

# DBC Training

## Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		27 – 29 January 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider requires improvement because:

- too many apprentices make slow progress and do not achieve within the planned period of their training
- initial assessment results are not consistently and effectively used to identify and plan functional skills support to meet apprentices' individual needs
- additional support put in place to accelerate apprentices' progress has not been fully effective
- target setting is insufficiently focused and detailed in learning plans and at learner progress reviews to enable apprentices to know what they have to achieve and by when
- assessors make insufficient use of technology during assessment and the range of assessment methods are limited
- the range of learning resources currently used is narrow and does not meet all apprentices' needs
- the use of data is underdeveloped and does not provide managers with accurate and extensive information to monitor learner progress and plan improvement
- managers do not set all staff challenging targets for their individual performance
- staff have not been able to refresh their knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity or safeguarding through formal update training.

### This provider has the following strengths:

- apprentices acquire and demonstrate very good work skills
- employers provide apprentices with high levels of support as required to help them develop their skills
- apprentices benefit well from effectively-planned individual subject coaching sessions
- managers have successfully established a clear vision and strategy to focus curriculum planning on meeting employers' skills shortages
- managers have a very clear focus on equality and diversity and have implemented a good range of initiatives to widen participation
- staff manage and monitor safeguarding and health and safety very effectively
- the highly effective self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes clearly focus and motivate staff to improve the provision.

## Full report

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

- Increase the frequency of learning and assessment for vocational and functional skills qualifications in order to accelerate the progress of apprentices. Ensure cases of slow progress are identified and plan remedial action through more frequent assessor visits in order to improve the pace of learning and assessment.
- Use initial assessment results to identify and agree apprentices' support needs. Focus particularly on those apprentices with additional support needs in English and mathematics. Use in-house expertise and resources, and where applicable, establish links with specialist providers in order to meet any further additional needs.
- Increase the variety of assessment methods in order to promote more responsive practice and expand the range of assessment methods that efficiently capture evidence of apprentices' performance at work. Include question and answer, and professional discussion so that apprentices do not always have to rely on written statements to provide evidence of their knowledge.
- Develop relevant staff skills in the use of management information systems in order to make sure they are able produce data accurately. Ensure staff interpret data in order to inform trends in performance so that a more extensive range of reports are produced to inform and advise senior managers.
- Make learning targets sharper in order to address all needs identified through initial assessment. Ensure targets focus on specific tasks that lead to completion of learning outcomes and qualifications. When assessors discuss achievement of targets with apprentices at progress reviews, ensure that they identify their skills gaps as well as progress towards learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Ensure managers set all staff challenging and measurable targets in line with the organisation's business plan. Periodically monitor staff performance against their individual targets through their planned individual meetings and formal appraisals in order to gauge their performance and progress.
- Establish a supply of relevant learning resources that assessors, apprentices and their employers can access and apply rapidly in order to meet immediate learning needs. For example, use the shared on-line bank of training materials and off-the-job modules that are available and already being used on other DBC Training (DBC) programmes.
- Through the regular staff development sessions, update all staff to refresh current knowledge and introduce recent developments relating to equality and diversity, and safeguarding. Improve the coverage of equality and diversity and safeguarding at learner progress reviews by introducing more open questioning and encouraging debate with apprentices.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
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- DBC provides intermediate apprenticeships for post-16 learners in three main subject areas: administration, customer service and retail. Administration was selected as the organisation's key subject area for the purpose of the inspection with aspects of retail being sampled. As a new contract holder no published data are available. Five apprentices have left the programme early for valid reasons beyond the control of DBC. The large majority of apprentices are making slow progress towards achieving their qualifications within the planned time, with no discernible variations in the performance of different groups. However, apprentices are enthusiastic about

their learning programmes and value the recently introduced additional assessor visits which are helping them work towards completing aspects of their programme, such as functional skills.

