

# Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>18–21 February 2014</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider requires improvement because:

- No provision has yet been made for the development and assessment of functional skills.
- The performance management system does not yet monitor key quality assurance processes including the observation of teaching and learning. Measures to improve the evaluation and quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet been effective.
- Tutors do not check apprentices' understanding enough in theory lessons which sometimes slows the pace of learning.
- Short-term target setting is too vague, and does not give apprentices clear aims to work towards.
- Apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity is still superficial and not reinforced well in reviews or training sessions.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- The recent increase in the number of apprentices who complete their qualification within the time allocated, to well above the national average.
- The good use of training staff's skills and experience to develop apprentices' knowledge and technical skills.
- The close attention to the changing needs of employers in the industry.
- The careful and individualised support for apprentices to help them find and keep employment.
- The open and honest self-assessment report, demonstrating the organisation's self-knowledge and readiness for improvement.

## Full report

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

- Make arrangements for learners who need the functional skills qualifications, to be able to sit examinations as soon as they are ready.
- Develop tutors' and assessors' ability and confidence to coach apprentices in English, contextualised to the needs of their industry and their future employment.
- Establish and maintain reliable quality assurance systems for the whole of the training process, including one for observing teaching learning and assessment.
- Link the observations of teaching, learning and assessment to the staff development programme, so that tutors and assessors are helped to improve where necessary.
- Maintain the pace of learning in theory lessons by more accurate checking of all apprentices' understanding.
- Ensure that short-term targets set for apprentices, whether in theory lessons, assessments or reviews, are specific, measurable, achievable and challenging. Make sure that employers or supervisors are involved in setting and monitoring apprentices' targets.
- Train staff in equality and diversity issues as they apply to the industry, so that they are confident to develop apprentices' understanding through relevant and meaningful discussions.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
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- Success rates have improved significantly over the last year, and are now better than the national average for the qualification. Over 70% of apprentices complete their programmes within the time expected. However, the company's internal data suggests a slight decline in the current year.
- The standard of apprentices' technical work is good. They quickly develop useful industry standard work related skills and complete complex tasks with the minimum supervision. For example, one apprentice successfully installed light-emitting diodes (LED) spotlights and data cables meeting the high standards expected by the assessor and the employer.
- Those who are now completing their qualification also had the chance to develop their English, mathematical and ICT skills at the beginning of their qualification, through working on a key skills portfolio. However, current apprentices in the first three years of the qualification are not working on a similar portfolio. The qualification requires apprentices to develop mathematical skills as they progress, but there are no arrangements yet in place for them to develop their English and ICT skills, or to achieve functional skills qualifications if they do not have GCSEs at grade C or above.
- Attendance on block release programmes is good at nearly 95%, but on day release programmes, it is less so at 87%. Each cohort is made up almost exclusively of young white men. There are no significant achievement gaps.
- Employers provide extra training as it is required, for example on working on scaffolding. The provider offers extra training commercially, with a discount for apprentices on completing their programmes. Apart from the lack of functional skills, apprentices develop employability skills such as taking responsibility, independent thinking and customer awareness. For example, at Allied Bakeries, an apprentice electrician was quick to understand the enhanced hygiene requirements for a food production setting, which meant using stainless steel for conduits instead of plastic, and minimising the number of joins.

- On completing their apprenticeships, most apprentices continue their employment as qualified electricians. Anecdotally, a significant proportion of apprentices go on to establish their own small businesses and send their own apprentices to Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd (BET), but the company has not yet established formal arrangements to collect and analyse information about what happens to apprentices after they leave.

## The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Although overall success rates have improved recently, there remain some significant aspects of the provision, which are in need of further development.
- In the better theory sessions, teachers make good use of their own workplace experience in order to clarify what is being taught. As a result, apprentices make good progress in grasping new concepts and techniques and become familiar with best practice across the industry. For example, in one lesson, the teacher explained how he had needed to fix a problem with a domestic shower, which resulted in the cold water supply being heated and the customer receiving low level electric shocks. Apprentices were able to analyse the possible causes and apply their knowledge to identify a range of possible remedies. Apprentices develop their ability to work with a minimum of supervision well.
- In those sessions which require improvement, insufficient checking of apprentices' understanding takes place or lessons lack sufficient variety to stimulate the interest of all apprentices. As a result, apprentices make insufficient progress. For example, in one lesson a teacher spent much of the time reading a presentation aloud without using either questioning, discussion or any other techniques to test apprentices' understanding.
- Improved arrangements for conducting initial assessment this year ensure that newly-recruited apprentices possess the English and mathematical skills to be able to cope with the demands of the programme. Staff also help apprentices to prepare their curriculum vitae or improve their interview skills. However, trainers do not use the findings from initial assessment to set individualised targets for apprentices. As a result, apprentices' progress is inhibited by a lack of specific, measurable and challenging goals. An electronic system for recording evidence of competence has been introduced this year for first year apprentices and for some other apprentices who have been making slow progress, but for too many apprentices, targets are expressed simply in terms of completing a certain percentage of their logbook by a certain date.
- Arrangements for the assessment of apprentices' work are mostly effective. Assessors use a wide range of assessment strategies and these are recorded well in the electronic recording system. For example, on one visit, an apprentice observed best industry practice in fitting lights by disconnecting the mains supply and double-checking for live wires before correctly wiring and sheathing earth cables. He was assessed appropriately and the evidence was recorded well. However, assessments are not planned in advance and assessors rely on those opportunities which present themselves during their visits. Due to the length of the programme the lack of assessment planning has not had an adverse impact on overall progress.
- First-year apprentices manage their electronic portfolios well and they benefit from prompt feedback on their performance. However, the quality of feedback is not consistently high, as a significant minority of apprentices do not receive clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their future work. Too many errors in punctuation and grammar are left uncorrected.
- Apprentices receive very good support from qualified and experienced staff within the classroom and the workplace, which enhances their knowledge of the requirements of working in the industry. Tutors extend apprentices' mathematical skills confidently, to meet the demands of the qualification. However, they do not do the same for apprentices' English skills. Inspectors found

little evidence of the development of either English or mathematical skills during workplace reviews or assessments.

