

# Bexley Youth Training Group trading as Skills for Growth

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		8-12 October 2012
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- Overall success rates, especially for adults and on advanced programmes, are good.
- The development of employability and personal skills through enrichment activities and additional qualifications is good.
- Enthusiastic staff have high expectations and support learners' progress in developing their employment and vocational skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment provided by tutors to coach, mentor, encourage and support learners are good.
- Leadership is strong with a learner-centred approach.
- Performance management is good and leads to high success rates.
- Very effective operational management drives quality improvement.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The whole organisation approach to developing English and mathematics is not sufficiently coordinated and the corrections to spellings in lessons, assessments and marked work are not carried out as a matter of routine.
- The pass rates in English and information and communication technology (ICT) functional skills require improvement.
- Too few teaching methods are used to stretch and challenge more able learners.
- The promotion of wider equality and diversity themes is insufficient in some lessons.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Establish a whole organisation approach to developing English and mathematics skills and include procedures outlining an agreed approach for the correction of spellings in lessons, assessments and marked work.
- Implement strategies to improve English and ICT functional skills, similar to those applied to mathematics.
- Develop a broader range of approaches to stretch and challenge more able learners in class including the use of open questions.
- Promote wider equality and diversity themes in all lessons to maximise opportunities to explore and extend learners' knowledge and understanding and draw on the broad diversity of staff and learners to include their heritage, experience, cultural and religious perspectives.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Success rates are good and improving for learners on apprenticeship programmes. Three out of four apprentices achieve their framework within planned timescales, well above national rates for all providers. Advanced apprentices have considerably better success rates than those on intermediate programmes. Learners in early years and administration perform better than those in hairdressing, especially at advanced level, and all areas are above national rates by at least three percentage points.</li><li>■ Two out three apprentices are aged 16 to 18 and the majority follow business administration programmes. Adult learners achieve very high success rates, especially those aged over 25. In early years, a high proportion of learners completes within agreed timescales. A strategic change in the organisation of programmes has recently improved attendance rates. Apprentices attending off-the-job training have very high attendance rates.</li><li>■ Progression rates for foundation learners are good; however, pass rates in English and ICT functional skills require improvement. Progression into employment for advanced apprentices is high; in 2011/12, just over half of all leavers progressed to either a higher level of study or into apprenticeships and employment; however, too few destinations of leavers are captured.</li><li>■ Learners display a positive attitude to learning and many have a clear idea of their future career path. A clear curriculum progression route accommodates different levels of social and academic ability. The standard of work is mostly good.</li><li>■ Across all programmes, males achieve better than females, although they represent only one in six of all leavers in 2011/12. White British learners make up three quarters of all learners and those from a Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi heritage are successful and all achieve their frameworks.</li><li>■ Learners develop a very good range of employability and personal skills. A strong emphasis placed on understanding rights and responsibilities and the centre environment create a good ethos which prepares learners for employment. Skills for Growth offers good opportunities for learners to gain additional skills and qualifications, for example a commercial sponsor funds training in specialised software.</li><li>■ Learners benefit from enrichment activities that develop their cultural awareness, for example a local partnership with the Women's Asian Project enables them to become well-being champions and an engaging newsletter produced by learners provides a forum for them to share interests and debate topical issues. Some learners use course projects well to try out</li></ul>	

entrepreneurial ideas or fundraising activities. All learners express high levels of satisfaction and enjoyment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Enthusiastic staff set high expectations of learners to achieve qualifications by extending their knowledge and skills through a range of engaging courses and apprenticeship programmes. Learners' and apprentices' high success rates reflect Skills for Growth's expectations.</li><li>■ Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners benefit from well-planned lessons and flexible assessments which are highly participative in theoretical sessions, practical workshop settings and their workplaces. Early years learners receive very good flexible off-the-job training opportunities to support their needs which include Saturday provision.</li><li>■ Highly qualified staff check learning effectively using good teaching techniques such as peer group work. They stretch, coach, motivate and challenge learners who enjoy their learning. However, the content of lessons does not always challenge some more able learners. Hairdressing apprentices benefit from coordinated training in their salons that enhances their practical abilities.</li><li>■ Initial assessments and diagnostic testing are good, comprehensive and robust in identifying learners' starting points to build a profile for teachers or assessors ready to plan individualised learning from their induction onward. Swift action to establish additional learning support for foundation learners, or apprentices requiring extra help on a one-to-one basis and continued monitoring, is effective in helping learners attain new skills.</li><li>■ Progress reviews are good, informing learners and focusing on their progress. Good communication of any causes for concern effectively involves partners, parents and carers to bring about necessary changes. However, attendance and punctuality measures agreed with learners are not always successful.</li><li>■ Verbal and written feedback are good, identifying what learners and apprentices have done well in highly encouraging progress reviews, in lessons and through marked work. Feedback is frequent and links together to form a plan for learners to support their progress in achieving their short- and long-term goals. Targets are well defined and time bound, identify further improvements necessary and inform learners how to accomplish the improvements.</li><li>■ In early years provision, spellings are checked in lessons and on marked work; however, in the majority of other subjects teachers carry out insufficient checks on spellings. The Foundation Learning handbook text is too difficult for learners with low literacy skills levels.</li><li>■ Skills for Growth offers good information advice and guidance to learners by providing a range of activities, open events and taster sessions linked through professional referral services, for example outreach activities to provide timely information on course offers and progression routes. Taster sessions and inductions prepare learners effectively and appropriately.</li><li>■ Early years learners receive good promotion of equality and diversity in lessons and progress reviews, exploring wider equality themes effectively. Hairdressing, administration and foundation learners are able to voice these wider themes when required due to their participation in answering such questions during assessments or reviews. However, naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity in lessons are not realised by teachers and are subsequently under promoted.</li></ul>	

