

Develop (trading name of Bedfordshire & Luton Education Business Partnership)

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		20–24 January 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
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:

- Nearly three-quarters of learners starting with few or no qualifications and lacking in confidence, go on to further education courses at a higher level, or employment, after their programme.
- Learners develop good vocational and employability skills during their programme.
- Most learners who take functional skills tests in mathematics and English at level 2, pass them.
- The provider makes sure that learners attend regularly and punctually.
- Staff have high expectations of learners, and provide appropriate support so learners feel safe to raise their expectations and increase their efforts.
- There is a wide range of supportive work placements available to suit each learner's needs and interests.
- Strong leadership is driving substantial improvements.
- Strong and effective partnerships ensure that the curriculum is well matched to local and national employment opportunities, and individual learners' starting points.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough teaching and learning is good or better.
- Mathematics and English are not developed well enough. There is not enough thoroughness in correcting learners' English, and there are too many spelling and grammatical errors in materials produced for learners. Some trainers miss opportunities to talk about mathematical concepts and English usage while developing vocational skills.
- A thorough system for improving teaching and learning through observation and professional development has not yet been established.
- Good practice in teaching and learning is not effectively shared.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve all teaching and learning by:
 - checking learners' understanding more thoroughly so that tutors know when they can move on
 - breaking tasks down into sections learners can understand more easily
 - planning how to make the best use of support staff so that learners making slow progress can keep up with the lesson.
- Improve the development of English and mathematics by:
 - making sure tutors' mathematics and English skills are good enough for them to be able to support learners confidently and accurately
 - insisting on learners taking note of the corrections made to their work
 - improving the quality control of documents produced for learners to use
 - raising tutors' awareness of the importance of maximising naturally occurring opportunities to reinforce mathematics and English skills in vocational and employability training sessions.
- Implement the planned system for improving teaching and learning through observations linked to professional development and performance management.
- Develop systems to share the good practice of better tutors, with others who lack expertise or confidence.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- A high proportion of learners achieve their learning goals and gain qualifications, despite their low starting points with few or no qualifications and initially negative attitudes to learning. The proportion who succeed has increased steadily over the last three years, and is now high. The qualifications learners take have become more demanding. A far higher proportion took functional skills tests in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2 last year, and passed, than in previous years, when more learners were sitting tests at entry levels. Most learners make good progress in their learning sessions and enjoy learning, although a small number have trouble managing their behaviour and become disruptive. Learners develop good employability skills, including timekeeping, taking responsibility, working in groups and communicating. They also develop good vocational skills in a variety of areas, including childcare, care of the elderly, retail, beauty, business management and information technology.
- The provider has developed comprehensive methodologies for collecting and analysing data. It is well aware of the narrowing achievement gaps, both in progression at the end of the programme, and in qualification success rates, between its three largest ethnic groups – white British, Bangladeshi and Pakistani learners. The provider has carried out careful and regular analysis for example of achievement by gender, and of which learners come from areas of particular disadvantage, to make sure there is no significant difference between other groups of learners. Managers now produce regular reports for discussion at board level.
- Over the last two years, the number of learners sitting functional skills tests has increased considerably. In both English and mathematics last year, the level two learners were more successful than those taking tests at lower levels. A small number of learners completed functional skills in ICT last year for the first time, with some success. Some learners are able to

take other additional qualifications, for example health and safety at work. Learners are required to use reflective journals, and are able to discuss, evaluate and apply what they have learnt. Information technology (IT) learners use live blogs in place of the journals.

- Most learners move on from the programme into further education or employment. The proportion last year at 72% was lower than the previous year, but the number of learners is larger. Just over half go on to a college course at level 2 or above. Virtually all of the learners on the advanced IT specialist course are expecting to go on to university locally. The numbers entering apprenticeships have been consistently low over the last three years, and the provider is in discussion with its local provider network and the National Apprenticeship Service about introducing a project to improve access to apprenticeships.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good teaching, learning and assessment contribute to the high proportion of learners who go on to employment or further education.
- Staff motivate learners to improve their attendance through a wide range of incentives, such as free gym sessions, driving lessons or football trials. Most sub-contractors supply breakfast clubs, some provide transport for learners to sessions and many offer free lunches. Supportive and well-matched work experience placements encourage learners to develop employability skills.
- Most tutors engage learners through lively sessions with interesting and employment-related learning activities. For example in one session, learners analysed the levels of customer service they received following visits to a range of fashion and confectionery shops. In a mathematics lesson, learners developed their understanding of mean and range through a careful analysis of reasons for distortion in data. The advanced IT tutor's high expectations of learners motivates them to work to professional standards, for example in coding. In the weaker sessions, tutors do not always check learners' understanding sufficiently. Some tutors allow themselves to be monopolised by more needy learners, while others sit and wait. Tutors do not always plan how support staff are going to be used effectively, so they just drift about the room.
- Initial assessment identifies learners' English and mathematical development requirements thoroughly. In one centre, staff use initial assessment very well to determine support for learners' behavioural, educational and emotional needs. However, in another centre, personal and social development needs are not assessed at the start of programmes, so progress is not clear. In the intermediate level IT programme, too many learners have started on the course without sufficient levels of literacy to manage it, resulting in slow progress and frustration for the learners. Learners' targets generally provide appropriate challenge. However, some targets are too general. For example, one learner was asked to catch up on all work not yet completed.
- Regular assessment of written and practical work, including comments on their learning journals or blogs, helps learners understand their progress. In a mathematics session, the tutor assessed learners' prior knowledge through a card activity where learners could identify what they knew, what they didn't know, and what they needed help with. The tutor explained the links between initial assessment, diagnostic assessment and individual learning plans very clearly, so that by the end of the session, learners had a good understanding of what they needed to do to improve and could relate this to their own learning plans.
- Some learners experience much more effective support for developing English and mathematics than others. In the most successful lessons, tutors used well-designed and paced activities to stimulate learners' interest. For example in a mathematics lesson, learners used a spidergram to agree aspects of fundraising to be included in their calculations. In an English lesson at the end of the day, the tutor maintained energy levels by encouraging learners to move about the classroom in response to questions. In other sessions, tutors successfully integrated English and mathematics into vocational lessons, such as through comparing notes taken during a beauty

