Further Education and Skills inspection report

Date published: 29 September 2014 Inspection Number: 434059

URN: 53032



The Lightbulb Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates	18 – 22 August 2014			
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3		
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good-2		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement-3			
Quality of teaching, learning and as	Requires improvement-3			
Effectiveness of leadership and ma	Requires improvement-3			

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Although most employability learners achieve their qualifications, apprentices have not achieved anywhere near as well and generally have made slow progress in completing their training.
- Not enough employability learners take up work experience or progress into employment.
- For many learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The planning of training does not take sufficient account of where learners are starting from or where they want to go.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is not sufficiently well planned to meet their needs.
- The promotion of equality and diversity within the context of their training is poor for too many learners.
- Managers do not self-assess accurately and rigorously, nor do they effectively monitor the performance of provision.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Success rates on qualifications for employability learners are consistently high.
- Learners enjoy their training and many improve their levels of confidence considerably.
- Apprentices develop good practical employment skills that lead many to progress into jobs with more responsibilities or into higher levels of training. Employability learners improve their understanding well of the qualities employers are seeking.
- Apprentices have a clear understanding of their progress, and what they need to do to improve further.
- Practical construction training is very effective; the training resources for fork lift truck learners are excellent.
- Managers have been particularly effective at developing a broad range of flexible programmes that meet local learners' and employers' needs.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure managers critically assess the effectiveness of all trainers, including those in subcontracted provision, and take robust actions to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good or better.
- Ensure the planning of training fully and effectively takes account of each learner's starting point and ensure that all are challenged to achieve of their best.
- Managers should ensure that a greater proportion of apprentices complete their programmes within the expected timescales. Trainers and employers should be made more accountable for learners' rates of progress.
- Effective measures be introduced to ensure that a greater number of employability learners progress into further training or employment.
- Fully ensure that the development of learners' English and mathematics skills is significantly improved. Thorough planning and effective learning resources are required to ensure that all learners increase these skills to a level that will support their future career needs.
- Managers and staff should have access to timely, robust and detailed management information and data in order to effectively monitor programme quality.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners

- Outcomes for learners require improvement. Most learners enrol onto short employability courses and nearly all of these achieve their qualification. Apprenticeship success rates and the completion of their programme within the agreed time are poor. In part, these can be attributed to the difficulties associated with TLB taking on learners from a failing provider. Apprentices on programme at the time of the inspection were making good progress.
- Learners particularly enjoy their learning and are positive about how the training helps them to plan their career. Apprentices quickly develop good vocational skills when introduced to the workplace and employers confirm the range of benefits they bring to their businesses. However, for more able learners or those with prior vocational experience, there is insufficient challenge to help them progress further and/or more quickly.
- During their time at TLB most learners improve their confidence and self-belief in their abilities. Apprentices develop good practical employment skills and employability learners' understanding of what is expected in the workplace is much improved. Progress of apprentices into higher levels of training or more responsible job roles is good in business administration, with learners progressing particularly well. The standard of learners work requires improvement overall.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Too many apprentices struggle to achieve well as the focus is on them passing the tests rather than developing an applied understanding of these skills to work and life. More able apprentices are not challenged to achieve higher qualifications or address weaker aspects revealed by the tests they take at the start of their programme. Insufficient arrangements are in place to improve or raise awareness of English and mathematics to learners on short courses.
- Managers have had only partial success in attempts to reduce the achievement gaps between different groups of apprentices. For example, while 16 to 18 year old apprentices now achieve as well as other age groups, female apprentices continue to achieve at a much lower rate than their male counterparts.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as reflected in learner outcomes. The quality of learning sessions ranges from outstanding to inadequate.
- The better training tends to be in practical sessions. Trainers plan these well and make good use of learners' previous experiences and knowledge. Trainers frequently challenge learners to develop skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of the qualification. Learners benefit greatly from outstanding construction training. The training resources for fork lift truck courses are excellent and exceed general industry standards.
- Overall, trainers provide a good focus on the employability potential of many learners. Apprentices develop additional vocational skills and knowledge that are instrumental in many gaining roles of responsibility and/or promotion in work. The very few traineeship learners benefit from good quality work experience and effective training. Less than a third of employability learners take up work placements and guaranteed employer job interviews, though, of those who do, a good proportion gain employment.
- Less effective learning is characterised by a limited range of teaching methods and trainers who fail to recognise individual learner needs when planning sessions. The pace of weaker sessions is often slow and an over-reliance on self-study workbooks leads to learners becoming bored. Information learning technology is not used effectively. Insufficient use is made by trainers of apprentices' different work experiences to encourage discussions and develop broader learning opportunities.
- The assessment of learners' skills and knowledge requires improvement. Much of the assessment for apprentices is by direct observation and assessors accurately judge learners' competence. Although in a few cases, such as in warehousing and health and social care, the questioning of learners' knowledge is superficial. The assessment of employability learners' knowledge does not always sufficiently confirm understanding.
- Support from the majority of trainers is good and learners enjoy the chance to learn in a vocational context. Apprentices receive frequent visits in their workplace and individual coaching from trainers is good. Many apprentices progress well into higher levels of training or sustained employment. Advice and guidance require improvement. For apprentices, these are effective, but less so for employability learners. As their progression is unclear and managers are unable to judge the impact of employability training accurately.
- Apprentices have a clear understanding of the progress they are making to complete their vocational qualifications. However, reviews of their progress do not take sufficient account of other aspects of learning or skills development. Employer involvement in supporting and monitoring progress requires improvement. Trainers do not routinely set targets that go beyond the requirements of the qualifications or develop learning themes related solely to a learner's workplace or future aspirations.
- Measures to develop learners' English and mathematics skills require improvement. The planning of English and mathematics support for apprentices does not take full account of most learners' initial test results. The support for, and progress of, apprentices with additional needs has recently improved although requires improvement. The development of English and mathematics skills is not adequately linked to all vocational training. Managers have recently introduced English programmes for employability learners but support for their English and mathematics continues to be insufficient.
- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is not consistently good. Not enough trainers develop learners' knowledge well within the context of the working environment. For example, too many business administration learners have a superficial understanding of equality and diversity.

Health, social care and early years

Apprenticeships

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as reflected in the low success rates and the variable challenge offered to learners. Previous slow progress by learners has recently improved, although changes to the planning of learning are not yet fully embedded. A high proportion of learners progress into sustained employment or further training, including into advanced apprenticeships and university.
- In the better sessions, assessors effectively probe learners' answers and extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, in weaker sessions, trainers only seek yes or no answers and individual comments and concerns are not explored such as learners' specific anxieties about mathematic skills or the legal status of "no secrets" in safeguarding.
- Learners value highly the flexible and responsive support by well-qualified trainers. This raises their confidence and encourages them to learn and progress. However, trainers do not link theory to working practice to prepare all learners for further learning and progression.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires improvement. In health and social care, learners benefit from a strong emphasis on person-centred care and respect for individual preferences and this effectively improves learners' professional practice. However, in early years, the promotion of equality of opportunity for children with diverse needs is much less effective. For example, the application of different cognitive theories to understand child development in different settings.
- Initial assessment is generally thorough and appropriately supports the development of individual learning. However, at reviews, trainers do not always link individual needs to target setting, and too often progress is focused solely on the achievement of occupational qualifications. The recently introduced and comprehensive exit review effectively builds confidence and raises learners' aspirations.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Too often, learning consists of learners completing generic test papers rather than focusing on areas of specific weakness. Professional discussions and feedback on written assignments do not sufficiently emphasise the importance of these skills.
- Employers generally speak highly of the training and support provided by trainers. Most employers could identify examples of positive improvements in working practices resulting from the training they provide. However, there is insufficient employer involvement in the planning of training and assessment activities.
- Pastoral support for learners is good and learners enjoy learning in the workplace. They appreciate the frequent reviews and regular and positive feedback on progress. An appropriate range of assessment strategies meets individual preferences. The portfolios in health and social care are very clearly structured and learners can track their path to achievement. This is less clear in early years and their assessment exercises are more repetitious.
- A centrally produced learning resource ensures uniform delivery of essential knowledge. However, independent learning skills, particularly for level 3 learners, are under-developed. There is insufficient use of information learning technology to support learning.

