

Gordon Franks (Training and Personnel)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51991

Name of lead inspector: Pauline Hawkesford HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Gordon Franks (Training and Personnel) (GFTP) was established in 1983. Currently it provides apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships for 126 learners in retailing, wholesaling, warehouse and distribution, business administration and customer service. It has 58 learners on foundation level programmes, including Entry to Employment (E2E) and 80 Key Stage 4 young apprentices. The 42 staff includes two directors, a general manager and quality manager, a team leader for apprenticeships and for foundation level programmes, a recruitment team, teachers, assessors, life coaches and administrators.
2. GFTP was last inspected in 2005. Since then it has ceased offering Train to Gain provision and has closed its centre. Almost all provision is funded by the skills funding agency.
3. GFTP is based in central Birmingham, and most learners are from Birmingham or the West Midlands, many of them from areas in which there is significant deprivation and long term unemployment. The area has high rates of workers with no qualifications, with 18% in Birmingham and Solihull, 17% in the West Midlands and 24% in the Black Country, against a national average of 12%.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners:	
Young apprenticeships	80
Entry to Employment	178
Employer provision:	
Apprentices	136

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Grade 4
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	4
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	Grade
Retail and commercial enterprise	4
Preparation for life and work	3
Business administration and law	4

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of the training provided at GFTP is inadequate. Overall success rates are low, and show a downward trend. The proportion of apprentices completing in the planned time is low. However, success rates are satisfactory for learners on E2E programmes, and good for young apprentices. Most learners make good progress from their starting points, and those who complete the programme gain good employment skills.
- The quality of provision is satisfactory. Taught sessions are varied and lively. Assessment is satisfactory. However, target setting for apprentices is not sufficiently precise and does not plan long term aims. The needs and interests of learners on foundation programmes and those disengaged from learning are met well. Support is good. Life coaches are skilled at helping learners overcome barriers to progress, and GFTP works closely with Connexions to offer good information, advice and guidance (IAG).
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The company's self-assessment report identifies areas for improvement that match those found by inspectors.

The planned changes to improve provision include restructuring the apprenticeship programme and fully implementing foundation learning and the qualifications and credit framework. However, these developments are new, and have not yet made a significant impact on apprentices' success rates.

Main findings

- Success rates within the planned timescale on apprenticeships are low. Most overall success rates are low, although the success rates for business administration apprentices at intermediate level match those achieved nationally, as do those for retail apprentices aged 19 to 24.
- Many learners, especially those on young apprenticeships, Aimhigher courses for disengaged learners and E2E, make good progress from their starting points. They gain appropriate skills, including literacy and numeracy, to help them progress into employment or further training and education.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers encourage learners to participate, and make good use of resources and a wide range of teaching strategies to enliven lessons. In a few lessons not all learners are fully engaged.
- Assessment is satisfactory on all programmes. Regular reviews on E2E programmes help learners to focus on the job or training to which they want to progress, and to find ways in which they can achieve their aim. Reviews for apprentices focus on short term targets but they are not sufficiently time bound or specific.
- GFTP meets the needs and interests of learners appropriately. Progression routes for foundation learners are good. Assessment for apprentices is flexible to match learners' working patterns. The company offers introductory provision in easily accessed community locations throughout the city. This is successful in encouraging young people back into learning.
- All learners benefit from the leading role GFTP takes in creating good partnerships with a wide range of other education providers and networks. This helps good practice to be shared, and opens up a wider range of potential progression opportunities across Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country.
- Learners are well supported. GFTP has several life coaches who help learners gain confidence and overcome their personal barriers to learning. It works closely with Connexions, and has made good progress in developing functional skills.
- The company is committed to raising the aspirations of young people and learners. It intervenes successfully to prevent learners at school from leaving early, and to re-engage young people with their education and training.
- Resources are satisfactory or better. All teachers and assessors are qualified appropriately. The process for the observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although ways of using the outcomes from this to plan focused staff development or share good practice are not yet developed.

