

Buzz Learning Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		2–5 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-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:

- In 2012/13 learners' success rates were high.
- Initial and diagnostic assessment and progress reviews are very thorough and detailed.
- Learners receive very good pastoral support and careers education, information, advice and guidance to help them to make good progress.
- Learners enjoy their learning and the development of their personal, social and employability skills is good. Interesting and enjoyable enrichment activities are also extending learners' skills.
- Work experience is preparing learners very effectively for future employment and arrangements with employers to support learners' personal and social development in the workplace are good.
- Managers and staff are highly committed and strive to meet the needs of both learners and the local community.
- Continuing professional development for staff is good.
- The focus on equality and diversity, health and safety, and safeguarding is strong and this helps to ensure learners are safe.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Although success rates were high in 2012/13 they are not consistently high for a three-year period.
- Vocational targets for learners on work experience are not set and recorded.
- Too few teaching and learning sessions are outstanding.
- The process for observing teaching and learning is not thorough enough and the grades awarded to some sessions are too high.
- The thoroughness and accuracy of self-assessment and the process for improving the quality of the study programme require further development.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the high success rates achieved in 2012/13 are maintained or improved by:
 - increasing retention by encouraging learners to complete their study programme
 - making sure that learners are fully prepared for the qualifications for which they are aiming to improve their chances of success.
- To enable learners to derive maximum benefit from their work experience, in collaboration with their employers or supervisors set and record vocational learning targets to:
 - add focus to their on-the-job learning
 - provide benchmarks against which their progress in the workplace can be reviewed and evaluated.
- Provide high-quality support to teaching staff to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning sessions improve so that all learners experience outstanding lessons.
- Further improve the process for observing teaching and learning by:
 - increasing its thoroughness and ensuring that lessons are not over graded
 - focusing on learning and the progress learners make in lessons
 - implementing robust joint observation and moderating procedures
 - encouraging tutors to evaluate their own performance systematically and to record the strengths and areas for improvement.
- Increase the thoroughness and accuracy of self-assessment by –
 - capturing the views of learners, parents, carers, tutors and employers in whatever ways will provide the most useful information
 - ensuring that the self-assessment report is concise and evaluative and that all the key strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified and coordinated with the quality improvement plan.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- In the past three years outcomes for learners have improved and in 2012/13 they were high. In two of the past three complete years, female learners were slightly more successful than males and learners with a declared learning difficulty and/or disability were slightly more successful than learners who did not declare a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- In the current year, most learners who have remained on the study programme are expected to achieve their personal learning goals and qualifications within the planned time. Most of those who have left the programme early have been successful in progressing to employment, apprenticeships or courses in further education.
- Learners are enjoying their learning and making good progress, in many cases from very low levels of prior attainment. A large majority of learners have significant barriers to learning and employment which they are working hard to overcome. Their personal, social and employability skills are improving considerably and their behaviour in class is excellent.
- For most learners, work experience is a substantial element of the study programme and it is preparing them very effectively for future employment. They have very good opportunities for developing a good range of practical vocational skills in, for example, horticulture, ground maintenance, retailing and hairdressing. Additionally, work experience is particularly successful

in helping them to improve their confidence, team-working skills, oral communication and time management.

- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are progressively developing independent living skills, including travelling unaccompanied on public transport. They are becoming much more self-reliant. For example, they are learning how to budget, how to shop and the importance of having a healthy diet.
- Interesting and enjoyable enrichment activities are also extending learners' skills. For example, a small group of learners who were crew members on a sailing boat have learned how to use a compass and how to tie knots correctly. Eighteen learners also developed basic painting and decorating, joinery and horticultural skills by helping a local animal sanctuary to prepare for an open day.
- Learners are successfully improving their functional skills in English and mathematics and are working for qualifications one level higher than they achieved before joining the study programme. Many learners are getting good opportunities in their work placements to practise English and mathematics in realistic contexts, for example, by talking to colleagues and customers, handling money and calculating distances.
- Systematic monitoring of learners' attendance on the study programme is effective. . Since the programme began in August 2013, only 63% of learners have met or exceeded the provider's 85% target. However, strenuous efforts are made to follow up absentees immediately by texting and telephoning them or their parents and/or carers to find out the reasons for their non-attendance. A very small minority of learners is also late for lessons.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and this is reflected in the improving success rates.
- Tutors use their skills and experience creatively to develop in-class activities that motivate learners and encourage them to participate and become independent learners. Tasks are skilfully graded to meet the needs and abilities of all learners. Particularly effective and probing questions are used by the majority of tutors to promote learning and increase learners' knowledge and understanding. The subcontractor provides high-quality training for the very small number of childcare learners.
- Tutors use a good range of assessment methods to evaluate and extend learners' knowledge, skills and understanding. Oral and written feedback is clear and helpful in informing learners about what they need to do to improve. In a small minority of classes there is insufficient focus on learning and too few opportunities for learners to demonstrate their understanding.
- Employers are very committed to providing work-experience placements. Considerable care is taken when selecting placements for learners and employers recognise that the learners are correctly placed with them. Employers provide strong support for learners in the workplace by helping to develop their personal, social and vocational skills. Communication with employers is good. They are fully informed about learners' progress and appreciate the contribution they make to their businesses. Too few learners are working for a vocational qualification or for qualification units. Many employers are asking for more learners to be placed with them, and a few are considering offering apprenticeships to current learners.
- Very good support for learners is making a positive contribution to their learning and progress. Staff provide particularly effective pastoral support, which is helpful in building the learners' confidence, self-esteem and sense of achievement. Parents, carers and employers are particularly appreciative of the support given to learners to advance their development and progress.
- Learners benefit from very thorough and detailed initial and diagnostic assessment that facilitates the development of clear individual learning plans to support learning. Most progress reviews are comprehensive and used in a meaningful way to set short-term individualised

targets to enhance learners' progress. However, in a small minority of reviews too little importance is given to reviewing what learners have learned. The assessment and recording of vocational skills while learners are on work experience are insufficient.

- The skilful embedding of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) helps learners to progress and achieve their learning goals. In the classroom and in most work-experience placements, particularly effective coaching is provided to learners to help them improve and apply their English and mathematical skills. Tuition is often tailored to meet the needs of the learners' roles and allocated tasks within the workplace, for example, taking money from customers and giving the correct change. The standard of English in written work is good. Grammatical punctuation and spelling errors are routinely identified and systematically corrected by tutors.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance are highly effective. A significant emphasis is placed on careers education, information, advice and guidance to help learners achieve their goals and progress from the study programme into apprenticeships, college courses or employment. Throughout their learning programme, learners receive good formal and informal information, advice and guidance when required. Ongoing assessment of learners' goals and aspirations is particularly good. The three-week induction process is good and learners are integrated very effectively into the study programme.
- Resources to support learning are good. All learners have their own area within the ICT system to store their work and access resources. Good encouragement is given to learners to monitor their own learning and progress in English and mathematics through accessing appropriate ICT resources. Information and learning technology and other resources, such as desktop computers, interactive white boards and additional materials produced by tutors, are used very effectively to support learning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching and learning is good. Learners and tutors are mutually respectful and supportive. Health and safety are very strongly emphasised and learners feel safe in their different learning environments. Learning resources are sensitive to cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. The embedding of equality and diversity, through learning resources and lively discussions of topics that affect learners, is good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Managers are highly committed to developing provision to meet the needs of learners, the vast majority of whom have significant barriers to learning and employment including learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Managers and staff have high expectations of themselves and their learners. They are highly motivated to improve learners' life chances and employability prospects through ensuring that each learner has an individually designed study programme that meets their needs.
- Performance management has significantly improved and this is having a beneficial effect on the quality of the provision. Staff are now much more accountable for the quality of their work and its impact on learners. Performance targets are specific and challenging. Staff receive regular feedback on the quality of their work. The updated performance-management procedures strongly link staff development and performance management. Underperformance is now more quickly identified and action is taken to eliminate it.
- A number of recent initiatives have strengthened the process for observing teaching, learning and assessment, including internal peer observations and working with another training provider to carry out joint observations. Overall, however, the observation process places insufficient emphasis on learners, what they are learning and the progress they make in lessons. Some sessions are graded too highly and reports are not thoroughly moderated.
- Staff have the skills and experience they need to carry out their roles efficiently. Tutors have studied a wide range of subjects up to degree level and they are qualified to teach in the further education and skills sector. Continuing professional development for staff, primarily through a