## Early years and playwork

### Apprenticeships

Good

- Learners make good progress, develop good vocational skills and successfully complete their apprenticeship frameworks, which is why success rates are high and above national rates for all providers for both intermediate and advanced apprentices. These have been high for the last three years with all learners completing within their agreed timescales. Staff set challenging targets for learners and have high expectations of them.
- Activities and tasks set in lessons enable learners to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject studied. Learners are purposefully engaged in lessons, when demonstrating competency at work and during progress reviews. Skills for Growth staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic, which learners appreciate.
- Good on-the-job training enables many learners in good quality settings to develop stimulating and challenging activities for young children in their care. Staff they work with are supportive and helpful and settings offer a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Teachers plan lessons well, with clear and comprehensive coverage of the subject. Assessors and teachers are knowledgeable and vocationally experienced. They are able to relate theory to practice well, helping learners make links between what they do at work and in the classroom.
- Very good support is given to learners by assessors and teachers, including specialist off-the-job support, for example in mathematics. The needs of learners and employers are met well through provision such as the Saturday off-the-job sessions, flexible assessment and the introduction of the electronic portfolio.
- Progress reviews are effective in monitoring learners' progress and identifying concerns highlighting any learners at risk of disengagement. Very good contributions are made by workplace supervisors and nursery managers.
- A good rapport is established between assessors and learners, and activities and discussions are recorded well with outcomes shared with all parties. Good questioning techniques are used by assessors which result in learners very ably exploring their roles and responsibilities.
- Assessment plans are thorough and detailed enabling learners to identify clearly what will be observed or what they are expected to do. Good assessment practice clearly identifies what learners do well and what they need to do to improve. Records are appropriate and verbal feedback clear. Learners understand the process and use feedback well.
- Assessors are flexible and adaptable, maximising opportunities to accredit competency through good, holistic assessment despite, in some instances, challenging circumstances. At advanced level, learners make a good contribution to the planning process. The use of technology is good, for example digital voice recorders, for those learners using electronic portfolios.
- Learners are aware of the next steps in their learning and opportunities to develop their careers; however, this is not systematically discussed with learners until towards the end of their training.
- Teachers provide helpful plans to meet the differing needs of learners in lessons. Learners are aware of equality and diversity which are promoted during progress reviews. The content of lessons maximises opportunities for learners to explore cultural and religious practices with interesting tasks and activities for learners to research and to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