- Management information about the progress and achievement of apprentices is not easily accessed, nor available in a format that helps teams to plan their programmes to help all learners achieve within their target time. However, data on equalities and the progress of foundation learners are used well.
- Target setting in the annual business plan is not sufficiently specific, nor monitored robustly to ensure that planned improvements take place. However, the company identifies these shortcomings accurately, as well as its other areas for development. It has implemented actions, including a recent restructuring of the management of apprenticeships, to improve provision.

What does Gordon Franks (Training and Personnel) need to do to improve further?

- Increase success rates and the proportion of apprentices who complete in their planned time by introducing a more robust method to monitor learners' progress.
- Improve target setting for learners and teams so that it is time bound, realistic and specific enough to be measured and monitored.
- Use the observation of teaching, learning and assessment to focus staff development on identified areas for improvement, and to ensure that good practice in teaching is shared with all staff.
- Further improve the use management information so that all staff understand how to use it to drive continuous improvement.
- Continue to develop initial and diagnostic assessment and use it to plan all aspects of programmes so that all learners are placed on the right programmes for the appropriate length of time.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the different methods of teaching
- getting to know other learners
- being treated respectfully and as adults by staff
- the confidential support by learning coaches
- the enjoyable and fun induction
- very good additional support from their life coaches
- friendly and helpful assessors
- good opportunities to get jobs through their placements
- particularly supportive employers and colleagues.

What learners would like to see improved:

- breaks later in the morning when it is a four hour session
- getting more information on levels of qualifications being taken
- not having to wait so long for a placement
- receiving copies of certificates quickly
- introduction of canteen facilities
- more structured job search activities at the end of apprenticeships and placements
- more practical and interesting learning resources for technical certificates.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers/partners like:

- the chance to train and develop a learner while on placement before employing them
- the excellent communication and support from GFTP
- working together with assessors and life coaches to improve learners' attitudes and capabilities.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no responses.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

7. The company's capacity to improve is inadequate. On those programmes with sufficient data to make judgements it has sustained improvement in E2E provision, but success rates in the two apprenticeship programmes have declined and are low. Aspirations of learners, especially those who are disengaged have been raised successfully as a result of the company's clear vision of its role. Its priorities are to develop the whole person as well as to ensure learners' achieve. It has met some of the key challenges identified in the previous inspection. Retention and achievement rates did improve following inspection, but have since declined, and the use of data to monitor performance remains an area for improvement. GFTP has identified accurately what it needs to do in order to improve provision, and while this has led to improvements in foundation learning programmes, it has not impacted on apprenticeships. It has sufficient resources to improve and has recently appointed new managers to implement change, although this is too recent to have had significant impact. All staff are consulted about change.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

8. Success rates within the planned timescale are significantly below national rates. Most overall success rates are also low, although in business administration the success rates for apprentices on intermediate programmes match those achieved nationally, as do those for retail apprentices aged 19 to 24. Outcomes for learners who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are good. All learners on pre-NEET programmes remain in education. Some 80% of NEET learners who attend Aimhigher programmes run by GFTP enter education or training. Success rates for young apprentices are high, at around 80%. Progression from E2E is satisfactory, with 63% progressing to further education, training and employment.
9. Learners on E2E programmes make good progress. Many come from being NEET, achieve key skills and functional skills in more than one subject and progress successfully to apprenticeships. Learners who achieve apprenticeships make satisfactory progress against their starting points, and most gain new skills and extend their role in the companies in which they work.
10. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory. Learners on young apprenticeships, programmes to re-engage learners, and E2E gain satisfactory employment skills, including improving their literacy and numeracy. Those apprentices who remain on the programme gain appropriate skills although too many leave early or take too long to complete their programmes. GFTP recognises this and has begun a pre-apprenticeship programme to help learners achieve appropriate skills before taking up apprenticeships.