wide range of short courses, is very good. These include, for example, working with learners with autism, effective peer observation in practice, and improving grammar. Resources and accommodation are good, although the virtual learning environment is only in the early stages of development.

- Staff are now more fully involved in the self-assessment process and their views, and those of learners and employers, are used when compiling the annual self-assessment report. The updated self-assessment report is detailed and generally evaluative. However, key strengths and areas for improvement are not always clearly identified and the self-assessment report and the quality improvement plan are not sufficiently coordinated. The extent to which they will drive further improvements is limited. Inspectors identified areas for improvement that have not been identified through self-assessment.
- Good relationships have been developed with learners, parents, carers and employers and their views are sought and used to bring about further improvements. However, the questionnaires which are used for collecting respondents' views are not sufficiently comprehensive.
- The change from foundation learning to the study programme was successfully managed. The opportunity for learners to have work experience as their core objective was carefully considered and thoughtfully implemented. Buzz Learning Limited (Buzz) is highly regarded in the local area as a very flexible training provider that is intent on providing a high quality of service to learners and the community. When learners need specialist advice for dealing with difficulties, such as drugs and alcohol misuse, teenage pregnancy and homelessness, they receive good guidance from managers and trainers about suitable agencies to consult.
- So far, too few learners have been recruited to the study programme. Although the provider has been particularly proactive in promoting it, and there are learners waiting to join the programme, it is improbable that the contractual volume will be fully achieved in the current contract year.
- The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet the statutory requirements. A high priority is placed on learners' safety in the training centre and in work-experience venues. Thorough health and safety checks are made before learners are allowed to take up a work placement. Learners who are deemed to be a risk to themselves or to others are thoroughly risk assessed and strategies are implemented to ensure high levels of safety are maintained. Staff are vigilant for signs of abuse and should any be detected immediate and appropriate action is taken. Good contact is maintained with learners' key workers, parents and carers, and if learners leave sessions early or do not attend training they are quickly informed. Almost all trainers have a safeguarding award at level 2 and update training for staff is good.
- Equality and diversity are actively promoted by managers and staff. There is zero tolerance of bullying, discrimination and unfair treatment. Staff treat learners with dignity and respect and expect them to reciprocate appropriately. Learners have good opportunities to negotiate ground rules for governing their behaviour in class, which effectively supports the maintenance of a respectful and conducive learning environment.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Buzz Learning 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	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	106							
Principal/CEO	Ms Therese Timlin							
Date of previous inspection	July 2012							
Website address	www.buzzlearning.co.uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
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+
	34	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NECC Training and Assessment Centre Limited 							

Contextual information

Buzz is an independent learning provider, established in 2004, and based in Ashington, Northumberland. The company has a contract with the Education Funding Agency to deliver the study programme (previously foundation learning). It works mainly with young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in education, employment or training and young people aged 16 to 24 who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Of the current learners, 54% have an identified additional learning need, 46% are female and 98% are White British. Buzz recruits learners from south-east Northumberland although it is planned to extend the recruitment area to include the north and west of the county. Buzz also provides a small number of self-financing training courses to local businesses. Ashington, formerly noted for its coal-mining industry, has a population of approximately 28,000 people. It has an unemployment rate of 6.6% and the third highest incidence of teenage pregnancy in England.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Ken Fisher

A lead inspector and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, 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 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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