

Chiltern Training Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51149

Name of lead inspector: Jai Sharda HMI

Last day of inspection: 30 March 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Chiltern Training Limited (CTL), established in 1993, is a privately-owned company limited by guarantee. It provides apprenticeship training for the Children and Young People's Workforce. The company's early years provision has grown significantly since the previous inspection. CTL's provision in business administration, team leading and management and foundation learning was too small for inspectors to grade and report on separately. Most learners work in childcare settings in Berkshire and the south east of England. CTL has a contract with Thames Valley Skills Funding Agency for its apprenticeship provision.
2. The chief executive officer has responsibility for strategy and finance and the managing director for operational issues. Together, they lead the company's senior management team. CTL employs some 19 staff as tutors and/or training coordinators. Two staff provide additional learning support and four share a responsibility for admissions and welfare. Learning sessions take place at centres in Reading and Swindon and at employers' premises. Riverside Training, a subcontractor based in Spalding, Lincolnshire, trains 14% of CTL's apprentices. Government-funded training accounts for almost all of CTL's business.
3. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people belonging to a minority ethnic group varies from around 3% in West Berkshire to 34% in Slough and 13% in Reading, compared with a regional average of 5% and a national average of 9%. The proportion of school leavers who participate in further education or training is high, but the number of young people who are not in education, training or employment is rising, especially in Reading.
4. CTL provides training in early years and play work on behalf of the following providers:
 - Oxford and Cherwell Valley College.
5. The following organisation provides training in early years and play work on behalf of CTL:
 - Riverside Training (Spalding) Ltd.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<p>Provision for young learners: 14 to 16</p> <p>Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment</p>	<p>26 part-time learners</p> <p>16 part-time learners</p>
<p>Employer provision: National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in the work place Apprenticeships</p>	<p>162 learners</p> <p>589 apprentices</p>

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Early years and play work	2

Overall effectiveness

6. CTL is a good provider of work-based learning. Some aspects of provision are outstanding.
7. Most learners complete their apprenticeship well within the planned time. The progress of current learners is excellent. Although all learners do well, overall success for learners aged 16 to 18 is lower than for those aged over 19. Learners gain very good skills in early years and play work and many develop sufficient confidence and experience to work independently and to achieve a promotion. Learners feel safe at work and in the training centre.
8. Tutors plan off-the-job learning sessions thoroughly. They use good examples from their experience in the early years sector to illustrate the links between theory and practice in the workplace. In a few lessons however, especially at advanced level, tutors do not provide sufficient challenge for all learners. These sessions do not provide enough opportunities for learners to participate in challenging and interactive learning activities. Assessment is very good. Assessors are particularly effective in ensuring that regular and frequent assessment in the workplace contributes to the excellent progress that learners make.
9. CTL provides an excellent range of opportunities for learners at all stages in their programme. Learners progress well from one level to the next. The provider's excellent links with a wide range of early years employers provide

good opportunities for learners to work for high-quality employers who actively contribute to learners' development and welfare. CTL provides outstanding support for learners which helps them to stay on their programme and to achieve their qualifications.

10. CTL's senior managers provide high-quality strategic direction. They listen carefully to learners and employers to help make improvements. The company has high expectations of learners, staff and employers. Managers have worked very successfully to maintain the high standards found at the previous inspection.