11. Learners feel safe, and adopt safe working practices. They are well aware of health and safety rules, although these are not sufficiently reinforced at reviews. Attendance is satisfactory overall, although attendance by apprentices at workshops for technical certificates and key skills is low.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

12. Teachers are qualified and experienced in working with young people and in their own occupational area. They plan lessons carefully and have clear aims and objectives. In the better lessons, teachers employ a suitable range of teaching techniques and strategies. They use activity based learning effectively. In several lessons they make good use of interactive whiteboards to deliver sessions which are lively and fun. Teachers encourage learners to take a full part in lessons by asking questions and debating topics. However, they do not always engage all learners fully. Some explanations of topics are insufficient to ensure learners' understanding. Many learning materials for independent learning in retail and business administration are poorly designed.
13. Progress reviews for E2E learners are satisfactory. Reviews take place every two weeks and focus on learners' career choices and their progress towards them. Tutors monitor learners' achievements of qualifications well. However, learning plans often fail to identify learners' barriers to progress and often identify key objectives, such as to improve an aspect of literacy or numeracy or improve self-confidence, without stating how this can be done. Barriers to progress identified during the programme, such as attendance, are not made into key objectives.
14. Assessment practices and progress reviews for apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. Reviews take place frequently and focus on previously agreed targets. However, assessors make too little use of longer term targets which look at progress overall. Some targets are too vague which makes it difficult to identify achievement. Assessment practice is well documented and referenced. Good use is made of professional discussion during this process. However, assessment plans are not always reviewed and modified after assessors set appropriate new targets. In business administration and retail, employers are not involved sufficiently in the review process. Target setting in reviews and assessments is sometimes poor in retail.
15. Progression routes for E2E learners are good. Learners have the opportunity to progress to employment, college or apprenticeship programmes offered by the provider or by other providers who offer training in occupational areas more relevant to learners' aspirations.
16. Learners who feel that they are not ready to take part in a full apprenticeship programme can enrol in GFTP's recently introduced pre-apprenticeship programme which delivers well-supported preparation to aid learners' progression. The programme offers learners the opportunity to take part in a range of training sessions including employability, information and communication technology (ICT), health and safety, literacy and numeracy.

However, too few opportunities are available for learners to take part in work experience.

17. GFTP, in conjunction with Connexions, delivers outreach provision for disaffected, hard-to-reach, young people who feel unable or are unwilling to join a formal programme. The provision lasts for between four to eight weeks and includes an induction, a life coach session, an initial assessment of basic skills and a sport activity.
18. The retail programme meets the needs of learners well. Assessors offer a flexible approach to match the requirements of learners and their employers. Assessors have effective working relationships with employers which benefit both employers and learners by giving learners the opportunity to try work placements before being offered employment or choosing another option.
19. GFTP has a well established and well maintained network of productive partnerships that benefit learners. It is a member of the Northwest Collegiate which serves north-west Birmingham and offers a wide range of day-release vocational courses for schools. GFTP works successfully with many schools in the region and offers a year 10, year 11 and a young apprentice programme. In 2009/10 the overall success rate for these programmes was 82%, with retention at 73%. The company has an excellent working relationship with Connexions and takes a full part in the local NEET strategy group that identifies and supports young people from disadvantaged groups. It has a particularly effective working relationship with other providers through a range of provider networks. It works closely with E2E providers through the E2E providers' forum and has effective relationships with many employers in the retail sector.
20. Care, guidance and support are good overall. GFTP works hard to empower learners to enable them to improve their self-confidence and take a full and meaningful part in their programme and subsequent progress. This is done by using life coaches to carry out reviews and generally support learners with personal or other issues. All life coaches have appropriate training. A Connexions personal advisor attends the centre fortnightly and works with learners from their induction to progression. The provider make use of external agencies to support and advise learners on specific issues including housing, drug and alcohol misuse awareness and aftercare for those previously in care. Induction is good and prepares learners thoroughly for their time on the programme. The provider is working closely with Connexions towards the achievement of a careers service information, advice and guidance (IAG) award and is planning to deliver IAG training to all staff. Employers offer good support to learners and are able to offer specific support for those with additional needs. However, assessors on apprenticeship programmes and life coaches do not work closely enough to improve learners' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

