

# Didac Limited

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		10–13 March 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding-1
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
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:

- teaching, learning and assessment are good; well-qualified, experienced trainers and assessors have high expectations of their learners and support them diligently in their work
- learners make good progress in developing their confidence and their vocational skills and many learners develop good or outstanding practical skills
- it has very strong and purposeful relationships with employers and is seen by them as an effective partner that helps them to develop the skills of their staff and improve their businesses
- it supports the development of professional standards and bespoke qualifications well in the specialist vocational areas that it serves
- it makes a good contribution to developing good practical skills with younger learners from local schools and through its study programme.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- the proportion of learners completing their qualifications successfully has been too low on a significant minority of courses
- not all learners have sufficiently challenging targets to ensure that they achieve to the best of their ability
- some aspects of quality improvement and self-assessment are insufficiently rigorous to consistently achieve improvements across the whole organisation.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that managers evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more effectively and identify areas for improvement more clearly and use the information in performance management.
- Ensure that more learners achieve their qualifications in the planned timescales by setting challenging targets that stretch learners and help them to develop their skills and understanding more quickly.
- Ensure learners improve their skills in English by consistently correcting mistakes in spelling and grammar in their work.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Currently, there are 79 learners on manufacturing technology courses and 161 learners on business administration and customer service courses. Three learners aged 16 to 18 attend the provider's own academy in Bristol on a foundation level study programme. Three learners attend the academy for one or two days a week as part of a school link programme.</li> <li>▪ Since 2011, the proportion of learners gaining their qualifications within the agreed timescales declined and in some cases was well below national rates. This decline is now being reversed. The provider's own data show that for the current year the proportion of learners who gain their qualifications within the planned timescales has increased. Current learners are making good or better progress.</li> <li>▪ Not enough learners continue to develop further their English skills during their courses. Although many have the required minimum qualification in English, there is insufficient attention paid to helping them improve.</li> <li>▪ The overwhelming majority of learners clearly enjoy their programmes and feel they have made a good career choice. They develop good team working skills and positive attitudes and as a result their timekeeping and attendance are very good. They become more valuable employees through their participation on their courses and progression rates into permanent jobs and higher level qualifications are good.</li> <li>▪ Nearly all learners develop good interpersonal skills and improve how they work with both colleagues and customers. They also acquire and practise good health and safety skills.</li> <li>▪ The small numbers of young learners on study programmes and school link courses become well motivated and enthusiastic as a result of taking their courses. They develop very good practical skills and some go on to further study in the furniture, wood and construction industry.</li> <li>▪ Learners develop very good technical skills. They understand the technical processes involved in their work and become much better at finding solutions to problems for themselves. Their practical skills are well-developed and they help employers to maintain high standards of workmanship in producing items for sale and to client specifications.</li> <li>▪ Business and customer services learners develop very good people and communication skills. They are good at discussing what customers need and helping them to find products and materials that meet these needs.</li> <li>▪ Most learners develop good written and number skills. Many manufacturing technology learners have very good skills in mental mathematics such as calculating measurements quickly and precisely.</li> </ul>	

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

Good

- The recent improvement in the numbers of learners gaining their qualifications is the result of good coaching and training in the workplace from skilled assessors.
- Learners benefit from the high expectations of experienced and knowledgeable assessors who motivate them to produce industry standard work. For example, learners in furniture and wood become adept at using traditional hand skills and produce products to industry standards such as a yacht mast from a single tree.
- Planning is good and, as a result, learners fully participate in training sessions and make good progress. Assessors provide a personalised programme for each learner that also meets the needs of the employers. The learners from, for example, business administration learn how to work effectively with suppliers and meet their requests in timely and professional ways.
- Assessors use a variety of interesting and stimulating work-related activities to promote knowledge and understanding well. For example, learners on the study programme were invited to wear glasses that simulated a smoke filled room that resulted in them gaining a better understanding of the danger of fires in the workplace.
- The small numbers of learners on the study programme are enthusiastic and develop good vocational skills in furniture making. For example, they produce cabinets and tables to a very high standard. However, not enough of these learners benefit from consistently high quality work placements.
- Additional learning support arrangements are good. Learners receive good help for identified learning needs.
- Accommodation and resources to support learning are good. Learners in manufacturing technology benefit from outstanding workshop facilities that provide excellent opportunities to develop high level skills. The upholstery area is too small for the number of learners who sometimes find it difficult to move freely around their work.
- Learners receive good and timely information, advice and guidance. This ensures that they are on programmes that meet their expectations and aspirations. They receive good information about careers and are able to make well informed choices about future career opportunities.
- Most assessors make effective use of assessments of learners' prior knowledge and experience to set challenging individual targets for learners. These encourage learners to work harder and make good progress.
- Most learners use the virtual learning environment (VLE) well to support their learning. They make intelligent use of the very good learning materials that complement their use of electronic portfolios.
- Assessors' monitoring of learners' progress on e-portfolios and in progress reviews requires improvement. In a minority of progress reviews, assessors do not provide learners with sufficient constructive and developmental written feedback so that they can make further improvements to their skills and knowledge.
- Most learners develop their skills in English and mathematics well alongside their vocational skills to progress in their chosen career. For example, in one upholstery session, learners were routinely calculating surface areas, costing raw materials and writing and presenting their work.
- Assessors do not pay sufficient attention to developing the literacy and numeracy skills in all learning sessions to ensure that the more able learners produce work at a higher standard. Too many able learners do not receive sufficient encouragement and support to study beyond the level required by their framework.
- In the few less effective sessions, the level of work set does not challenge the more able learners. They do not receive sufficiently detailed targets to help them to achieve their full potential.
- The majority of assessors plan and promote the understanding of equality and diversity well in sessions and reviews. The planning and integration of diversity in teaching and learning have

