

Didac Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51550

Name of lead inspector: Diana Pinkney HMI

Last day of inspection: 14 June 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Woodwise Academy
Riverside
Crews Hole Road
Bristol
BS5 8BB

Telephone number: 0117 904 9377

Information about the provider

1. Didac Ltd (Didac) was established in Bristol in 1997 as a specialist training provider in the woodworking industry and, in 2010, set up its Woodwise Academy for off-the-job and specialist training. The company is run by three directors. Didac contracts with the south-west Skills Funding Agency to provide apprenticeships and other vocational training. Outside the scope of the inspection, Didac provides full-cost recovery training courses for a range of organisations. Approximately 57% of Didac's provision is publicly funded.
2. Of the current learners on a range of manufacturing technologies programmes in furniture, wood machining, woodworking and upholstery, 48 are intermediate apprentices and 13 are working towards qualifications in either furniture making or upholstery. A further six learners are undertaking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in occupational health and safety. Nine learners aged between 14 and 16 from a local work2learn initiative are following a level 1 vocational qualification in furniture.
3. In November 2011, Didac acquired another training provider's provision in warehousing, business administration, customer service, team leading and management. Currently, 115 learners are on apprenticeships in these areas, of whom 77 are on customer service programmes. This provision was sampled during the inspection, but was not directly inspected or graded.
4. Learners are located throughout England. Thirty learners are female and six have a declared disability. Most learners are aged 25 or over, 31 are aged between 16 to 18 years and 13 are aged 50 and over. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is 7%, compared with 9.1% nationally.
5. Didac does not provide training on behalf of other providers.
6. No organisations provide training on behalf of Didac.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: NVQ's in the workplace Apprenticeships	94 learners 57 apprentices

Summary report

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

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

Subject Areas	
Manufacturing technologies (wood machining, furniture and woodworking)	1

Overall effectiveness

7. Didac is an outstanding provider and has an excellent record of making highly effective improvements to its provision. Learners' achievements are outstanding and current learners are making very good progress. A very high proportion of learners successfully complete their apprenticeships in the time planned. They develop excellent practical skills in furniture manufacture and wood machining and quickly perform at a high level in their workplaces. Learners greatly enjoy their learning and take pride in the rapid development of their skills. They confidently use safe working in their learning and at work.

8. Most of the training is practical, taking place individually or in small groups. The training and the resources used are outstanding. The theory teaching very effectively supports learners' practical training. Learners particularly benefit from their trainers' excellent knowledge and experience of industry practice; they provide learners with highly constructive feedback. The individually planned programmes, and highly flexible arrangements for training and assessment, meet the needs of learners and their employers extremely well. Didac's excellent partnership working with employers strongly supports learners throughout their apprenticeships. Support for learners during their training through frequent workplace visits and for individual issues is very good. The range of programmes is highly relevant to learners' employment and career goals.

9. Management of training, learning and resources is outstanding. Trainers monitor learners' progress thoroughly. Arrangements for safeguarding learners and ensuring their health and safety are outstanding. Didac promotes equality and diversity well to employers and comprehensively to learners at their induction. Staff frequently seek learners' and employers' views on the provision and respond very positively by making improvements. Didac has a very strong culture of continuous improvement which staff implement particularly well. Integration of the company's recently acquired provision in business, administration and warehousing has been managed very successfully. Didac provides outstanding value for money.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Apprenticeship success rates are very high with almost all learners completing within the time planned. Current apprentices are making very good progress. Learners' success rates and completion within the time planned for NVQs in the workplace, and achievements on work-based unit programmes, are also very high. Learners greatly enjoy their learning and achieve exceptionally well.
- Learners develop and demonstrate very high levels of practical skills in furniture manufacture and wood machining. They progress quickly to making a significant contribution to their workplaces. Learners develop good social skills and a positive attitude to their learning. They take great pride in their work, the high quality of their performance and the excellent progress they are making.
- Learners feel safe and confidently use safe working in their learning and at work. They are very knowledgeable about the hazards within their industry. Learners respond particularly well to trainers' very high expectations for safety during practical work. Training very effectively reinforces best practice in safety. Trainers carefully monitor the safety of learners' workplaces and actively encourage high standards.
- Practical training and learning are outstanding, as are the resources used. Trainers have excellent knowledge of industry practice. Learners particularly benefit from individual or small group tuition and highly constructive feedback. Assessment is prompt and encourages progress. Trainers use interesting materials during theory teaching and plan well to support learners' practical work. Learners' development of skills and knowledge is outstanding.
- Training programmes are exceptionally well matched to the needs of learners and their employers. Their individual training needs are particularly well met through excellent planning and careful choice of specialist course modules. The range of programmes is highly relevant to learners' employment and career goals. Training and assessment arrangements are extremely flexible and suit learners' and employers' needs particularly well.
- Learners benefit significantly from Didac's range of highly effective partnerships, particularly with key organisations in the furniture, wood and timber industries and wood safety sector. Staff provide expert advice and guidance on best