therapy session, and through the interpretation of train timetables. In the less effective lessons, insufficient planning means more able learners do not get a chance to stretch their English and maths skills fully and slower learners do not complete work on time. Comments on learners' work show some tutors' inability to match subject and verb, capitalise or use the apostrophe appropriately. Some tutors demonstrate inaccurate spelling while commenting on learners' work or while writing on the board.

- Initial advice and guidance fully informs learners of their options on study programmes. Potential learners have a good understanding of what is on offer and receive clear direction when they start their programmes. Some sub-contractors use the National Careers Service specialist support well.
- Staff attitudes encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect amongst learners. Learners involved in community development and volunteering projects effectively develop social and cultural awareness. Staff make very good role models, many having progressed through non-traditional training routes and experienced barriers to progression themselves. However, tutors do not always plan well enough to include appropriate topics within lessons, and sometimes miss naturally occurring circumstances to reinforce equality and diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, just 16 months ago, improved leadership and management have produced a positive step change in the work and progress of Develop. The new acting chief executive officer (CEO), in close partnership with directors and staff, has taken prompt and successful action to address the key areas for improvement. There is work still to do, particularly in relation to quality improvement, but outcomes for learners and teaching, learning and assessment are now good. Develop and its partners continue to promote their clear and ambitious vision to work in the best interests of disadvantaged learners and to move them forward towards employment. Develop has managed the transition from Foundation Learning to Study Programme well and sensitively, and has used the momentum to introduce other changes. Internal and external stakeholders all speak positively about the significant, and enhanced, positive impact of Develop within the network of arrangements to help disadvantaged learners. Through courses for learners, strategic and operational groups, projects, funding bids and piloting of ideas, Develop has a significant presence in joint working with local authorities, schools, colleges and government agencies. It also contributes its valuable experience gained from wider learning related activities, outside of the scope of this inspection.
- Directors continue to maintain good oversight of the performance of Develop and work closely with the CEO and managers, providing strong challenge and support. In contrast to the situation at the previous inspection, they now give high priority and attention to the quality of the training programmes. They receive well-conceived and reliable data and other reports, enabling them to overview learners' success and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Directors have a particularly good range of relevant work and life experience which they use in the best interests of Develop. A purposeful and enthusiastic management team work well together, and with their teams. Staff know what is expected of them and feel well supported by managers. They are passionate advocates for the work of Develop. Subcontractors value the quality of work with Develop and feel that they are well supported.
- Performance management of Develop's own staff, and their professional development remain good. Lesson observations have led to reviews of teachers' performance and to their improvement or departure from the provider. However, such a systematic approach has not yet been used across the subcontractor network, where too much teaching and learning is not yet good. At the time of the inspection, Develop was about to introduce a new package for lesson observation and associated teacher development. Since the previous inspection, lesson

observations have not been sufficiently or consistently carried out and too many teachers working for subcontractors have not been observed by Develop for some considerable time. There has not been enough sharing of good practice between sub-contractors.

- Develop's assessment of its own strengths and weaknesses, and those of its subcontractors is sound. As part of its work to improve the consistency and application of quality arrangements it recognises the need to engage subcontractors better. Action planning for improvement is clear and suitably challenging. The most recent self-assessment, covering the year 2012/13, is clearly structured and accurately graded.
- The highly inclusive nature of Develop and its work pervades all it does. It systematically reviews key aspects of equality and diversity promotion. The work of the equality and diversity forum is particularly valuable. It analyses equalities data thoroughly and investigates any achievement gaps it identifies. Staff training is good and Develop has recently been awarded the level 2 Investor in Diversity award. Inspectors found occasionally that tutors missed opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons.
- Develop rigorously implements its very thorough safeguarding arrangements for learners. The proactive and team approach of managers and other staff is evident. A comprehensive and up to date single record of DBS checks is maintained. Staff training is good and up to date. Induction, for staff and learners, covers safeguarding well. Health and safety is well managed and secured and fully embraces the work of subcontractors. However, not all tutors reinforce health and safety requirements for learners using computers – some learners slouch at their desks, with their screens wrongly adjusted and their keyboards and mice poorly aligned.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Develop (trading name of Bedfordshire & Luton Education Business Partnership)

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability Training	2

[illegible]

Contextual information

The provider has two centres, branded as First Place Training, one in Bedford and one in Dunstable. Through these two and its subcontractor network, it offers training to disadvantaged learners in Luton and throughout Bedfordshire. It also has a centre in Norwich which has been recently established in response to local need.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jane Shaw HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four 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 relevant 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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