## Hairdressing

### Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and have led to improving success rates. Intermediate and advanced apprenticeship rates are above national rates for all providers and are now high.
- Teachers have good specialist knowledge and expertise. They are highly motivated and act as good role models for learners. Some have progressed from their apprenticeship with Skills for Growth into industry and are now back working as trainers.
- Apprentices enjoy their lessons. Teachers use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and carefully plan activities that develop, challenge and motivate learners. Lessons focus on improving learners' personal development and employability skills, such as client consultation and the level of practical skills expected by employers.
- Training in the workplace is good. Employers are committed to training and learners benefit from the opportunity to practise their skills and assessments on a wide variety of clients. Most employers have designated in-house training and some have their own qualified assessors contributing to the learners' experience.
- Learners make good progress; many complete their course early and most advanced apprentices progress into employment. Regular curriculum audits identify learners who are not on target to complete and additional support is implemented swiftly. Learners appreciate this support and soon get back on target.
- Training is flexible and planned to meet the needs of learners and employers. Learners can attend the training centre one day each week or on a flexible basis, for example some learners have all their practical skills training in the workplace. Advanced apprentices plan their training and assessment to meet the needs of their work commitments and these learners are encouraged to progress and become assessors themselves.
- Well planned practical lessons are held at Skills for Growth training salons and assessors provide good support in planning assessments. However, in some practical sessions, the importance of wearing personal protective clothing is not emphasised.
- The assessment process is fair and rigorous with time-bound targets agreed with learners. Feedback is constructive and focuses on the early achievement of units of the vocational qualification and the development of learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Learners' progress reviews in the workplace are thorough. Reviewers communicate well with learners and employers, and targets set during reviews focus on learners progressing swiftly through their programme. Feedback provides clear direction for improving performance.
- Key skills are integrated into vocational lessons with additional support for English and mathematics given by specialist trainers. Apprentices enjoy the way teachers relate these skills to work and make them relevant to situations that they will encounter in their professional and social life.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well during learners' workplace progress reviews and lesson plans identify opportunities to develop their understanding. However, these opportunities are not always taken and, in those lessons where these occur naturally, teachers place insufficient emphasis on equality and diversity to improve learners' awareness.

## Foundation Learning

Good

- Good quality teaching and sensitive, responsive support prepare learners well for progression to further education, training or employment and progression is good. Achievements in mathematics and employability awards are satisfactory. English functional skills attainment is low, however.
- Teachers place a good focus on developing learners' employability. They make good use of visits to and from employers, making particularly productive use of both real and mock interviews to identify learners' individual areas for development.
- Learners enjoy learning and participate enthusiastically. Sessions are well prepared with teachers ensuring, in the main, that learners work together cooperatively. In a minority of sessions, however, management of group activities does not ensure that all learners are included.
- Teachers introduce challenging themes of interest and relevance to learners. A discussion about gangs resulted in lively and critical debate which extended to international affairs and which clearly improved learners' confidence in these skills.
- Staff are well qualified to carry out their roles and bring very useful life experiences which much enhance their interaction with learners who have a range of personal and social barriers to learning. Information technology resources are adequate and used well, although classroom accommodation, while well maintained, is too cramped for the size of some groups.
- Initial assessment of learners' English, mathematics and social skills is good and the results inform learning plans. Progress reviews are well documented and supported by contact sheets recording any issues which may arise between reviews.
- Written feedback on assessed work is supportive and identifies what learners need to do to improve. However, no clear strategy is in place to inform the marking of spelling errors or ensure the accuracy of grammar in learner-focused materials.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive appropriate guidance on entering the programme. The induction booklet is clear and contains relevant information, although some text is too complex. Staff know the learners very well, act promptly when problems occur, and involve parents, carers and external agencies when necessary.
- Staff plan well to ensure that learning materials match the different literacy and numeracy levels of learners. Resources are stimulating and used well to maintain learners' interest. In most cases, learners work very well together, are mutually supportive and tolerant of each other's views. The use of naturally-occurring opportunities to deepen learners' awareness of the ethnic diversity of the local area is good.

## Administration

### Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching and learning are good and strategies are successfully redressing the differences in success rates on apprenticeship programmes where advanced learners' success rates are high and intermediate learners' success is in line with national rates. Progression to employment is good and many learners obtain permanent positions on completion of their training.
- Learners enjoy learning and participate with enthusiasm. Lessons are well planned and prepared, involving a variety of work-related activities with teachers ensuring that learners



work together cooperatively. Detailed schemes of work clearly signpost opportunities for learners to develop key skills in a work-related context.

- Staff encourage learners to work hard, make progress and achieve. However, in some lessons inspectors found some unnecessary repetition of work for learners who have progressed from intermediate to advanced levels, and insufficient use of questioning techniques to check learners' understanding and stretch and challenge them all.
- Staff are well qualified to carry out their roles and use their vocational experience to support and enrich learning. Learners benefit from high-quality work placements where they develop their confidence and entrepreneurial skills and extend their knowledge and understanding of the vocational area. Learners take on extra responsibilities at work to develop their skills further.
- The development of independent learning skills is effective. For example, learners are confident in carrying out professional, well-researched presentations about the organisations they are working for, which extend their knowledge as well as developing work-related skills. Learners' information technology skills are good, particularly in work settings where learners are required to use new software, and in the classroom where ICT is used for research projects and presentations.
- Assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow awarding body requirements effectively. Regular progress reviews involving the learner, assessor and employer record targets and identify areas for improvement. Learners have the opportunity to develop additional vocational skills through gaining supplementary qualifications.
- Feedback in class activities and on assessed work is supportive and identifies what learners need to consider in order to progress. Learners are set short- and long-term targets. However, at intermediate level these targets are sometimes too broad and give insufficient guidance on steps learners must take to achieve the specific goal. In a few cases, insufficient attention is given to learners' existing skills and knowledge, particularly at advanced level.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive appropriate guidance on entering their programmes. Learners speak highly of the support they are given and particularly enjoy the In Touch programme as part of advice and guidance. The clearly-presented induction booklet promotes equality and supports diversity. Teachers know their learners well and plan for their individual needs in teaching sessions.
- Skills for Growth very successfully widens participation, enabling learners who have previously been disengaged from learning owing to their negative experiences at school or college to take part.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