- Employers retain apprentices who have completed and give sustained employment and good progression prospects. Within the workplace, they provide high levels of support and apprentices gain good job skills and make a very effective contribution at work. The majority of apprentices have acquired challenging job roles and have met those challenges well. One technology-based company offers a range of opportunities to apprentices on completion of their course, which include overseas information and communication technology (ICT) support for international organisations.
- All apprentices pass English, mathematics and ICT functional skills tests at their first attempt or are exempt from taking them. However, initial assessment results do not consistently identify levels of support required for functional skills and do not inform the planning of functional skills development into the apprentices' programme. In many cases functional skills are not sufficiently contextualised into the vocational area or are introduced late into the training programme.

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

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and apprentices' low rate of achievement within planned timescales and slow progress reflect this. Good support from employers, and the training they provide, enables the majority of apprentices to develop good technical and employability skills such as the use of accounting software, customer service and working effectively with colleagues.
- The quality of support for apprentices is too inconsistent but improving since a new team of assessors was recently introduced. Many apprentices are experiencing the effects of weak and infrequent assessment and, while now receiving better support from new staff, are still at risk of not achieving within their planned time. DBC's methods for reporting on apprentices' progress are too ambiguous to enable staff to set them sufficiently demanding targets.
- The quality of workplace coaching, learning and assessment sessions varies too widely and requires improvement. Assessors plan some elements of workplace sessions well. They provide particularly good individual coaching sessions on internet safety, equality and diversity and much helpful information and advice about laws that protect apprentices at work. During workplace sessions, DBC staff do not always concentrate closely enough on promoting apprentices' progress and instead prioritise less critical aspects such as giving detailed oral feedback on completed work.
- Assessors use a limited range of assessment methods which include too much writing by apprentices of personal statements, when recording discussions and using question and answer techniques would be more efficient and increase the pace of apprentices' progress. Their approach is not sufficiently dynamic and creative in seizing opportunities to discuss and observe apprentices' work performance. DBC has recently implemented new processes and procedures to improve assessment and other aspects of the learning experience but these have yet to have an impact on apprentices' progress and achievement.
- DBC accurately identify apprentices' prior achievements in English, computing and mathematics. Conversion of this information into meaningful targets and support plans for all apprentices is not consistent.
- The development of apprentices' English, mathematics and ICT learning requires improvement. Apprentices do not receive sufficient structured support to develop their functional skills and assessors are not sufficiently qualified to support all apprentices. Staff do not take advantage of readily identified opportunities to encourage or enable apprentices to access the rich variety and

quality of learning resources within DBC training centres. In most cases, apprentices receive positive and detailed verbal feedback about how to improve their writing skills.

- Assessors very effectively and routinely involve employers in reviewing and planning learning and work with them and their employees as a team to promote learning. Employers are successfully engaged in an early analysis of apprentices' work targets so that the assessment team is able to agree relevant specialist units in the qualifications. DBC staff very effectively engage good companies in apprenticeships where apprentices benefit from valuable experiences in their job role and have exciting opportunities for rapid progression at work.
- Information, advice and guidance given to apprentices and employers by DBC staff are improving with the employment of new training and recruitment staff. Apprentices now receive helpful information and advice about the requirements of their programmes and progression options and are well matched to companies and qualifications. Too many apprentices are unclear about how they can improve and influence their learning by, for example, completing unplanned independent work or requesting more assignments or different teaching methods.
- Apprentices develop a basic level of awareness of equality, diversity and safeguarding. Resources recently developed by DBC staff are reinforcing equality and diversity and giving apprentices a deeper understanding. However, at progress reviews assessors too often ask apprentices simple questions on equality, diversity and safeguarding and do not give opportunities for discussion to broaden and reinforce understanding.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- DBC offer a wide and effective curriculum to support local and regional businesses. It has very clear and well formulated business strategies to grow the apprenticeship programme. Diverse business areas identified for key growth present opportunities to meet both the local and regional needs and local skills shortages. Working closely with local employer networks, the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus and the local enterprise partnership (LEP), DBC are very receptive and responsive to new initiatives. School engagement is a high priority, with very effective links established with both schools and individual pupils. All staff are particularly aware of the strategy and ambition of DBC and through the strategic operational and development plan fully understand their role in driving the business forward.
- Following the recent introduction of a new senior management team, all aspects of training programme delivery undergo regular and effective monitoring for quality improvement and individual performance management purposes. Highly effective and developmental feedback is provided on individual staff performance following observations of all aspects of the learning programme. Feedback is clearly linked to performance management as part of the staff appraisal and development process. Well-supported staff access a range opportunities to meet their individual development needs. Although most staff work to clear and measurable objectives, staff in one key area are not set clearly defined targets.
- The management of the curriculum has recently been reviewed and priority is now on ensuring apprentices have a clear focus on achievement and are fully aware of the timescales involved. Daily recorded team briefings and regular management meetings now focus on apprenticeship programme performance and growth. However, data produced for managers fails to determine where improvements are still required. Managers do not receive accurate and up to date reports to inform them of learner progress and trends and data use as a tool for quality improvement is currently underdeveloped.
- Self-assessment is particularly self-critical and accurate and is a key component of the organisation's quality framework. Individual subject area self-assessment reports very effectively inform the overall self-assessment report. A detailed and well-understood quality improvement plan drives improvements supported by a quality calendar which very effectively focuses quality

