

# Dimensions Training Solutions (DTS) Limited

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		24–28 March 2014
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement - 3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory - 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:

- Intermediate hairdressing apprentices' success rates have improved steadily over the last three years and are now close to the national rate. The proportion of advanced hairdressing apprentices' who achieve their framework remains low, despite recent improvements.
- Teaching in hairdressing does not sufficiently meet the apprentices' individual needs. Too few practical sessions in Dimensions Training Solutions (DTS) Limited academies have sufficient clients and products to enable apprentices to make good progress.
- Tutors do not make good use of opportunities in hairdressing training to develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills and show their relevance to salon work.
- Tutors are not developing apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity in training sessions and progress reviews.
- Staff development activities and individual support have not led to sufficient improvements in teaching and learning in hairdressing. Data from internal observations do not identify areas for further staff development and improvements.
- Judgements in the self-assessment report are too descriptive and not supported by sufficient evidence, resulting in quality improvement plans that lack detail and specific targets.
- Arrangements to evaluate the quality of hairdressing and salon-based customer service apprenticeship programmes do not lead to actions that improve the quality of the provision.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- The majority of apprentices develop good work-related skills. These enhance their employability and career opportunities. Progression into employment and further training is high.
- Apprentices and their employers value the flexibility to start training at any point in the year. Those on hairdressing apprenticeships benefit from the choice to be trained and assessed either in their workplace or at one of the DTS academies.
- Apprentices benefit from good quality learning on business programmes and the new health and social care programmes.
- In 2012/13, most business apprentices achieved their framework.

## Full report

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

- Increase success rates by ensuring that all apprentices have specific targets and make good progress in all aspects of their programmes.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by further developing hairdressing tutors' teaching skills and providing them with more, high-quality learning resources.
- Develop hairdressing tutors' knowledge and confidence so that apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills and apply them in work-related activities.
- Provide staff development activities and resources for tutors on business and hairdressing programmes to help them discover ways to include relevant equality and diversity topics into learning activities and progress reviews so that apprentices understand how these topics relate to their work.
- Improve the collation and analysis of data from observations to identify improvement trends and areas for further staff development.
- Improve the quality of the self-assessment report so that judgements are evaluative, supported by sufficient evidence and result in an increased pace of improvement.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Action taken by managers to reduce the proportion of hairdressing apprentices who leave their programmes early without completing their apprenticeships has been effective. Both intermediate and advanced apprentices' success rates have improved but remain below the national rates and require improvement. The majority of apprentices across the provision develop good work-related skills that enhance their employability and career opportunities.</li> <li>▪ DTS data for 2013/14 indicate that the retention and success rates of intermediate and advanced hairdressing apprentices have improved.</li> <li>▪ Success rates were high in 2012/13 for the few apprentices on the subcontracted programmes in management, team leading, customer service and advanced administration apprenticeships. The small number of intermediate administration apprentices performed less well.</li> <li>▪ Apprentices' achievement in functional skills is good. Most apprentices who entered functional skills examinations at level 1 and level 2 in 2013/14 achieved the qualification on the first attempt. Hairdressing apprentices use their English and mathematics skills confidently at work in tasks such as booking appointments and calculating ratios when preparing hair colouring products.</li> <li>▪ No discernable gaps exist between different groups of learners. Apprentices in receipt of additional learning support achieve at a similar rate to those not in receipt of support. The few apprentices from minority ethnic groups achieve at a similar rate to other apprentices. In 2012/13, the small number of male apprentices achieved better than females.</li> <li>▪ As a result of good monitoring and prompt follow-up of absence at academy sessions, apprentices' attendance has improved and is good. Reasons for absence are recorded for trend analysis and evaluation. However, the same arrangements are not in place for attendance at the DTS activities in apprentices' workplace salons.</li> <li>▪ Progression from apprenticeships to further and higher study and employment is good. To date in 2013/14 leavers' destinations divide almost equally between full-time employment and full-time further education or training. Destination data are recorded and include reasons for those apprentices leaving before completing their programme.</li> </ul>	

- In 2013/14, DTS increased its apprenticeship provision by offering intermediate customer service apprenticeships and intermediate barbering apprenticeships to hairdressing apprentices who had completed their apprenticeship and work in a salon. The increased choice of salon apprenticeships gives hairdressers the opportunity to take further and higher qualifications that complement each other and enhance their work-related skills.