Main findings

- Success rates are generally good and have improved in the last three years. However, success rates for advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18, although satisfactory overall, are lower than for those aged 19 or over. Current data indicate that most groups of learners are continuing to achieve well. Almost all learners achieve their qualification well within the planned period. Current learners' progress is excellent.
- Learners develop excellent vocational skills which their employers value. They gain in confidence and can articulate their achievements well. Many receive a promotion or gain additional workplace responsibilities. Learners demonstrate a wide understanding of early years care and play work. They behave impeccably in class.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors plan learning activities thoroughly. Lessons clearly identify the relationship between theory and workplace practice. Tutors skilfully use questioning and information and learning technology (ILT) to extend learners' understanding. In the few weaker lessons, tutors do not challenge learners effectively, especially at advanced level. Learners become restless because the work is too easy or insufficiently stimulating.
- Assessment is particularly good. CTL staff make good and frequent use of a range of relevant assessment methods in the workplace. Learners who need extra help receive additional assessor visits. Assessors respond promptly to requests for assessment from learners. Learners who use the electronic portfolio are well motivated and have a particularly accurate understanding of their progress.
- As a specialist provider of early years training, CTL offers learners a wide range of opportunities to gain experience of working in the sector. Progression from intermediate to advanced level is good. CTL's staff take swift actions to deal with any concerns raised by employers or learners. Assessors exercise discretion and flexibility to minimise disruption to the workplace when they carry out assessment visits.
- Partnerships are excellent. Employers speak very highly of the flexibility and professionalism of CTL's staff. CTL offers highly-valued opportunities for employers to attend early years workshops and training sessions. It runs regular and well-attended breakfast meetings for employers. CTL carries out effective

marketing work with schools to promote careers in the early years sector, especially for boys.

- Care, guidance and support for learners are outstanding. CTL offers excellent support for learners throughout their programme. Staff pay close attention to learners' individual needs. Many learners remain on their programmes as a consequence of this support. Information, advice and guidance are very good and help learners to make informed choices about careers and further study. Learners feel safe and safeguarding arrangements are good.
- The company's senior managers communicate well a very clear strategic direction to staff. Strategic and business plans promote high standards and set challenging targets and timescales. Training and development for staff are good. The company uses external consultants effectively to ensure that its staff are well trained and able to deal well with new challenges and responsibilities.
- The provider has an active equality and diversity committee. Actions to increase the number of male learners have been successful. High-quality promotional and marketing materials celebrate diversity and provide positive role models for groups under represented in early years. Senior managers analyse equalities data carefully to identify and reduce any gaps in performance between different groups.
- CTL makes good use of stakeholders' views to improve the provision. It carries out regular surveys of employers and learners and acts promptly to resolve any identified concerns. The provider has recently begun to make good use of learner focus groups to gain better qualitative feedback on how well the company is performing in the eyes of its customers.
- Self-assessment is a rigorous and inclusive process. Staff understand quality processes and procedures. Managers use data well to monitor performance. Quality improvement arrangements are well established. Improvement plans clearly identify the company's key strengths and weaknesses. Targets in the improvement plan, which managers regularly monitor, are challenging and realistic.
- CTL provides outstanding value for money. Many learners come to CTL with few previous qualifications or with a range of additional learning needs, yet overall success rates remain good. CTL's training centre is well equipped. The company contributes to sustainability by encouraging the use of electronic portfolios and promoting the application of communication technology to reduce staff travel costs.

What does Chiltern Training Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that actions taken to improve the relatively weaker performance of advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18 are applied robustly and monitored closely.
- Provide all learners, especially those on advanced programmes, with more challenging and interactive learning activities in order to extend their knowledge and understanding and achieve their full potential.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being given a chance
- the support, help and advice from CTL's staff
- tutors and assessors, who make learners feel welcome
- help in gaining a placement
- the good induction for learners
- CTL's prompt response to calls and enquiries
- going to college and sharing ideas with other learners.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the range of approaches to teaching and learning, so that sessions are more interactive
- the explanations provided by assessors of questions on worksheets
- the amount of one-to-one time with the tutor during classroom sessions
- the access to CTL's electronic portfolio software, so that learners can have their work assessed more quickly.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the long-established and productive relationship with CTL
- the very good communications with CTL's staff
- the regular network meetings where employers can discuss funding and available courses
- as an employer, being listened to and receiving prompt and appropriate responses from CTL
- the learner assessment and review process and receiving timely feedback on learners' progress
- the quality of support provided for learners who are struggling with the course
- the professionalism and flexibility of assessors.

