Further Education and Skills inspection report

Date published: 16 January 2015 Inspection Number: 446604

URN: 54277



SBC Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates	8 - 12 December 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:

- the quality of the provision in health and social care, the largest area of provision, requires improvement and a low proportion of learners in this area complete their frameworks within the planned time
- quality assurance arrangements and performance management are not sufficiently effective in reducing the variation in performance between programmes
- teaching and attainment in functional skills English and mathematics, and information and communications technology (ICT) where required for the framework, are insufficiently effective, especially for the more able learners where expectations are not high enough
- the use of technology is not embedded well enough in teaching, learning and assessment, to develop learners' skills and enable rapid progress through the qualifications.

This provider has the following strengths:

- good provision in building services, including traineeships, and in retail and administration
- excellent functional skills support for learners whose initial attainment in these subjects is well below their framework requirements
- strong partnership working and responsiveness to employers which enhance the quality of the vocational work and inform the development of new strands of provision
- the high standards of vocational and employability skills attained by learners.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen quality assurance arrangements including self-assessment and the provision of management information at all levels so that senior managers can:
 - monitor performance and make judgements about the progress learners are making on all the elements of the apprenticeship frameworks
 - provide appropriate support and intervention to drive improvements and increase the proportion of learners, especially in health and social care, who achieve their full framework within planned timescales
 - raise the expectations of staff for what learners can achieve, especially in English and mathematics.
- Develop strategies to introduce and embed the use of information and learning technology, particularly in the workplace, to improve training and assessment and further promote independent learning.
- Share the good practice in one-to-one training, learning and assessment that exists in some subject areas, particularly in relation to planning, the setting of learning targets, and the involvement of employers.
- Improve the robustness of the observation of teaching, learning and assessment process by ensuring observers focus more clearly on the impact of teaching practices on learning and progress, and in enabling them to make clearer judgements on grading.
- Provide all trainers with clear and measurable targets for improvement and monitor the impact of the training they receive on the quality of their provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, about 270 apprentices were on programme, with most in health and social care, building services, and administration. A few were following apprenticeships in engineering, retail and commercial enterprise, and business management. Health and social care, with just over one third of apprentices, was the largest area. A small number of learners were undertaking traineeships in building services and engineering.
- Apprenticeship framework success rates are too variable across the range of the provider's work and require improvement. For older learners and for advanced apprenticeships the rates were slightly better than for intermediate-level learners and those aged 16 to 24, but were still not high. Achievement is high in building services, retail and commercial enterprise, and above average in business. In health and social care the rate is close to the national rate.
- Learners' progress is too variable between programmes. Learners in health and social care make slow progress, whereas those in building services, and retail and commercial enterprise make good progress. The proportion of apprentices who achieve within planned timescales is broadly average for advanced apprenticeships but low at the intermediate level and for all age groups, particularly so for learners aged 16 to 24. Managers have put arrangements in place to improve these rates, for example by improving the teaching of functional skills and strengthening the monitoring of achievements; interim results for 2014/15 show improvement.
- Learners develop their vocational and employability skills, such as team-working and working with limited supervision. They become more confident. Standards of work are high in most subject areas but work is of variable quality in health and social care. A high proportion of

learners remain in, or progress to, permanent employment at the end of their apprenticeship programmes. Employers are very positive about the standards their apprentices achieve; examples of increased responsibility taken on by apprentices and promotion were reported in each subject area. Learners on traineeships make good progress and a high proportion progress onto apprenticeships or into other positive destinations.