21. GFTP has a very strong commitment to creating partnerships and supporting learners who are in danger of worklessness and low aspirations. It works very successfully with local schools to re-engage learners, and with Aimhigher to inspire young people to train in appropriate vocational areas. It champions national initiatives such as the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and Foundation Learning as a means of giving all learners a way of developing skills and making progress. It works closely with local organisations to improve progression routes for learners. However, the targets it sets are not monitored sufficiently and have not been met on apprenticeship programmes. Data is collected, analysed and used, although GFTP is currently changing its management information system to help avoid duplication and to access data more efficiently. The management of apprenticeships has been subject to considerable disruption over the previous two years. The new management structures are very recent and have not yet made an impact on learners.
22. Resources are satisfactory, and staff receive plentiful training. All tutors have completed introductory teaching qualifications and a few have completed the diploma in teaching in the lifelong learning sector. All tutors are observed, and feedback given. Although team leaders are expected to discuss the areas for improvement with staff, managers do not have an overview of the most common areas for improvement so that they can plan focused staff development to meet identified training needs. Observed good practice is not routinely shared with other tutors.
23. Safeguarding is satisfactory. GFTP is compliant with all government requirements for safeguarding. All managers have had formal certificated training. All staff have had recent training to make them aware of safeguarding and what action to take if they suspect any form of abuse or harassment. The general manager is the named person for safeguarding and she has clear links with the appropriate staff in the local authority. Learners are clear about who to go to if they encounter any safeguarding issues.
24. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. The company promotes the uniqueness of individuals, and fosters mutual respect and courtesy between learners and between staff and learners. It took the lead role in an Aimhigher project to examine progression for white males and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and to develop interventions to overcome barriers for these groups. To do this, it initiated summer schools, run by itself and other providers, throughout Birmingham in areas identified as having significant numbers of young people who are disengaged. This programme has been successful in reducing NEET numbers by around two percent. The company analyses equalities data, including data on the number of referrals, interview and take up of places from different groups of learners. The data shows little difference between males and females, or learners with learning difficulties. Numbers in each ethnic group are too low for meaningful statistical analysis.

25. GFTP has far reaching and strong partnerships with users across Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country. The managing director chairs the local providers' partnership, and successfully leads the initiative to create good links between providers to share good practice and information. GFTP is an active member of the local 14 to 19 strategy board, Aimhigher, and the lifelong learning strategy group. It has productive links with local schools, especially with learners at risk of disengaging from education. It analyses the views of employers and learners regularly, and teams are given this information to help inform their business plans.
26. The company understands itself well, and has developed recent strategies aimed at improving low success rates in apprenticeship programmes. Actions to develop and improve young apprenticeships, re-engagement of learners and E2E have been effective, and provision has improved. It has identified nearly all the areas for improvement found by inspectors. However, strategies to improve these have not yet had time to impact significantly on learners currently on the apprenticeship programmes. The monitoring of action plans is not sufficiently robust to ensure that actions to bring about improvements are completed and their effectiveness reviewed. Managers do not set precise, time bound targets for staff to ensure that they support the requirements of the action plan.
27. Value for money is inadequate. Success rates are low on apprenticeship programmes although the progress made by apprentices is satisfactory. The progress made by learners on young apprenticeships, programmes for re-engaging those who are NEET and E2E is at least satisfactory and in many cases very good. GFTP takes employers, learners and staff views into account when planning the use of resources and is currently planning to make greater use of ICT. Resources are used satisfactorily to support learners, although the frequency and length of visits to apprentices is not considered in terms of environmental sustainability. The skills funding agency provider financial management team has graded financial management as good.