practice and current regulations. Their promotion of health and safety is outstanding. Excellent partnership working with employers is highly effective in strongly supporting learners throughout their apprenticeships.

- Support for learners, particularly individual support provided during training and for individual issues, is very good. Learners receive very helpful advice and guidance on their career aspirations. Frequent workplace visits support learners very effectively. Staff monitor learners' progress thoroughly; however, they do not fully consider learners' progress in the context of their overall learning programme during progress reviews.
- Leadership and management are outstanding, demonstrating excellence within the company and wood trades industry. Leadership is open and inclusive. Strategic planning is very well considered; managers demonstrate a strong ambition to improve. Communication and operational management are excellent. Didac uses its management information system particularly effectively for decision making. Resources are outstanding and are managed exceptionally well.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are very strong and are given high priority. Didac has excellent arrangements to risk assess and ensure learners' safety and welfare. Staff work very effectively with employers to improve health and safety standards. Didac meets current government requirements for safeguarding well. Appropriate enhanced checks are carried out on all staff, who take part in suitable training.
- Didac's arrangements and commitment to promoting equality and diversity are good. Employers are strongly encouraged to adopt good practice. Didac has a good range of effective mechanisms to ensure learners are protected from bullying, harassment and unfair treatment. The company promotes equality and diversity comprehensively during learners' induction. However, trainers do not sufficiently reinforce learners' understanding during progress reviews.
- Engagement with users is outstanding in supporting and promoting improvement. Learners and employers are very effectively involved in planning the individually tailored programmes. Their views are frequently sought through workplace visits and also regular surveys. Managers and staff strongly focus on engaging with users and are highly responsive to users' views, particularly in promptly identifying and making effective improvements.
- Arrangements for quality improvement are good, supported by well-established quality assurance measures. Managers use data well to monitor performance and progress, and identify improvements needed. Their action plans for improvement are ambitious; they monitor and implement them thoroughly. Good practice is shared very effectively. However, observations of training do not focus sufficiently on the quality of learning and learners' attainment.

What does Didac Limited need to do to improve further?

- Include more focus on the detailed planning of learning and the reinforcement of equality and diversity during learners' progress reviews.

- Develop the processes and procedures for observations of teaching, training and learning, to include specific evaluation of learning and learners' attainment, with clear action plans for any improvements identified.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the comprehensive induction
- being able to upload their completed work onto an electronic portfolio
- learning while they are working
- the way the learning programme is carefully tailored to their work
- the very helpful and skilled trainers
- the additional visits made by the trainers to help them complete their qualifications
- the very high quality of the practical training
- the opportunities to broaden their workplace skills to improve their job prospects.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more detailed information about their overall progress.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way the training programmes are tailored particularly well to meet their needs
- the flexibility of the learning and training
- the very good communications with Didac staff
- the assessors' high level of skills and expertise
- Didac staff's knowledge and understanding of the sector
- that the tailored training helps to plan their company's future requirements
- the excellent health and safety advice provided by Didac
- that Didac staff are highly effective and reliable.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the clarity of information about details of learner progress.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