improved since the last inspection, but are not yet consistently good in all vocational areas. As a result, a minority of learners have only a superficial understanding of issues around diversity and show limited awareness of how these could have an impact in the workplace.

## Manufacturing technologies

### Apprenticeships

#### 14-16 part-time provision

#### 16-19 study programmes

#### 19+ learning programmes

Good

### Teaching, learning and assessment in manufacturing technologies are good because:

- learners make very good progress and attain high levels of practical skill and confidence; they work accurately with hand tools, producing a comprehensive range of practice joints, quickly moving to the production of articles that are of an exceptionally high standard, including cabinets and tables
- learners use high quality English hardwoods, rather than engineered materials, and as a consequence they take considerable pride in their work and are pleased to be able to take their artefacts home to show their family and friends
- learners benefit from close support from their assessors; as a result of close individual attention, learning is well matched to the individual needs of learners and helps them to extend their knowledge and understanding and improve their employability skills
- workshop facilities in the academy are outstanding and provide a learning environment equivalent to, or often better than, that experienced by learners in their workplaces; assessors make particularly good use of these facilities and the computer-based resources in the 'Savvy Centre' to plan learning that motivates learners and helps them to learn independently
- assessors are well qualified and highly skilled and are adept at matching practical skill development to the specific needs of the learners' workplaces; for example, they develop specific projects for cabinet makers and boat builders that reinforce learners' skills development in the context of their workplace
- learners and assessors pay particularly high regard to health and safety and safe working practices with learners operating hand and machine tools with confidence and with appropriate respect
- assessment practices for practical skills development are particularly good; learners make good use of a range of evidence sources, including photographs and, increasingly, video and audio recordings
- learners develop very good skills in mathematics; they interpret layout drawings well and can readily transfer dimensions and calculate cutting and machining allowances accurately.

### Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet outstanding because:

- the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications within agreed timescales is not yet good enough
- assessors do not adequately encourage learners to develop their skills in written English further and to a higher level.

**Business administration and customer service**

Good

**Apprenticeships****Teaching, learning and assessment in business administration and customer services are good because:**

- the proportion of learners achieving their qualifications within the agreed timescale has risen substantially over the last year and the majority of current learners are making good progress
- a large proportion of learners completing customer service and business administration courses are able to take on additional responsibilities in the workplace as they complete their courses and qualifications
- assessors collaborate well with employers to ensure a good blend of training in the workplace and in the classroom to meet their business needs fully
- learners develop good business skills; they communicate effectively with customers to identify their product or service requirements accurately and deal with customer complaints in a manner that encourages continued loyalty
- assessors have good and extensive industry experience which they use with enthusiasm to motivate learners to complete their qualifications confidently; they foster relationships of trust with learners and their employers by being well organised, reliable and making regular visits to support learners to enjoy the course and complete their qualification
- learners use electronic software very competently to build a wide range of portfolio evidence, including photographs and video recordings that improves their knowledge and understanding
- assessors provide regular verbal and written feedback to ensure that learners improve the quality of their work to meet business standards and to fulfil the requirements of the qualification criteria to a good level
- learners use numeracy skills to a high standard in ensuring accuracy when fulfilling customer orders, and calculating piping, concrete and guttering specifications competently.

**Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet outstanding because:**

- assessors do not use initial assessment information or learners' analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses to provide sufficiently challenging targets that help learners to improve weaker skills and utilise their stronger skills more fully in the workplace
- assessors do not correct mistakes in spelling and grammar in learners' work regularly enough and they do not prioritise the development of functional skills to ensure that learners produce work at a higher standard
- assessors do not sufficiently promote understanding of diversity as an integral part of the course, with only rare examples of stimulating discussion that raise awareness of sensitive issues beyond the basic requirements of employer rights and responsibilities in the workplace.

**Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- Senior managers and staff at all levels have a clear understanding of the organisation's vision, strategic and operational objectives and how they contribute to the achievement of business targets. Following the acquisition of another training provider, which diverted their attention, managers have succeeded in improving the quality of this provision.
- Operational management is effective through clear performance management arrangements. Managers routinely challenge assessors during individual monthly meetings when reviewing the progress of their allocated learners.
- Managers ensure that good staff development plans support the professional development needs of all employees; as a result, staff motivation is high. However, managers do not take

sufficient consideration of the quality of assessors' performance in lessons or in workplace assessments in order to fully evaluate and improve their overall performance.

- Managers have set clear expectations for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This results in internal observation judgements that are accurate and cover most key areas of teaching and assessment.
- Managers' feedback to assessors does not always ensure they improve their practice. The feedback does not identify the elements of good or better teaching precisely enough or make enough reference to the progress that learners make.
- The system of self-assessment is effective in enabling managers to make improvements. Managers evaluate the quality using the views of learners' and know the strengths and areas they must improve. The self-assessment report does not prioritise clearly the most important areas for improvement.
- Partnership working is outstanding. Since the last inspection, through its work with sector skills councils and employer bodies within the furniture, wood and building merchandising sectors, Didac's staff have been pivotal in actively developing new occupational qualification standards that meet the needs of industry particularly well.
- Employers value their highly effective relationships with Didac. They see it as an important organisation that helps them to provide good access to a wide range of qualifications for their employees and helps employees to extend their knowledge and skills and become more competent in the workplace.
- Curriculum management and planning are good. The directors and the management team work very effectively with a range of organisations to meet local, regional and national needs using good market intelligence. These include learning enterprise partnerships, industry bodies, sector skills councils, employer organisations and regional training provider groups.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers analyse and use data effectively to tackle and eliminate varying performance between different groups. There are no significant differences in performance between different groups of learners or associated with learners who have learning difficulties.
- Learners work in an environment of mutual trust and respect. Relevant policies and procedures are up to date and reviewed on an annual basis, ensuring that staff and learners are suitably protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination, both in the academy training centre and in the workplace.
- Safeguarding arrangements for learners are good. Learners feel safe and are supported well. Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children, including those associated with accessing online learning materials and social media, are updated annually in order to reflect any changes in legislation. Both of the designated safeguarding officers are trained to an appropriate level.
- Safeguarding incidents are very rare. Where disclosures have been made, they have been swiftly investigated and prompt referral made to appropriate external agencies. Managers have recently developed a new policy of how they intend to protect those who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism, but at the time of the inspection this was still in a draft form and not being implemented.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Didac Limited

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Customer service</b>	<b>2</b>

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider							
<b>Age range of learners</b>	14+							
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	383							
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Mr Jon Gibson, Managing Director							
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	June 2012							
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.didac.co.uk">www.didac.co.uk</a>							
<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	1	-	2	38	-	-	-	-
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	70	97	5	27	-	-		
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	-							
<b>Part-time</b>	3							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	-							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	-							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	Didac Limited does not subcontract any of its work to another agency, nor does it act as a subcontractor.							



## Contextual information

Didac Limited was established over 15 years ago providing specialist training across England in wood and timber trades such as machining, furniture and woodworking. It merged with a much larger independent learning provider in 2011 and began to provide training for the builders' merchanting sector in business administration, warehousing and distribution and customer services. It has a base in Bristol, known as the Woodwise Academy, where it has developed specialist facilities to support its work in woodworking and manufacturing. It has developed partnerships with some local schools. A small number of 14 to 16 year-old learners attend the academy as part of their school timetable and there is a small foundation study programme for 16 to 18-year-olds. There is an upholstery programme for learners aged 19 and over.

As well as publicly funded training, Didac provides a range of specialist courses on a commercial basis in health and safety and other specialist areas, largely to clients from the building, woodworking and building retail trades. This work was not inspected.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Wilf Hudson HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by one of the company's directors 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:

[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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