Warehousing and Distribution Apprenticeships Inadequate

- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate and this is reflected in the low success rates and continual slow progress of learners. Too many learners are not provided with sufficient or timely learning to overcome their barriers to progress. However, learners do develop appropriate employability skills and attitudes to learning at work and most learners enjoy and value their learning. For those learners that achieve, progression opportunities are good in successfully sustaining employment, broadening roles and increasing responsibilities.
- Trainers do not use results from initial assessment effectively to plan learning. Learners are set clear targets although these are insufficiently challenging or responsive to individual needs. Arrangements to monitor and review progress are satisfactory but do not always lead to prompt actions to address slow progress or identified problems.
- Learners communicate effectively with their trainers and are clear about the requirements of the apprenticeship. They have well-planned and frequent trainer visits. Learners receive supportive individual coaching. However the planning of these sessions assumes all learners are at the same level of learning and making the same progress, which they are not. Apart from learners achieving an additional employability unit certificate, learning is limited to the standard programme requirements.
- Learning and development are strongly trainer led and many learners are overly supported in the completion of learning and assessment material. Most learners use workbooks effectively though a few are unclear about the relevance of the information and how it is applied in the workplace.
- Most employers provide good on-the-job training and support to learners. The link between onand off-the-job training is not sufficiently well established. Many employers are not sufficiently involved in the apprenticeship learning or monitoring of progress.
- The provision of learning in English and mathematics is inadequate. The planning of learning is poor. Learning materials are not sufficiently effective or timely to meet the needs of most learners. The marking and correcting of learner work is satisfactory with clear feedback given. Little use is made of specialist learning support.
- Assessment practice requires improvement. Learners are assessed appropriately using a broad range of methods to test their competence. Following assessment, learners receive clear feedback but it does not always help them to consider how to improve. Some observation records are unclear as to how learners met the assessment criteria.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in learning is good. Learners demonstrate a sound understanding of equality and diversity, and there is effective reinforcement of understanding in learning and review. Learners are well supported in the resolution of any workplace problems.
- A few learners are exposed to risk by unacceptably poor health and safety practice at their workplace. Learners do not receive sufficient guidance on safe working practice from their managers. The use of personal protective equipment is not enforced. A few workplaces exhibit poor organisational arrangements that do not support the required standards for apprenticeship learning and assessment.

Employability Training

Employability

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. The number of learners who achieve externally accredited qualifications is high and many learners appropriately improve their knowledge and understanding. However, the planning of learning does not take sufficient account of learners' starting points or their abilities in English and mathematics. Trainers and managers are not sufficiently aware of the impact learning has on learners' progression into employment or self-employment.
- Trainers are enthusiastic and use their subject knowledge and experience well. Overall, the practical sessions are more effective than theory classes. The practical classes are well planned to include a variety of activities that keep learners motivated and engaged. All learners in these sessions participate well and make good progress. Construction practical training is very effective and helps learners to exceed the qualification standards.
- Excellent fork lift truck practical resources and workshop areas meet industry best practice. Trainers and managers maintain a particularly strong focus on health and safety within the practical training environments.
- Learners enjoy developing their skills and knowledge. However, too often, trainers fail to sufficiently recognise or cater for the needs of individual learners, for example those with prior experience, knowledge or skills. Less effective sessions are characterised by an over-reliance on learners completing workbooks and trainers fail to recognise that learners quickly become bored and inattentive.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Managers have recently introduced a new range of English courses. However, for many learners, the results from tests at the start of the programme are not used sufficiently well to plan learning. English and mathematics are well embedded into vocational training. Spelling and grammatical errors in learners' work are not routinely highlighted or corrected.
- Assessment of learning requires improvement. Trainers' assessment standards vary too much, from good to poor. In- class question and answer sessions are not always effective at including all learners and assessing understanding. A few trainers give good feedback and this contributes well to learners having a clear understanding of how to improve. However, too often feedback is very brief and of little use.
- Learners receive good support within classroom sessions to complete their own development plans. They revise these plans throughout the course, but trainers do not always provide clear next steps for the learners to take after training.
- Many learners receive good specialist guidance from trainers to support them in making the transition into work. Around a third of learners are guaranteed work experience and a job interview. These lead to many of these learners securing employment. However, this arrangement is not extended to the majority of learners who complete their training with subcontractors. Insufficient data are available to assess the full impact of training on learners' next steps.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is effective in the better employability sessions and is embedded well into some of the courses. For example, in one session the trainer made good links to equality and diversity in the health care sector and emphasised the mandatory requirements and expectations of staff working in the sector. However, in a minority of sessions, equality and diversity are not sufficiently well promoted.