### **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The few apprentices on business programmes and health and social care apprenticeships benefit from good or better quality teaching, assessment and progress reviews. This reflects the apprentices' good working practice and the high success rates on business programmes.
- Apprentices benefit from employment in a wide range of good employers, across South, West and North Yorkshire that enable them to develop good workplace skills. Most employers are highly supportive of their apprentices and provide time at work for training, assessment and reviewing progress. Tutors are responsive to individual apprentices' needs and work patterns by offering flexibility in arranging visit times for training, assessment and progress reviews. The visits offered can include evening and night appointments.
- All apprentices benefit from the good subject knowledge and industry specific expertise of their tutors and assessors. For example, health and social care tutors ensure their apprentices have a thorough understanding of their employment rights and responsibilities. Business tutors integrate English and mathematics well into discussions about work-related specialist skills.
- Most apprentices receive good individual coaching by tutors visiting their workplaces or in the DTS hairdressing academies. Business and health and social care tutors are well organised and highly knowledgeable about the apprenticeship and qualification requirements as well as the apprentices' work roles and responsibilities. They set clear objectives for activities, check apprentices' learning regularly and conduct sessions in a calm focused manner that is highly conducive to learning. The needs of individual hairdressing apprentices are not always planned well enough in group sessions.
- Assessment practice is good. Assessors prepare apprentices well for assessment. Apprentices are able to produce appropriate evidence of their knowledge and skills, linking work-related activities well to qualification requirements. A variety of appropriate assessment methods is used and verbal feedback is constructive and clear. Written feedback is too often too brief to help apprentices fully understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance varies for different programmes. Good examples include the presentations and reference handouts given to prospective intermediate hairdressing apprentices, including learners on study programmes. Health and social care apprentices receive good guidance on progression routes and career options. Intermediate hairdressing apprentices are less well informed about the choices between the new salon-based customer service apprenticeships, compared to the advanced hairdressing apprenticeship.
- Functional skills tutors use the results of initial and diagnostic assessments well for determining apprentices' starting points for the development of their English and mathematics skills. However, the quality of apprentices' individual learning plans and the targets set in these do not always use details of their prior attainment or employer's training plans effectively.
- Apprentices receive information about equality and diversity during their induction at the beginning of programmes, but do not find this memorable. Health and social care apprentices benefit from the ways the tutors include relevant equality and diversity topics into learning activities and reviews, which helps them to understand how these topics relate to their work. Other programmes do not include relevant equality and diversity topics in learning activities or well enough so apprentices understand how these topics relate to and influence their work.

**Hairdressing  
Apprenticeships**

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. It reflects the further improvement needed in hairdressing apprentices' success rates to ensure they rise above national rates. The majority of apprentices are developing good work-related skills and work well within their teams in busy, high-quality salons.
- The majority of employers provide regular salon training and a minority offer additional, useful training opportunities, such as manufacturers' seminars and specialist courses. Good practice in the better work-based training sessions link commercial requirements well to apprenticeship training and assessment, as well as extending apprentices' skills to high standards.
- Since 2013, following requests from apprentices and employers, the majority of apprentices have all their DTS training and assessment in their salon workplaces. The salons are well-resourced high-quality practical learning environments whereas DTS academies have insufficient clients and products.
- DTS is flexible and adaptable in supporting their apprentices and employers, who value having a choice of start dates throughout the year. Recently, when a few apprentices complained about being unable to concentrate on theory work in sessions held at their salons, due to interruptions to attend to salon duties, DTS arranged for them to return to attending academy sessions.
- DTS tutors provide good individual coaching to apprentices in both the academy and their salon workplace training sessions. In practical sessions, apprentices learn from useful demonstrations by their tutors, who have good commercial hairdressing skills and work-related experience. For example, hairdressing tutors use graphics well to show the angles of haircuts, but apprentices do not fully understand the relevance of mathematics to cutting accuracy as this is not sufficiently explained. A key issue at the academies is that even when tutors plan sessions to include clients, too often not enough or no clients attend, consequently apprentices cannot complete client consultations and NVQ assessments.
- Theory sessions require improvement. Tutors explain effectively the technical aspects of hairdressing and complex terminology but occasionally information is inaccurate. Too often, there is insufficient planning to meet apprentices' individual needs and tutors' questioning does not sufficiently check apprentices' learning.
- Assessment practice is fair and now occurs more frequently. DTS assessors now visit apprentices' workplace salons at least monthly. Assessment planning with apprentices is thorough enabling apprentices to understand fully the assessment criteria. Verbal feedback is constructive and useful, but written feedback does not have sufficient detail to remind apprentices about what to do to improve. Internal verification is adequate. However, internal verifiers are not providing their assessors with guidance on how they can improve the quality of their written feedback to apprentices.
- Progress reviews are satisfactory and have improved. They are carried out more frequently and are well recorded. Employer involvement in reviews is inconsistent; where it is weak apprentices' progress is slow as they miss opportunities to improve their specific skills or complete assessments at work. Targets set for apprentices are too vague and do not have sufficient detail about what needs to be done, by when and with support from whom, in order for the apprentices to progress well.
- Initial assessment and diagnostic assessment are appropriate in identifying apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics. Additional support identified is not always organised quickly as there are not enough staff. The impact of this on apprentices' progress and success rates is not evaluated.
- Functional skills teaching in mathematics is good but the specialist support for English is weak. The few intermediate apprentices who have achieved their level 1 functional skills progress and study level 2. The hairdressing tutors provide insufficient support to their apprentices to help them improve their English and mathematics skills.