Subject areas

Retail and service industries

Grade 4

28. Currently 37 learners are working towards qualifications in retail and 11 in warehousing. Of these, 46 learners are apprentices and two are advanced apprentices. Around 80% of learners are aged 16 to 18. Learners are placed in diverse organisations such as independent retailers, national chain stores and large warehouses. Assessors visit learners in their workplaces every two weeks to carry out training and assessment. Off-the-job training for key skills and technical certificates takes place at the training centre.

Key Findings

- Outcomes for learners are inadequate. In 2008/09 success rates for learners aged 16 to 18 were low, although combined overall success rates for retail and warehousing learners on all apprenticeships are satisfactory. Success rates within the planned timescale for all learners in 2008/09 are low, and along with overall success rates have declined over the last three years up to the time of the inspection.
- Learners make satisfactory progress against their starting points. Many learners have multiple barriers to learning and employment when they start their apprenticeship. Approximately one third of apprentices progress from foundation programmes and make very good progress with their personal and social skills while in their placement. However, for many learners technical certificates are introduced too late in the programme.
- Learners develop good occupational skills such as customer service. They increase their confidence greatly and learn to work well in teams. Opportunities for progression in learning and work are good. Many learners gain employment in their company at the end of their apprenticeship. A quarter of learners who left without achieving during 2009/10 moved to employment or other training.
- Learners feel safe and are appropriately protected. Employers have effective health and safety and equality practices. Health and safety is introduced appropriately at induction, and learners' understanding of workplace safety is developed through careful coaching from managers and assessors. Learners' understanding of issues such as bullying or harassment and the wider aspects of equality and diversity are not sufficiently developed.
- Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Assessors make good use of digital recorders in professional discussion. Teaching and learning in workshops are good, with a wide range of well-designed learning resources. However, too few learners attend these workshops, and learning materials for independent learners are dull and uninspiring. Key skills projects are not sufficiently linked to the workplace or NVQ.
- Planning of learning is ineffective. Learners have a thorough initial assessment which includes assessment of their learning styles, literacy, numeracy, technical

certificate aptitude, and job role. However, staff do not use the outcomes of initial assessment effectively to plan learning and assessment. Learners do not have copies of their individual learning plans.

- Target setting is inadequate. Learners' barriers to progress and achievement are discussed at their review and actions identified. However, targets for these actions are not specific enough, nor are they recorded on review documents. Targets set at assessment visits are not sufficiently stretching. Learners do not receive written copies of targets set by their life coaches.
- The needs of users are met satisfactorily. Learners have an appropriate choice of units and range of qualifications. Capable learners can undertake higher levels in key skills qualifications. Assessors respond flexibly to employers' needs. Employers and learners benefit from a choice of routes into employment including work trials, short or long-term placements, and supported work experience.
- Good long-term partnerships are maintained with a range of supportive employers. Placements are chosen carefully to support under-confident learners in their first experience of employment. Employers, assessors and life coaches work together well as a team to improve learners' employability. Workplace supervisors are involved fully in learners' programmes. Many employers support learners well to overcome personal problems
- Learners receive particularly good support from trained life coaches to improve their personal and social skills. A stimulating assessment tool is used well to assess and measure learners' progress with life and social skills. Assessors support learners particularly well to prepare them for work placements. Job search support at the end of learners' apprenticeships is not sufficiently structured.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The company has identified this and put measures in place to improve learners' progress and achievement. These include a pre-apprenticeship programme to support learners with multiple barriers, and redesigning the current programme to enable early achievement of the technical certificate and functional skills. It is too early to assess the impact of these measures.
- The management and monitoring of learners' progress and timely completion is inadequate. Data is collected and stored, but is not used effectively for the timely identification of slow progress. Assessors and internal verifiers hold useful monthly meetings to standardise assessments and to discuss new developments. However, the team does not focus sufficiently on improving learners' progress and achievement.