Administration and Customer service

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflecting the outcomes for learners. Recent improvements in the monitoring of learners' progress indicate that progress for learners is much improved. Employers recognise the benefits apprentices bring to their businesses. Many learners move into sustainable employment, taking on increased responsibility and wider roles within the organisation.
- Employers provide a timely and thorough induction to the apprenticeship. This enables learners to engage in their programme effectively and make positive and significant contributions in the workplace. On-the-job training is good and learners benefit from effective individual coaching from trainers. However, trainers adhere rigidly to learners meeting the qualification framework and too often, naturally occurring learning opportunities to challenge and stimulate learners are missed.
- The use of good quality and creative resources, including the use of technology requires improvement. Trainers rely too much on workbooks to facilitate learning specific to the unit criteria. The use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning, particularly in developing learners' understanding and the application of technologies to support everyday tasks and business improvements is underdeveloped.
- Trainers provide good personal support for learners and make themselves available in between formal sessions to respond to questions and queries by email, e-portfolio and telephone. Trainers schedule frequent progress reviews, but their feedback to learners and their target setting focus too much on the completion of vocational units rather than on achieving incremental goals and promoting broader learning.
- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills requires improvement. Initial and diagnostic assessments are not used sufficiently well to plan each individual's learning. Learners who are capable of improving their English and mathematics at a higher level than that required by their framework are not routinely encouraged to do so.
- Trainers set clear actions for learners' next steps. Most trainers give learners detailed and accurate oral feedback on their assignment work but, in a few cases, learners' work is not marked carefully enough and feedback does not always help learners understand how to improve their skills and knowledge further.
- Learners generally prepare well for their reviews, but they are not sufficiently involved in the setting of targets, nor in reflecting on, and evaluating, the progress they are making or the range of skills being developed. Employers' feedback on progress reviews is not routinely used to set targets to improve learners' work practices.
- Trainers do not promote equality and diversity adequately; because of this, learners have limited understanding of wider aspects of equality and diversity and of how important this understanding is to good business practice. In progress reviews, trainers make superficial references to equality and diversity and lack confidence in their skills to do this well. Learners feel safe and know who to speak to if they have concerns about their safety.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have been effective at implementing a strategy that meets local employment and training needs. The range of programmes and the number of learners have significantly increased and major partners cite TLB as a preferred provider in the delivery of employability training. However, rapid expansion has not been without its difficulties and managers have not always been sufficiently responsive to declining or poor provision offered by subcontractors.
- Staff are included well in decision making and managers consult frequently with them on how to improve business performance. Staff benefit from a wide range of professional development, and an effective reward scheme maintains their motivation to improve. Trainers are appraised frequently and receive performance targets that are closely monitored. However, too few of these targets concentrate on improving learners' progress or the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Frequent observations of assessments, reviews and training ensure that programmes consistently meet awarding body standards. Feedback to trainers and assessors on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment identify strengths well but do not give adequate feedback on how staff can improve their practice.
- The management of subcontractors requires improvement. Current subcontractors have a clear understanding of contract requirements and they consistently exceed success rate targets. TLB managers recently withdrew two contracts where a high proportion of learners were unsuccessful. There are insufficient effective measures in place to ensure that subcontractors continually improve learner outcomes and/or the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Trainers closely monitor individual learners' progress. However, the information available is not used sufficiently to analyse trends in learner performance over time or the progress made by different groups of learners. As a result, managers do not effectively identify reasons for underperformance of groups of learners early enough for swift remedial action to be taken. Data on learners' progression from TLB courses are not routinely collected or analysed.
- The evaluation of TLB's provision requires improvement. Self-assessment is not sufficiently judgemental or accurate. While managers and trainers are aware of some key areas for improvement, they under-estimate their impact on overall effectiveness. The improvement plan although detailed, is not sufficiently clear as to how or when actions will be successfully completed.
- Managers have recognised the need to improve the teaching of English and mathematics and the recent introduction of additional specialist resources is having a positive impact on apprentices' progress. However, there is a lack of clarity as to how all learners' English and mathematics needs will be effectively and fully supported.
- Senior staff work successfully with key stakeholders, such as employers and managers from Jobcentre Plus to identify and meet emerging training priorities. Managers and trainers are very responsive to needs, delivering training that is convenient to large numbers of employability learners' locations and availability. For example, health and social care courses have been particularly successful in supporting unemployed people into the care sector.
- Managers ensure appropriate policies and learning materials are in place to promote diversity and provide equality of opportunity. Trainers are good role models and ensure learners are respected whether in training or at work. However, actions to reduce achievement gaps between different groups of learners have not been effective. For example, success rates for black and minority ethnic and female apprentices have lagged behind rates for other groups.
- TLB meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of learners. Safeguarding training for staff takes place annually, although for new staff it does not happen quickly enough. Appropriate health and safety policies are frequently reviewed and improved. Learners generally