- Apprentices benefit from clear advice and guidance, which ensures that they are on the right programme and that they understand the needs of the industry. BET makes significant efforts to find suitable apprenticeships for apprentices, which enable them to practise their skills. A greater adherence to entry criteria is having a positive impact on overall apprentices' progress.
- Apprentices' behaviour in all parts of their training programme is good. They demonstrate considerable respect for their peers and their teachers, share ideas well and help one another. However, assessors and teachers do not promote equality and diversity sufficiently well in training sessions or reviews. Staff do not plan how apprentices could better understand the needs of a diverse range of customers they might encounter at work. During reviews a series of prepared questions are used to test apprentices' understanding but staff accept superficial answers without probing or challenge.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Directors have a clear view of how they want to improve the quality of the programme they offer. Over the past two years, they have made significant changes, particularly to the training team and tutors. A focus on industry experience as well as teaching experience gives the team credibility with apprentices. However, recent staff changes have meant that planned improvements such as the introduction of functional skills and a performance management system have not yet taken place. A new electronic portfolio and apprentice monitoring system, developed in conjunction with the awarding body, means trainers and employers can see easily the progress an apprentice has made on their programme, and whether they are at risk of falling behind. However, this is not yet being used to monitor all aspects of the apprentices' programmes such as reviews.
- Staff development plans record that some staff have substantial formal day release training programmes being supported. However, there is no link between the system for observing teaching and learning and the staff development arrangements. Managers have identified that further improvements are needed to the arrangements for observing teaching and learning, but these have not yet been implemented. The system lacks thoroughness, relevance and completeness. The previous tutor manager had introduced a timetable for some observations to be carried out, but the plan did not include all trainers, and has not been kept to. No internal observations were carried out in the three months before the inspection, although one tutor was observed by his college as part of his professional development. Notes of previous observations show that identical, general feedback was given to two new assessors. The space for commenting on functional skills has been left blank in internal observation reports.
- Considerable work has been done to establish a meaningful self-assessment process. The most recent report uses data well to support its evaluation of the provision. It shows a good awareness of the company's strengths and areas for improvement, although some of the strengths it claims are no more than normal practice. The company is aware of the improvements that need to be made, but recent staff changes have caused delays to the programme. Managers have improved the initial assessment process and use of its findings, and also the self-assessment process. They have also introduced much more detailed and easy to use monitoring systems to make sure apprentices, their trainers and their employers know where they are on the programme. However, the quality improvement plan and internal meeting notes do not show appropriate action planning to improve the quality of the provision, particularly with regard to providing functional skills support and assessment and improving apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity issues. There is no reference to other known improvements needed from the last Ofsted report and included in the self-assessment report, such as improving the system for observing teaching and learning and improving target-

setting at reviews. The quality assurance arrangements have not been strong enough to identify when planned improvements have not been put in place.

- Directors established the company over twenty years ago, to provide an alternative to college training for electrical contractors in the West Midlands. Employers found that college courses did not meet their needs for training their apprentices, and wanted an alternative that would offer practical training in the workplace as well as classroom theory. Directors have developed the provision since then, in discussion with employers, to ensure that it continues to meet their needs. For example, to reflect recent and anticipated changes in the industry, it is developing training in photovoltaic installations, and in fitting charging points for electric cars. The company is unusual in offering a choice of block- or day-release, to meet the needs of different employers. Many of the employers with whom they work started their careers as BET apprentices.
- The company has not been successful recently in recruiting young women, or apprentices from minority ethnic groups. It has offered well-received careers sessions in girls' schools, but this has not produced any applications. In previous years, it has had a small number of successful female apprentices.
- BET's arrangements for safeguarding apprentices meet statutory requirements and it manages any potential risks to apprentices appropriately. All staff have recently completed safeguarding awareness training. Managers and staff instil in their apprentices an appropriate appreciation of the importance of health and safety in their chosen profession.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Building Services</b>	<b>3</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 129							
	Part-time: 24							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	John Sims							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	November 2012							
<b>Website address</b>	www.birminghamelectricaltraining.co.uk							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	91	38	N/A	N/A		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Full-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Part-time</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None.</li> </ul>							

## Contextual information

Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd (BET) is a private company founded in 1991 to train electrical installation apprentices. Most apprentices start straight from school at 16 or 17. Birmingham's unemployment rate is high at 11.9%, compared with the national average of 7.7%. However its schools are now performing marginally better than those in the country as a whole. The percentage of pupils who gained grades A\*-C in at least five GCSEs including English and mathematics is just higher than the national average.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Jane Shaw HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by one of the directors 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 apprentices' 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 apprentices 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 area 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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