What does GFTP need to do to improve further?

- Improve success rates by a range of methods, including close monitoring and management of learners' progress and achievement of each part of their apprenticeship framework and, improving target setting by identifying smarter and more stretching targets that are well documented for learners to follow.

- Fully implement and evaluate the planned changes in apprenticeship programmes to ensure technical certificates and functional skills are completed early in the programme.
- Improve attendance of learners at workshops for technical and functional skills and review and improve the learning and revision materials for learners who cannot attend.
- Fully use the results of initial assessment to plan learning and assessment more carefully and in more detail.
- Develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity and safeguarding, by reinforcing these through meaningful discussion at reviews.
- Give more opportunities for structured job search support to learners who reach the end of their apprenticeship programme without employment.

Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Context

29. One hundred and seventy eight learners participated in E2E programmes during 2009/10. Fifty eight learners currently take E2E training programmes of which 20 are following functional skills training, two are on Pathways work tasters, nine on Moving On and the remainder receiving intensive one-to-one support from life coaches. Thirty learners are female and 23 are white British. The provider worked with 144 learners during 2008/09 on summer engagement projects with year 11 pre-NEET and year 12 NEET learners. Eighty learners take young apprentice programmes in schools.

Key findings

- Progression is satisfactory on E2E programmes. Except for one year, progression has improved every year since the last inspection. Retention is consistently good. More learners now progress to apprentices than did previously. High numbers of learners participating in Aimhigher summer engagement projects progress to further education or training. The projects improve awareness of work-based learning and significantly improve learners' awareness of funds available to support their continuing education.
- Learners develop a good range of functional and key skills and make good progress towards achievement. Most learners have achieved at least one functional or key skill and many have achieved two. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Attendance is satisfactory. Learners make satisfactory progress and enjoy learning.
- Learners feel safe and staff place a strong focus on health and safety, safe internet use and working safely. Learners can gain health and safety accreditation as part of employability training. They are aware of safeguarding procedures and details of the nominated person to whom they can report problems.
- Opportunities for learners to participate in community and volunteering activities are insufficient. GFTP identifies this as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report and has taken some action to make improvements, but it is too early to judge the impact of these.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work. Better lessons have clear aims and objectives. Teachers are careful to provide individual activities for learners working at different levels and use a range of methods to engage learners. Learning resources are relevant. Staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and have good relationships with learners.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory and takes place early in the programme. A range of initial assessment tools are used to identify training needs in literacy and numeracy, personal and social development and career aspirations. Diagnostic assessment is currently under-developed to define accurately the

most appropriate starting points for literacy, numeracy and information technology.

- Reviews of progress are satisfactory. Regular reviews help learners to understand their progress on the programme and towards career choices. Life coaches make effective use of active and reflective questioning. Reviews do not sufficiently check learners' understanding of equality and diversity and health and safety. Some learners are not given sufficiently challenging targets and actions to complete between reviews.
- Learners' key objectives do not contain enough detail and are not informed sufficiently by the outcomes from a range of initial assessment activities. Some learning plans have gaps in key objectives, particularly where delays occur in gaining information on learners' previous attainment. Some learners are unclear about the structure of their programme and their learning objectives.
- Learners have too few opportunities to attend work placements. Only two learners are currently on a work placement. Implementation of work trials for all foundation learners is to be implemented from September 2010 but planning is incomplete.
- A good range of programmes provide successful progression routes for learners, including to apprenticeships. The range of qualifications enables easier transition to further courses. The introduction of functional skills and personal, social and development and employability qualifications increases the range of provision effectively. E2E provision is offered successfully in community venues to engage under-represented learners.
- Learners receive good support. A comprehensive induction focuses on developing confidence, self discovery and rights and responsibilities through active, interesting and varied sessions. Life coaches provide frequent confidential individual support on personal and employability issues. They give effective advice and guidance to aid learners' decision making and career choices. This helps learners overcome barriers to employment and gain confidence.
- Good management of the programme monitors learners' progress well. Data systems are very effective at monitoring groups and individual learners and they quickly highlight any concern with progress. Feedback from each learner group is analysed and used to improve the programme. Data are used effectively to monitor learners' qualification achievements and attendance.