Gaps in achievement rates by learners' characteristics are small, except for the low achievement rate of women in comparison to men. This is explained by the low rate in health and social care, where women predominate.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, and this is reflected in the outcomes for learners that also require improvement. Trainers' expectations of what learners can achieve are high in building services and retail but not sufficiently so for the more able learners in business administration and health and social care. Trainers provide good pastoral support to learners. Learners feel safe and have a sound understanding of safeguarding. The management of health and safety is strong. Employers and learners' needs are met well and they are very positive about the provision.
- Trainers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Their planning of learning and the use of technology are of variable quality. Their planning is thorough in building services and in retail, where it results in good teaching overall. However, it is not sufficiently well developed in health and social care where, for example, workplace visits are not always sufficiently productive, and in aspects of business administration where, for example, visits do not have enough of a focus on learning. Trainers use technology well in business administration and retail to enhance learning and progress, but its use is limited in other areas. The close working relationships managers have with employers have a positive impact on learning and learners' progress. Employers benefit from good communications with SBC Training. They are very appreciative of their flexibility around shift patterns and workloads.
- The initial assessment of learners' prior knowledge and experience is timely and effective. Trainers provide good support for learners who are working well below the levels of English and mathematics required for their apprenticeship framework. Progress reviews have a positive impact on learning in most subject areas. They are thorough, the learning targets set are usually clear and appropriately challenging. Trainers monitor closely learners' progress. In health and social care, however, targets are not always sufficiently challenging and clear for advanced apprentices, slowing their rate of progress. Employers make a good contribution to the review process in building services and retail, but in administration and health and social care their input is more variable and requires improvement.
- Assessment is rigorous and timely in most subject areas but in health and social care its scheduling does not always meet the needs of higher-attaining learners. In this area observation of competence does not always take place at the earliest opportunity, slowing progress. Trainers' use of technology to support assessment requires improvement, resulting in a more laborious capturing of evidence and a less efficient use of time.
- The development of learners' skills in English and mathematics is of inconsistent quality. For example, teaching is good in administration but not good enough in health and social care. The promotion of mathematics in health and social care, and of English in building services are insufficient. Although trainers provide good support for lower-attaining learners, too few learners who are capable of developing skills above framework requirements are challenged and supported to do so.
- Staff give good initial advice and guidance at programme entry and, as a result, learners are recruited to the right course, at the right level and the work-based diploma units chosen match the interests of learners and their job role well. Guidance for progression from intermediate to

- advanced level programmes is effective; however, the information and degree of challenge provided in the guidance for progression to provision above level 3 are insufficiently effective.
- The culture of respect between learners and with trainers is very strong. Learners are treated very fairly, and the promotion of equality and diversity is good in most curriculum areas in induction and in progress reviews. For example, in building services discussions are challenging and productive, and in retail learners benefit from a good range of resources. As a result, learners develop a good understanding. In health and social care, however, learners do not consider the diverse needs of their customers sufficiently well.

Health and social care Apprenticeships Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not good enough. As a result, whilst the proportion of learners who complete their qualifications successfully is close to the national rate, too few do so by the required deadline. Early in-year data for 2014/15 show improvement. Learners develop good practical care skills, acquire a deeper understanding of their job role and become more effective team members in the workplace. The expectations trainers have of the more able learners are not high enough and the progress these learners make is not fast enough. Learners receive good pastoral support and have frequent contact with their trainers.
- Trainers are appropriately qualified and have extensive occupational experience that they use well to extend learners' knowledge and understanding of how to meet service users' needs. They do not plan workplace visits in sufficient detail to ensure time is always spent productively. Activities are not structured clearly enough to ensure enough learning takes place. They make routine checks to ascertain that learners have completed tasks set previously, but their evaluation of what has been learned is not always deep enough. Their use of technology to support training and learning in the workplace is underdeveloped, contributing to learners' slow progress.
- The initial assessment of learners' attainment and experience is comprehensive and done in a timely way. However, trainers do not make enough use of this and other information to plan learning so that it matches the needs of all learners sufficiently well, particularly those with high prior attainment. Progress reviews are carried out regularly in the workplace. The learning targets set during these reviews are not always sufficiently challenging and specific, especially for learners working at advanced level, and this slows their progress. The involvement of employers in the review process is variable and requires improvement.
- Assessment practice is not good enough. Trainers sometimes delay the assessment of practical competence, slowing learners' progress. For example, experienced care workers entering the programme with a good range of practical skills do not have these skills assessed until six months into the programme. Written assignment work is scheduled well and completed in a more timely manner.
- Trainers' expectations for learners' development of English and mathematics are not always high enough. Specialist trainers provide good support to learners whose initial assessments indicate they are below the required level, and these learners subsequently make good progress. A few learners study at too low a level. Trainers do not check spelling and the correct use of grammar well enough.
- Information, advice and guidance require improvement. Staff are effective at ensuring learners choose the right level of programme and in helping learners select units of competence which match their job roles. Guidance about progression from intermediate to advanced level programmes is clear and timely. However, guidance about how the better-gualified learners can

meet their aspirations is not always helpful enough. For example, one learner who is already qualified to progress into higher education to study nursing has not received appropriate advice.