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work in safe training environments. However, arrangements to promote high standards of health and safety for the small number of apprentices working for small warehousing companies are inadequate.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Lightbulb 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						3	3	
Outcomes for learners	3						3	3	
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3						3	3	_
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3						3	3	

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment			
Health and Social Care	3		
Early Years and Playwork	3		
Warehousing and Distribution	4		
Employability Training	3		
Administration	3		
Customer service	3		

Provider details

Type of provider	Indepe	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,582								
CEO	Mrs Le	sley Jon	ies						
Date of previous inspection	July 20	10							
Website address	www.tl	nelightb	ulb.co	o.uk					
Provider information at the time o	f the in	spectio	n						
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or Level 2 below		Level 3		Level 4 and above				
Total number of learners	16-18	19+	16-1	8 19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
(excluding apprenticeships)	3	87	0	7	0	0	0	0	
Number of appropriate by	Intermediate Adv		Adva	anced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19)+	16-18	19+	16-	-18	19+	
	100 117 13		-			0 0			
Number of traineeships	16-19 3				19+ 0			Total 3	
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A								
Full-time	<u> </u>								
Part-time	<u>'</u>								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	94								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the	ALM Training Services								
provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Specialist Trade Courses								
	Results Consortium Ltd.								

Contextual information

TLB is a private limited company based in Basildon Essex. It was established in 2003 and offers training across Essex and the Thames Gateway. Since its previous inspection in 2010 the range of programmes has expanded considerably. The largest programmes offered are employability courses and apprenticeships. The subject sectors with most learners are construction, business administration and customer service, health and social care, and early years. The number of warehousing and distribution apprentices is very small.

Essex and the Thames Gateway combine high density urban and agricultural rural environments. The percentage of the Essex population qualified to level 2 is slightly below that of England as a whole.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Richard Beaumont HMI

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Operations Director 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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To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk

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