What employers would like to see improved:

- support in using CTL's electronic software for portfolios so that employers can upload learners' work in order to monitor and support them better
- the length of notice that CTL currently gives to employers when it is about to run training courses.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

11. CTL has a good capacity to improve. Senior managers set a clear strategic direction and provide high-quality apprenticeship training that meets the needs of learners and employers well. Although the company has grown in size, it has maintained, and in some cases improved, the good quality of provision found at the previous inspection. Success rates are good for most groups of learners. The proportion of learners who complete within the planned period of study is very high. Current learners are making excellent progress. Managers have successfully tackled the main weaknesses found at the previous inspection.
12. Quality improvement arrangements are highly effective. CTL's managers know well the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Managers use data effectively. They use a wide range of information, including the views of staff and learners, to support judgements. The self-assessment process correctly identified the main strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors. Inspectors gave similar grades to those in the self-assessment report for most aspects of provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

13. Overall success rates for intermediate and advanced level apprentices are good and have improved steadily over the last three years for most groups of learners. However, success rates for the smaller number of advanced apprentices aged 16 to 18 remain only satisfactory. The provider has identified areas for improvement to tackle this relatively weaker performance and is taking appropriate action. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of these measures. The proportion of learners who achieve within the planned period of study is very high and considerably above national averages. Provisional in-year data indicate that current learners are making excellent progress towards achieving their qualifications. Written work is of a high standard.
14. Learners acquire excellent workplace skills. They work very competently with the children in their care to ensure that activities fully promote and support children's developmental needs. Learners develop confidence and good communication skills. Many gain promotion and take on additional responsibilities. Employers value the skills that learners gain. During class discussions, learners show very good understanding of a wide range of childcare issues and contribute insightful comments. Learners' behaviour is very good.
15. Learners feel safe. They are very well prepared for work and apply safe working practices. They understand the importance of risk assessment and keeping themselves and others safe when carrying out activities with children.

16. Learners have good knowledge and understanding to support them in making informed choices about maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Learners recently extended their understanding of health and fitness by participating in a culture and sport event organised by the local council. Speakers from the Swindon Outreach Sexual Health Partnership form part of CTL's external speaker network. Learners make a very good contribution to their community. They participate enthusiastically in fundraising events such as Comic Relief and Children in Need.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

17. Teaching and learning are good. In the most effective lessons, tutors plan learning activities thoroughly. They make good links between theory and workplace practice. They use questioning effectively to extend learners' understanding and knowledge. Learners are highly motivated and keen to make progress. They enjoy sessions and value the support of the well-qualified and experienced staff. In the few less effective lessons, learning activities do not provide sufficient challenge for all learners, especially at advanced level. In these lessons, learners become distracted, finding the work too easy and the activities dull.
18. Assessment is particularly good. Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods and they make regular visits to the learners' workplace. They make extra visits to learners who require additional support or who are at risk of falling behind. Assessors respond promptly to requests from learners requiring earlier assessment so that they can make more rapid progress. Those learners opting to use the electronic portfolio are highly motivated and know exactly how much progress they have made.
19. The regular reviews of learners' progress are of a high standard. Employers are fully involved, which significantly contributes to learners maintaining good progress. Tutors agree targets with learners so that they are clear about what they have to do to achieve particular units within challenging timescales. Assessors closely monitor these targets and share any concerns with tutors. However, assessors do not always sufficiently extend advanced apprentices' understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity during reviews.
20. The extent to which the provider meets the needs of learners and employers is outstanding. All the qualifications offered enable learners to progress in the early years sector. More than half of the learners completing the intermediate qualification progress to advanced level. Many learners receive promotion at work and develop sufficient confidence to carry out additional responsibilities. Employers comment favourably on the high-quality support and advice they receive from CTL's staff. Assessors carry out workplace assessments to ensure that no breach occurs of the required ratios of practitioners and children.
21. Partnership arrangements are excellent. CTL has long standing relationships with some 125 employers. Most comment very positively on the good working

arrangements. Many employers describe CTL as their 'first port of call' in connection with any early years training matter. CTL staff provide very good support for nurseries and pre-school settings through workshops which specifically meet their training needs, such as the 'excellence in the baby room' workshop and 'promoting learning development through displays' sessions. Employers receive very good support and information about changes to childcare qualifications. Staff from CTL visit a wide range of schools to provide information to pupils about careers in childcare.

22. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The admissions team at CTL provides excellent support from induction to completion of the qualification. Staff provide good support to meet the needs of individual learners. They closely monitor any agreed actions, which enables learners to remain on programme. CTL holds an annual information, advice and guidance week. Midwives, social workers and nursery managers provide inspirational talks and extend the employment possibilities for learners. Learners provide detailed feedback on these events, which CTL uses to plan subsequent activities.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. Directors and senior managers provide clear strategic direction which they communicate very effectively to staff. Three-year strategic plans, supported by annual business plans, demonstrate the organisation's clear ambition and understanding of the actions necessary to achieve high standards. Staff development is good. The provider makes good use of external courses and consultants to ensure that staff are well qualified for their current role and to take on increased responsibilities. Staff at all levels make good use of performance data to monitor the impact of changes in provision and to compare their performance with similar providers.
24. Safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearances, which CTL renews every three years. Four senior members of staff have attended designated officer training and all staff attend appropriate annual safeguarding training. Safeguarding awareness, particularly with reference to child protection, is good. Staff and learners understand reporting procedures and responsibilities. Senior managers have received appropriate training in safe recruitment.
25. The provider's equality and diversity committee, chaired by the managing director, scrutinises all aspects of the provision to ensure that equalities issues receive careful consideration in every aspect of the company's work. The provider has highly effective strategies to encourage male learners into childcare, including promoting the sector at job fairs, by running babysitting courses in schools and by pitch-side advertising at the local football stadium. Positive imagery in the provider's publicity materials and newsletters shows male learners and learners from different ethnic backgrounds working in care settings. The provider monitors performance data closely to identify and reduce gaps in achievement between groups of learners. CTL uses specialist external

consultants to carry out equality and diversity audits and to provide regular training for all staff. Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity issues through the early completion of the employee rights and responsibilities unit of their apprenticeship.

26. The provider actively seeks the views of employers and learners in order to improve the provision. CTL carries out regular surveys, including an employer exit questionnaire in addition to the questionnaire for learners when they leave a programme. The provider collects learners' views through innovative active evaluation by groups of learners, rather than the more traditional questionnaire survey of individuals. CTL responds promptly to users' views, for example the company has introduced additional evening classes and Saturday learning sessions for advanced apprentices.
27. Staff involvement in self-assessment is good. The process forms a key element of the thorough quality improvement arrangements. Quality improvement plans effectively tackle areas for improvement identified through self-assessment with clear, ambitious and realistic targets.
28. CTL provides outstanding value for money. Outcomes for learners are good, despite an open recruitment policy which accepts learners with low previous academic achievement, or with additional support needs, onto apprenticeship programmes. The provider has invested heavily in technology to support learning in its well-equipped training centre and encourages staff to use it effectively.
29. CTL has a comprehensive sustainability policy. It uses technology effectively to reduce travel and to promote the use of public transport. It encourages the use of electronic portfolios for their efficiency and to reduce impact on the environment. Staff monitor the consumption of energy in CTL's premises to reduce costs.

Information about the inspection

30. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four 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, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
31. 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)
Chiltern Training Limited

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	0	0	0
Part-time learners	404	13	391
Overall effectiveness	2	na	2
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	na	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	1		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1		
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	1	na	1
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?	1		
Leadership and management	2		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	na		
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?	1		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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