The promotion of equality and diversity require improvement. Learners, trainers and employers work well together in a culture of mutual respect. However, trainers do not always act as good role models, sometimes using incorrect terminology and over-familiar greetings. Learners are not encouraged sufficiently to consider the extensive range of service users' needs they may encounter when working in the health and social care sector.

Building services	
Apprenticeships Traineeships	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, contributing to outcomes for learners that are consistently high. Learners are highly motivated and develop good electro-technical practical skills, knowledge and understanding. Trainers have high expectations of their learners and learners respond positively. Learners' progression in the workplace is good and they work independently, with little supervision, and quickly move to roles with higher responsibility. Supervisors at the largest employer SBC Training works with have all progressed from apprenticeships. A very high proportion of learners on traineeships progress to apprenticeships.
- Trainers provide good support during on- and off-site training. They have a detailed knowledge of each learner, enabling them to identify and address pastoral and learning needs quickly and effectively. Support is enhanced through a highly effective peer support scheme whereby learners are paired with a buddy who provides good vocational help, for example to develop the application of mathematics skills to complex calculations involving three-phase supply. Learners with specific support needs make good progress. Trainers' emphasis on the health and safety of learners is particularly strong; learners work safely and feel safe.
- Off-site teaching and learning are good and challenges learners appropriately to develop and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. Training is well planned yet sufficiently flexible to meet employers' and learners' needs. For example, trainers change the timing of the training they deliver to a company which specialises in galvanised trunking, often at short notice, so that relevant content is taught when the company requires it. Off-site training is further enhanced through effective partnerships with manufacturers and specialist technical trainers.
- High quality on- and off-site training is planned and delivered for electrical installation learners by a nationally recognized employer. The employer's trainers work very closely both with their own and other employers' learners to ensure that all are well informed of progress, and training is individualized to meets learners' needs well.
- Assessment is fair, rigorous and reliable and enables learners to accredit their skills as required. Vocational trainers are highly knowledgeable and well qualified. Learners make good progress in response to detailed and challenging feedback from staff. Trainers do not make sufficient use of technology to capture and track assessment efficiently.
- Initial assessment is productive at identifying barriers to learning and helps trainers to place learners on appropriate courses. The progress review process enables learners to know clearly what they have to do to improve. Trainers, learners and employers all have a good understanding of learners' progress.
- The integration of mathematics within the vocational training is good but the development of English requires improvement. Learners understand the importance of English and mathematics and trainers use initial assessment to place learners on the most appropriate functional skills programme. Learners make good progress in mathematics, successfully completing, for example, calculations on cable sizing and resistance. Staff do not check or develop learners'

written English work sufficiently through the routine and systematic marking and correction of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

- SBC Training provides individual advice and guidance that are well informed by initial assessment and are thorough. They enable learners to develop an appropriate understanding of their programme and their opportunities for progression.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through induction and the review process is good. High-quality and challenging discussions during reviews cover a wide range of key diversity themes including radicalisation, disability, race and gender awareness. Learners and trainers have a very high level of respect for each other. The embedding of equality and diversity themes in off-site vocational training requires improvement.

Retailing and Wholesaling	
Warehousing and Distribution Apprenticeships	Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and result in a high proportion of learners completing their programmes successfully within the planned time. Current learners are on track to succeed within deadlines. Learners work to a high standard and they develop good occupational and social skills and confidence which enable them to take on increased responsibility successfully. Trainers encourage learners strongly, are very supportive and have high expectations of them. A high proportion of learners who are on one-year contracts convert to permanent full-time employment on completion of their frameworks. The management of health and safety in the workplace is good and learners feel safe.
- Individual coaching by trainers in the workplace is good. Learners produce well-presented portfolios that include a wide variety of appropriate evidence. They undertake a good amount of independent study, including research, and make good use of the internet and other technology to complete their workbooks in warehousing and prepare for their technical certificate in retail. Electronic portfolios, which could help gather and collate evidence more efficiently, help learners undertake research more productively and promote remote contact, are not used. Trainers have a good understanding of workplace needs, are appropriately qualified, and have sound commercial experience.
- Trainers provide good support, are highly motivated and work well with learners and employers. Staff provide good-quality additional support for the achievement of technical certificates where appropriate. Managers have a productive relationship with a specialist organisation that focuses successfully on providing employment opportunities for young people who are unemployed and often hard to reach.
- Initial assessment is effective at identifying learners' attainment and includes testing for English and mathematics followed by more in-depth diagnostic testing. Staff provide appropriate support where required. Learners' progress reviews are thorough and used effectively. Learners are set clear and achievable learning targets during the review process and their progress towards achieving them is monitored closely and clearly recorded. Many learners also complete their own 'to-do lists' and understand clearly what is expected of them.
- Assessment is well planned and rigorous. Trainers visit at least monthly and give detailed recorded feedback during reviews. Observation is perceptive and well recorded and related questioning productive at assessing knowledge and understanding. Learners understand clearly what is expected from them. Feedback following assessment on what needs improving and advice on how to improve are very detailed, but feedback on what went well is often too brief. In a few cases, learners are placed under undue pressure to complete on time because the

