfactory, although in carpentry and motor vehicle workshops, inspectors saw good standards of work. Learners feel safe and work safely, showing appropriate awareness of the safe use of products used in hairdressing, for example, and the need to use personal protective equipment.
11. Many of BTL's learners contribute well to their local communities. They are encouraged to do voluntary work in, for example, Age Concern or animal shelters. BTL has arranged a number of fundraising events in which both learners and staff participate. Organisations benefiting from this include a local community association and Gloucestershire Nightstop.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Learners benefit from enthusiastic teaching that inspires them to complete their qualifications and acquire new skills. Teachers have a good rapport with learners, contributing to a very productive environment for learning. However, lesson plans and schemes of work are too general. They do not draw sufficiently on information about learners arising from thorough initial and diagnostic assessment to ensure that lessons meet closely the needs of individuals. Learning activities do not emphasise sufficiently the development in individual learners of confidence and self-esteem, or the importance of attendance. Teachers do not plan sufficiently well to take up opportunities in lessons in vocational subjects for learners to develop and practise literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment feedback is supportive and encouraging but does not always focus sufficiently on how learners may improve their performance. This contributes to target setting in learners' individual learning plans that is insufficiently precise to give learners clear next steps in their learning and to enable rigorous monitoring of their progress. The coordination of the different elements of a learner's individual learning plan is insufficiently clear.
13. BTL uses a range of information very effectively and works closely with a variety of partners to plan a broad and responsive curriculum. This meets the needs and interests of learners well and supports learners' progression into BTL and in their next steps into further education, training or employment at the end of their programme. For example, the provider runs six-week summer programmes to meet the needs of those learners moving on to college. Many learners come to BTL after having been excluded from school, having not met the entry criteria for another provider, or have been referred by a local further education college in order to continue their learning. Learners benefit from strong links with local work-based learning and college partners that allow them to progress to employment opportunities or further education studies.
14. Care and support for learners are outstanding and link seamlessly with excellent arrangements to safeguard learners. BTL deals very effectively with any issues that learners may have. The provider has strengthened processes still further during the past year, and the number of young people seeking assistance has

increased significantly. BTL gives this support directly where it can and refers learners to specialist agencies where appropriate. Learners feel very comfortable about speaking to their tutors regarding any problems that they may have.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

15. Leaders and managers are successful in promoting a culture of ambition, continuous improvement and responsiveness throughout the organisation, putting learners at the heart of what they do. The relocation to new premises has been managed well, enabling the range of provision to be extended. Restructuring has been successful in ensuring that the complementary skills of the senior management team are used well. Communication in BTL is good. Staff are well informed and the organisation is receptive to their views and ideas. They know what is expected of them and are well supported towards achieving their targets. Managers make good use performance data, of labour market information, the views of learners and of their extensive and successful partnerships to ensure that the provision improves and meets the needs of learners and other stakeholders, such as schools and local colleges.
16. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements have developed well since the last inspection and subsequent monitoring visit. They have had a significant impact on improving the provision and outcomes for learners. Rigorous auditing of processes relating to key aspects of the learners' experience has been introduced in the past year and is beginning to have an impact. Areas for development found through this process align closely with those found by inspectors. The self-assessment report is highly evaluative and is mostly accurate. It leads to clear actions for improvement, contributing to the comprehensive key performance indicators that are part of the provider's development plan. All staff participate in the self-assessment process and value the opportunity to do so. However, the self-assessment report does not evaluate all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework in sufficient depth.
17. Lesson observation is systematic. It provides a reliable and accurate view of the strengths and areas for improvement in individual lessons, and of the quality of teaching and learning in the provider as a whole. Lesson observation is valued by teaching staff in helping them to improve their professional practice, and links well to staff development and appraisal. However, the provider recognises that the teachers of satisfactory lessons should be re-observed formally and routinely, in order to drive up the quality of lessons. All teaching staff have either achieved, or are working towards, appropriate teaching qualifications.
18. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and contribute to a very safe environment for learners. BTL makes very strong use of partnerships with agencies and other providers to assess risks and to ensure that learners receive excellent support from the point of recruitment into BTL and throughout their training. All staff have been trained in safeguarding to an appropriate level and

this training is renewed annually. All BTL employees have had enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. Appropriate records are maintained. Staff and learners are strongly safety aware.

19. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Recruitment to the provider is highly inclusive of different groups of learners. Policies are clear for both learners and staff and cover relevant legislation. Arrangements to review and update policies are effective. The impact assessment of policy changes from an equality and diversity perspective is well considered and sensitive to learners' needs, although largely informal. BTL analyses routinely and systematically recruitment and learners' performance data to identify any potential gaps in achievement. Learners work well together in a harmonious atmosphere of respect and tolerance to others. The provider acts swiftly and effectively to challenge inappropriate attitudes or behaviour. However, teachers do not plan consistently well to promote equality and diversity and often miss opportunities to promote and reinforce these aspects in lessons.
20. Accommodation and resources are good, but social spaces for learners are lacking. Value for money is good, shown by the good outcomes for learners.

Information about the inspection

21. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's business 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
22. 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)
Bridge Training Ltd (BTL)
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

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	108	108
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
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>		
<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?	3	
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?	1	
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?	1	
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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