- Information, advice and guidance require improvement. Prospective intermediate hairdressing apprentices benefit from detailed pre-enrolment information but they are not informed fully about the variety of progression opportunities.
- Planning for the delivery of equality and diversity topics is weak and does not develop apprentices' understanding of relevant issues. Discussions at progress reviews are too brief to be useful and relevant to salon work.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Both DTS and subcontractor staff have suitably high expectations for their apprentices. This is reflected within the majority of supportive employer workplaces where apprentices develop good work-related skills.
- Managers have implemented a number of strategies to rectify the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Newly introduced management-information reports allow senior managers to more accurately forecast DTS's and its subcontractors' recruitment, retention and expected success rates. A more systematic audit of staff performance combined with regular individual meetings identifies those apprentices falling behind their achievement targets. Tutors compile 'cause for concern' registers that identify apprentices needing specific help, and early interventions are set in place as a result. Although success rates have improved too many apprentices do not achieve in the planned time. DTS assessors have re-instated salon visits to complete on-the-job hairdressing assessments.
- The curriculum range has been extended since the previous inspection by the well-researched introduction of good subcontracted provision, which meets local community and business needs.
- Staff are suitably qualified and vocationally experienced. Staff development is not always planned well enough to best support staff in being prepared for changes and new demands. For example, hairdressing tutors have only recently completed English and mathematics assessments to identify the support they may need to improve their own skills in order to help their apprentices better in developing English and mathematics skills linked to hairdressing activities. Staff development has not sufficiently helped business and hairdressing tutors to have a good understanding of ways to relate relevant equality and diversity topics into learning activities and reviews so that apprentices understand how these topics relate to their work.
- Management of the subcontracted provision is satisfactory. It includes frequent audits and good communication. DTS invites subcontractor staff to external staff development activities, but the impact of development activities on apprentices' learning experiences is not evaluated. Not enough good practice is shared across the three organisations to improve the quality of the programmes for all apprentices.
- DTS has improved its teaching and learning observation process by increasing the frequency of observations and the range of learning activities it reports on. A considerable number of observations take place with most staff observed two or three times a year to capture their diverse activities. Observation records make suitable evaluative judgements but some grades are inflated. Staff whose observed sessions are judged satisfactory or below are mentored prior to re-observation. Managers do not systematically collate and analyse the grades and themes emerging from observations to inform actions for improvement.
- Self-assessment is an appropriately inclusive process, but requires improvement to be more useful in supporting timely implementation of quality improvements. DTS uses a variety of questionnaires, suggestion boxes and review discussions to gather apprentices' and employers' feedback on the provision. Judgements in the self-assessment report are too descriptive and not supported by sufficient evidence, resulting in quality improvement plans that lack detail and specific targets.
- DTS and its subcontractors promote an ethos of mutual respect. DTS has taken positive action to attract under-represented groups through the well-considered links with Leeds and Rotherham community groups. Since 2013, DTS has been working closely with three salons whose main client

base is from minority ethnic groups. The promotion of equality and diversity, introduced at induction, is not reinforced in teaching sessions or progress reviews.

- DTS meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding apprentices. Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and thorough. Clear audit processes for subcontractors ensure their compliance with safeguarding procedures. All DTS academies and subcontractors' centres have a designated safeguarding champion and links with local safeguarding boards are well established. Apprentices have a satisfactory understanding of personal safety and wider safeguarding issues.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Dimensions Training Solutions Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A

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

## 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: 173 apprentices							
	Part-time: 0							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Andy Heseltine							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	December 2011							
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.dimensions-training-solutions.com">www.dimensions-training-solutions.com</a>							
<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>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Part-time</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	NA
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	NA		NA		NA			
<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+		
	83	52	12	31	NA	NA		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>								
<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>■ Excel Training Ltd</li> <li>■ XTOL Development Services Ltd</li> </ul>							



## Contextual information

Dimensions Training Solutions (DTS) Limited is a privately owned company. It has been operating since 1983. It has 31 staff, of whom the majority are part-time. It has its head office in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, and its five hairdressing academies are centrally located in Barnsley, Wakefield, Sheffield, Leeds and York. The business programmes, and health and social care apprenticeship provision is subcontracted out. Excel Training Ltd offers apprenticeships in management, team leading, administration and customer service. Apprentices are employed in a wide variety of workplaces. XTOL Development Services Ltd offers mostly health and social care apprenticeships. Their apprentices work in residential care homes and community settings.

The SFA funded apprenticeship programmes account for approximately 90% of the DTS provision. DTS is funded to deliver a 14 to 16 schools programme in four school-based academies. DTS operates as a subcontractor to IGEN and delivers its government-funded study programmes, focusing on hairdressing and beauty therapy to 50 learners. Unemployment rates in DTS academies' locations are slightly higher than the national rate. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at the end of Key Stage 4 is below the national rate. The proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups in the five academy areas varies between 2% in Barnsley to 19% in Leeds.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Julia Horsman HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the Director of Training 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>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