development of functional skills, warehousing work books and retail technical certificates is delayed.

- The development of English and mathematics is good. The functional skills specialist coordinator works well with trainers to provide good additional support for learners. The embedding of functional skills into the occupational area is an area for improvement because trainers do not always challenge successfully those learners who are capable of working above framework requirements for functional skills to do so.
- Individual advice and guidance are successful at placing learners on appropriate courses and in developing learners' understanding of their programme framework requirements and their progress. However, few learners progress from intermediate to advanced level partly because SBC Training does not offer advanced apprenticeships in warehousing.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is very effective during reviews. Learning resources are of good quality and enhance well learners' understanding of, for example, bullying and harassment in coaching sessions. Staff provide a course to help apprentices protect themselves from cyber-bullying but their recall of what was covered is sketchy and in need of reinforcement.

Administration	
Apprenticeships	Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good; this is consistent with the proportion of learners who complete their frameworks successfully and the significantly improved rate of achievement within planned deadlines. Learners' work is of a good standard. They gain good levels of technical knowledge and rapidly improve their confidence levels. Many learners progress from intermediate to advanced programmes. They have a good awareness of safeguarding matters, and work and learn in safe environments.
- Trainers set high expectations of learners and provide good support particularly at the recruitment stage and when learners move between work placements. Learners are placed in good jobs which meet their needs and those of their employers extremely well. Employers provide good job-related training and challenging work. In several businesses, administration learners benefit from mandatory on-line training, with close supervision and support which link with their apprenticeships very effectively.
- Trainers make good use of technology, on-line video clips and paired project work during group teaching sessions. Trainers provide useful additional qualifications, for example in first aid and medical terminology, that meet learners' and employers' needs very well. The few learners who are not able to attend learning workshops, however, are not supported well enough, for example through the use of on-line resources, to improve their technical knowledge.
- Trainers' planning for workplace coaching and assessment sessions is not always sufficiently thorough. As a result, their feedback on assessed work and assessment planning sometimes dominates sessions too much and they do not provide enough workplace coaching and teaching. Workplace sessions are not frequent enough and more able learners are not challenged sufficiently to work at a higher level than their programme requires.
- Initial assessment is very effective. Staff identify learners' attainment, particularly of their functional skills, clearly and use the information to agree the optional units that are most closely matched to learners' workplaces and job roles. Trainers conduct highly effective reviews of learners' progress and agree appropriately challenging targets with them. Employers engage well in reviewing learners' progress and development needs.
- Assessment is rigorous and meets framework requirements very well. Trainers' records are thorough and subjected to rigorous quality assurance. Trainers make insufficient use of

technology to support assessment and, combined with the infrequency of workplace sessions, this limits learners' access to assessment.