10. Since the previous inspection, Didac has very successfully established and maintained an excellent record of sustained improvement. Managers set and meet ambitious targets to improve outcomes for all learners. They have developed a very strong culture of continuous improvement and appropriate priorities to raise standards for all users. Learners on manufacturing technologies programmes consistently achieve high success rates and almost all complete in the time planned. Whilst it is too soon to judge outcomes for the recently acquired provision, these learners are making very good and improved progress towards achieving their learning goals. Didac has managed the integration of this provision exceptionally well and used the merger very effectively to review and improve all the company's programmes.
11. The processes for self-assessment and quality improvement include thorough consideration of users' views. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and the self-assessment report is clear, self-critical and accurate. The quality improvements identified from the previous self-assessment have been implemented well. Staff are highly committed to improving the provision and their own practice; they are very well supported in this by managers, their colleagues and through staff development. Didac has an appropriate management structure and sufficient staff and other resources to carry through its plans for improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

12. Learners' achievement and enjoyment are outstanding. Success rates for apprenticeships are very high and consistently well above national averages, as are completions of the apprenticeship frameworks within the time planned. All the current apprentices are making very good progress. For NVQs in the workplace, the overall trends in learners' success rates and completion in the agreed time are very high and significantly above national averages. Learners on the recent work-based unit programme all achieved. Learners greatly enjoy their learning, both at Didac's academy and in the workplace. Learners from different groups achieve equally well.
13. Learners demonstrate very high levels of practical skills. They progress very well and quickly make a positive contribution in their workplace. Learners take pride in their work and the excellent progress they are making. They develop confident hand and machine expertise, displaying high levels of competence in their test pieces. Learners communicate confidently with their trainers, colleagues and customers. They focus well on producing high quality performance, including maintaining and setting up complex machinery.
14. Learners feel safe and confidently use their knowledge of safe working practices in the workplace. Very careful attention is given to health and safety at the

academy and in the workplaces. Training continually reinforces best practice and current legislation. Learners are very well informed of the hazards associated with the furniture and wood industries. Trainers ensure that learners work in a safe environment through careful monitoring.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

15. Practical training and learning are outstanding and form the major part of all the furniture and wood programmes. Training resources are outstanding with a well-designed and very well-equipped workshop at the academy. The company's website provides a comprehensive range of resources for learners. In the workplace, learners train in well-organised manufacturing areas and furniture/joinery workshops. Didac trainers are vocational experts and have excellent knowledge of industry best practice and current regulations. Learners benefit greatly from their individual or small group tuition. Learners' development of industry skills and knowledge is outstanding. Trainers use demonstrations very effectively to instruct learners. Learners are quickly involved in practising techniques under careful supervision and receive highly constructive feedback. Theory teaching is well planned to support practical training. Trainers use well-illustrated and interesting materials to support the linked practical work very effectively. However, in some theory sessions not enough use is made of questioning to explore learners' understanding thoroughly.
16. Assessment is accurate and encourages very good learner progress. Trainers are highly effective in enabling learners to link theory and practice, and reflecting on their performance. Learners receive prompt and very helpful assessment feedback. Target setting resulting from frequent trainer visits to learners in the workplace very effectively focuses learners on the next steps in their learning. Initial assessment accurately identifies learners' individual needs, which are very well met. The monitoring of learners' progress is thorough.
17. Training programmes are exceptionally well matched to the needs of learners and their employers. Didac specifically designs highly suitable training programmes for learners' individual circumstances. Learners' retention rates are high. The range of programmes provides learners with a choice of qualifications and progression routes that are particularly relevant to their employment and career goals. Arrangements for training and assessment are extremely flexible and suit learners' and employers' needs particularly well. Staff are very skilled in working with employers to ensure the programmes are closely tailored to their requirements.
18. Learners benefit significantly from Didac's range of highly effective partnerships, including its role in the development of new programmes for the wood and timber sector and the promotion of wood safety. Didac's established partnership with a local education group is providing valuable opportunities for learners aged 14 to 16 to sample the sector and gain a vocational qualification. Excellent

partnership working with employers is highly effective in supporting learners during their apprenticeships.