**Good**

- Leadership and management are good. The Chief Executive Officer, along with good support from senior management, demonstrates strong leadership in managing the recent merger of two organisations effectively and maintaining good success rates overall that are improving in most subjects.
- Managers are ensuring that harmonisation of the two organisations takes place very effectively. Good and open channels of communications ensure staff are kept informed throughout what, at times, has been a challenging period of transition.
- Operational management is good, with an effective learner-centred approach and good management of subject programmes, including improved structure and delivery of the Foundation Learning programme.
- Senior managers have an effective hands-on approach, with good prioritisation of actions to ensure a strong focus on the learner and their achievement. However, due to the priority

given to operational management, delays have occurred in developing a formal strategic plan and developing a new overall structure that meets the needs of the merged organisation.

- Performance management is good, with good focus on a range of key performance indicators, as well as strong and decisive action taken to manage staff performance, including effective disciplinary action where required.
- Managers use data well to monitor success rates, as well as financial and contract performance. Staff and managers have a good understanding of targets, and carry out regular reviews of team and individual performance at meetings and one-to-one supervisions, with clear action planning to address any shortfalls in performance.
- The Board of Trustees has good involvement in the organisation and a good awareness of performance and other matters. Members have wide experience and use their partnership links well to support Skills for Growth. A successful partnership exists with a local academy to improve the provision of hairdressing training for school pupils and apprentices.
- Skills for Growth has good links with a variety of employers, who confirm good working relationships and support, and some large employers attend the training centres to provide employability training for young learners.
- The management of teaching and learning is effective. Staff have a good range of formal qualifications in teaching, training and assessment. Some staff have attended functional skills training, and further training is currently being planned for other staff, as well as provision to raise skill levels in aspects such as coaching skills, use of interactive whiteboards and ICT.
- The internal observation of teaching and learning generally provides accurate feedback and development planning for staff, including training, induction and reviews. However, the process is not yet fully established and further training is required to improve aspects such as the use of interactive learning technology.
- Quality improvement arrangements are generally effective and managers use quality improvement plans well to set clear objectives, carrying out regular reviews and updating plans. Internal quality audits are very effective in identifying issues within specific programmes, leading to effective action planning and subsequently improving success rates.
- New quality assurance policies and procedures are currently awaiting board approval, but mechanisms for obtaining learners' and employers' feedback are not sufficiently advanced. Although most staff have a good understanding of self-assessment, and are involved in the process, a few have insufficient awareness.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners and risk is managed appropriately. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall, with a good ethos in the organisation that supports learners effectively.
- Systems for monitoring performance are well developed and used effectively to identify learners at risk of disengagement; however, managers carry out insufficient analysis of outcomes by other factors including gender, ethnicity and social needs. There has not yet been sufficient analysis to identify any shortfalls in participation and achievement.



## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Bexley Youth Training Group trading as Skills for Growth

<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	Apprenticeships	Foundation Learning
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	2	2
Outcomes for learners	<b>2</b>	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>2</b>	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>2</b>	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Hairdressing</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Foundation learning</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>2</b>

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	85	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	146	61	69	75	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	23							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

## **Additional socio-economic information**

Bexley Youth Training Group trading as Skills for Growth is a charitable organisation established for more than 20 years, mainly operating in Bexley and neighbouring London boroughs. It mostly provides apprenticeships for young people aged 16 to 25. Skills for Growth merged in December 2011 with Landmark Training based in Stratford, East London, which had mainly offered Foundation Learning for 16 to 18 year olds. A Chief Executive Officer leads the newly merged organisation supported by a Board of Trustees. It operates from three sites, two in Bexley and one in Stratford.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Rosy Belton HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the Chief Executive Officer as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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