- Trainers manage the functional skills needs of learners very well. Learners' prior learning is identified in a timely way and trainers provide learners with clear support plans appropriate to their needs. Trainers integrate functional skills very creatively into group sessions; for example in one exercise, learners made good use of mathematics to calculate the time allocated to different priorities each week. Trainers also promote intermediate learners' development of higher-level English, mathematics and ICT and associated qualifications which are additional to learners' frameworks and which prepare them well for progression onto advanced apprenticeships.
- Information, advice and guidance provided to new learners are very good. Learners receive informative handbooks and a record of the advice given to them about the courses available. They develop a well-defined understanding of their programme, the support available and how they will be assessed. Staff promote progression well into the programmes available at SBC Training, but there is insufficient information or referral for learners relating to career options beyond advanced apprenticeships.
- During their induction and workshops, learners develop a very sound grasp of equality and diversity matters and how these are relevant to their colleagues and customers. For example, one learner was sensitive to the particular needs of her elderly clients, and others understood the challenges faced by patients of different cultures when seeking help. Trainers engage learners in topical discussions at reviews, which further broadens their understanding. The protection of learners from cyber-bullying needs improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement, and good curriculum management across the provision is not fully established. Managers have a clear vision to develop high quality vocational and employability skills for learners, however expectations by staff of what learners can achieve are not always high enough. Managers have been slow to introduce changes to address some of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection and in previous self-assessments. Those actions taken, however, show a positive impact. Staff are fully aware and supportive of the changes taking place and they recognise the benefits of the much-improved communication between them and senior managers. Early indications are that regular and more effective ways of working are being pursued in most of the subject areas, but are not yet having sufficient impact on the provision, especially in health and social care.
- Performance management of staff requires improvement. Professional development is beneficial, staff training sessions take place regularly, and attendance is high. Strategies to improve teaching and assessment are not focused sufficiently on workplace activity. The quality of training varies too much across the subject areas and good practice is not shared sufficiently. Managers do not have an accurate enough overview of learners' progress to enable them to target intervention at learners who are struggling to complete their frameworks. Managers are now meeting with staff more frequently to monitor, record and use available information better. This is starting to have an impact on timely success rates, which are improving.
- Quality assurance arrangements have not been sufficiently effective in reducing the variations in performance across programmes and in assuring the quality of the small amount of subcontracted provision which is now being phased out. Learners' and employers' views are very positive and are used appropriately to inform improvement. Managers now have a broadly accurate view of performance and the improvements required. Observation of teaching, learning and assessment is too focused on the process and not enough on the learning that is taking place. The grades awarded in observations are often over-generous. Monitoring of quality improvement is not always effectively.

- Leaders and managers are very responsive to the needs of learners and employers at local and regional levels. Senior managers are proactive in local enterprise partnerships and are providing good quality traineeships in building services. The range of programmes currently available reflects local priority employment needs. Many apprentices successfully complete additional industry-recognised qualifications over and above their framework requirements.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good in the training centre but not fully developed across all programmes and workplace activities. Learners and staff are protected effectively from harassment, bullying and discrimination. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place; learners, staff and employers understand their roles and responsibilities well. No gaps in performance of different groups are discernible other than for women compared with men, where the difference is owing to the differences in quality across the subject areas. Access to training is inclusive.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Two designated senior managers take overall responsibility. Appropriate checks are carried out on staff, the information is suitably recorded and workplaces are vetted to identify risks. Staff are trained to identify signs of abuse and to understand the reporting procedures. Policies and procedures, and the responsibilities of managers are clear. The very few reported concerns are followed up quickly and appropriately investigated. Health and safety are well managed. Learners demonstrate a responsible approach to their own and others' safety, they work safely and say they feel safe.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

SBC Training Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding		14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	study programmes	S	19+ learning programmes	ships	£	Community learning
2: Good 3: Requires	=	part-	full-t	stud	Traineeships	earnir	Apprenticeships	Employability	nunity
improvement	Overall	4-16	4-16	16-19	raine	9) +6	ppre	oldm	omn
4: Inadequate	0	-	-	H	<u> </u>	1	A	Ш	0
Overall effectiveness	3				2		3		
Outcomes for learners	3				2		3		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3				2		3		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3				2		3		

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment		
Health and Social Care	3	
Building Services	2	
Retailing and Wholesaling	2	
Warehousing and Distribution	2	
Administration	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	740							
Managing Director	Mr Coli	n Thaw						
Date of previous inspection	July 20	10						
Website address	www.s	bc-train	ing.co	.uk				
Provider information at the time of	the ins	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+	16-18	3 19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
(excluding apprenticeships)	11	1	0	1	0	6	0	10
	Intermediate		te	Adva	nced		Higher	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	16-18 19+)+	16-18	19+	16-	16-18 19+	
Apprendiceship level and age	63 70		0	67 79		(0 9	
Number of traineeships				Total				
		11		()		11	
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners Funding received from								
At the time of inspection the	Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Diverse Training Ltd.							
provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Diverse framing Ltd.							

Contextual information

SBC Training changed its sole trader status in 2011 and is now a limited company. It is based in Shrewsbury (Shropshire) where it has a training centre. SBC Training provides Skills Funding Agency funded training for apprentices and a few trainees in companies which are mainly based in Shropshire and the West Midlands. It also provides training on a full-cost basis, and some supported by European Social funding.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Colin Evans AI

Six additional inspectors, assisted by the quality improvement 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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