improvement activity. Regular learner and employer feedback leads to improvements, for example, in timings of assessor visits and specific job training requirements.

- DBC staff understand equality and diversity very well. A range of equality and diversity initiatives are in place to extend the knowledge of apprentices through taught classroom sessions and to formally qualify staff. On-line training in equality and diversity forms part of staff induction and reinforces to staff the importance DBC places on ensuring a high level of awareness across the organisation. Initiatives to widen participation have been successful with highly effective engagement with a range of community groups helping remove barriers to learning and participation. Innovative marketing materials, developed in conjunction with local youth groups, ensure a diverse approach and message. However, staff do not always take advantage of opportunities to introduce equality and diversity discussions and debate as part of the learner progress reviews and staff require formal refresher training to consolidate their knowledge of equality and diversity.
- DBC's safeguarding of apprentices is good. Safeguarding and health and safety are very well managed and are high priorities for the organisation; they are led by designated members of the senior management team. No safeguarding issues had been recorded at the time of the inspection. Highly effective systems and processes are in place to ensure any potential issues are well managed. E-safety is particularly well promoted. Assessors deliver very effective individual coaching on e-safety and apprentices are fully aware of the negative issues that can result from misuse of social media. Both employers' and DBC's premises are very effectively risk-assessed and monitored regularly to ensure apprentices work and train in safe environments. Well-qualified staff hold appropriate qualifications in safeguarding and formal health and safety but they do not have regular update training. Most apprentices have a reasonable understanding of safeguarding but discussions at learner progress reviews are limited in content.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### DBC Training

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		
Outcomes for learners	3						3		
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3						3		
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2						2		

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Administration	3

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	22							
Principal/CEO	Kerry Bentley							
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection							
Website address	www.dbc-training.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+
	N/A	N/A	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+		
	12	10	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	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	▪ Not applicable							

## Contextual information

Derby Business College Ltd was formed under a franchise of Pitman Training in 2000, and was re-branded as DBC Training (Delivering Better Careers) in 2012. Operating from four sites in the East Midlands region, DBC offers a range of provision through its Skills Funding Agency (SFA) apprenticeship contract and a large European Social Fund (ESF) contract. Programme areas include ICT, business and management, accounts and finance, employability, customer service and retail. DBC employ 30 staff. The managing director oversees the day-to-day running of the organisation, supported by a senior management team. DBC also offers a small amount of privately-funded training to individuals and employers.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Tim Hanson AI

Two additional inspectors, assisted by the Managing 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. Inspectors also used data on apprentices' achievements. To help them make judgements, inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed coaching 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012)

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