19. Care, guidance and support for learners are good, particularly the individual support provided during practical training sessions; the company provides very good support for learners' personal issues. Staff provide very good advice and guidance using their expert knowledge of the industry to help learners achieve their career aspirations. Learners have frequent and regular workplace visits from their trainer and good access to them for guidance and support between visits. Visit reports effectively record the work covered and planning for the next visit. The twelve-weekly progress reviews are thorough and benefit from effective employer participation, but do not always place sufficient emphasis on considering the learner's detailed progress against planned training.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

20. Senior managers demonstrate outstanding leadership within the company and the furniture, wood and timber industry to raise standards. Strategic planning is very well considered and provides clear direction. Senior managers led the recent transition of provision and staff from another provider exceptionally well. The open and inclusive leadership generates a high degree of trust and strong ambition to improve. The management of the outstanding resources is exceptionally effective. Staff training and development offer very good opportunities which staff value highly. Communications are excellent within the company and staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. The company uses the management information system particularly effectively for monitoring the provision and making sound management decisions.
21. Didac gives a very high priority to safeguarding and health and safety. It has excellent arrangements in place for risk assessment and ensuring the safety and welfare of learners. Staff work very effectively with employers to ensure safe and secure working practices. Health and safety training is particularly good for staff and learners. Didac meets current government requirements for safeguarding well. Policies and procedures are comprehensive and easily accessible. The company has effective systems in place to record and respond to incidents. A senior manager has the nominated responsibility for safeguarding. Staff take part in suitable training and appropriate enhanced checks are carried out on all staff. Didac has suitable arrangements to support e-safety in the centre and raise awareness of cyber bullying.
22. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are good. Policies are comprehensive and linked to appropriate procedures. Didac's staff receive suitable initial and refresher training. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to protect learners from bullying, harassment and unfair treatment. Learners fully understand how to complain or raise concerns, and staff deal with these promptly and effectively. Staff check employers' equality arrangements and work hard to raise the importance of equality in their recruitment practice. Managers analyse data thoroughly to identify any differences in the progress

and achievement of particular groups of learners and to set and monitor targets for recruitment of under-represented groups. Didac has successfully increased its recruitment of female learners. Promotion of equality and diversity at learners' induction is comprehensive; however, the subsequent reinforcement of equality and diversity is insufficiently planned and recorded throughout their programmes.

23. Didac's engagement of users to support and promote improvement is outstanding. Learners and their employers are very effectively involved in planning the tailored individual training. Staff develop particularly productive relationships with learners and employers, enabling improvements to be quickly identified and implemented promptly. Learners' and employers' views are routinely surveyed and responses are carefully analysed to identify and make improvements. Managers and staff strongly focus on engaging with users and are highly responsive to their views in identifying and making effective improvements.
24. Didac has highly effective processes for monitoring performance, with well-established quality assurance arrangements. Managers analyse data on performance and progress and use the findings particularly well to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. Their action plans for improvement are clear and ambitious. They closely monitor progress towards achieving planned improvements. Internal verification is rigorous and developmental. Good practice is shared very effectively within the company. Managers carry out observations of training; however, these mainly focus on the quality of teaching and/or training and not sufficiently on learning and learners' attainment.
25. Didac provides outstanding value for money through the very good quality of its resources and careful consideration of the views of users regarding their suitability and availability. Success rates are very high and learners develop excellent skills. Didac has developed a highly effective environmental policy, ensuring efficient recycling, productive use of waste products and otherwise unwanted materials.

Information about the inspection

26. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by one of the provider's directors, 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.
27. 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)
Didac 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	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	182	13	169
Part-time learners			
Overall effectiveness	1	1	1
Capacity to improve	1		
Outcomes for learners	1	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1		
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?	1		
<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>	-		
Quality of provision	1	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	1		
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>	-		
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?	1		
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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Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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