What does GFTP need to do to improve further?

- Improve learners' progressions by close monitoring of their achievement.
- Develop a wider range of volunteering and work placement opportunities by improving employer and community links.
- Improve programme planning of literacy, numeracy and ICT training by the implementation and use of appropriate diagnostic tools to identify learners' needs.

- Improve the setting of learners' key objectives by reviewing and prioritising all initial assessment information.

Business administration and law

Grade 4

Context

30. Currently, 78 learners are working towards qualifications in business administration of whom 21 are advanced apprentices and 67 are apprentices. Of the 23 customer service apprentices six are on advanced programmes. Learners are able to join the programme at any time. All learners are either employed or on a work placement for the duration of their apprenticeship.

Key findings

- Success rates are unsatisfactory, with particularly low success rates in advanced apprenticeships. Overall success rates in 2008/09 were 63% against the national average of 74%. The proportion of apprentices completing successfully in the planned time is significantly below the national average. Success rates continue to decline in 2009/10.
- Learners develop good vocational skills. Learners on placements develop a wide range of skills and in many cases the job role expands as they progress through their apprenticeship. However, there is no evidence of this being managed by assessors and learners' job descriptions being updated to reflect the additional responsibilities they undertake.
- Planning for framework delivery is poor. The majority of apprentices complete the NVQ before completing key skills, technical certificates or employment rights and responsibilities. Projects for key skills are not related to the job, and as a result many opportunities are missed for developing learners' work-based knowledge and to embed the project across the whole framework.
- Health and safety coverage is good both at induction and throughout the apprenticeship. The company carries out good workplace risk assessments. Learners feel safe in their work environments and all learners complete a comprehensive health and safety review at induction.
- The monitoring of learners' progress is inadequate. Assessors visit learners frequently, review progress against the targets set and record achievement. However, all targets are short term, to be completed by the next visit. Twelve-weekly reviews are not always completed in time. Assessors' record learners' progress as a narrative and as a percentage but this does not reflect accurately their progress.
- Staff do not promote wider equality issues sufficiently. At progress reviews they make insufficient use of opportunities for discussion of equality and diversity, bullying and harassment issues with the learner. The tick box review document has no reference to safeguarding and is inadequate. Often employers or supervisors are not present to give feedback or understand outstanding evidence requirements.
- The results of initial assessment are not used sufficiently to meet the needs of learners and employers. Learners complete a thorough initial assessment

including vocational skills scans and learning styles analysis. However, there is no evidence of how the results of initial assessment are used to inform the planning for teaching, learning and assessment.

- Life coaches are used well to provide pastoral support for learners. When issues with apprentices' performance are identified a life coach works with them to help them to overcome problems. The support is provided for however long learners require it. Life coaches produce action plans and set targets. However, a copy of the plan is not provided to learners.
- Management of apprenticeship programmes is ineffective. The company has recognised this in the self-assessment report and has very recently appointed a manager to be responsible for the overall framework and implemented changes to reduce assessors' responsibility for learners with diverse qualification aims, so that they can focus on apprenticeships. The impact is not yet measurable.
- The provider has a satisfactory self-assessment process. Staff are involved in the self-assessment process and in development planning for the future. Internal verification is satisfactory.
- Resources are not deployed effectively. Assessors visit learners too frequently without any significant benefit to learners' progress. Staff are made available to deliver scheduled workshops. However, attendance is not compulsory and consequently attendance rates are poor. Timings for the workshops do not always meet employers' business needs.

What does GFTP need to do to improve further?

- Introduce a robust centralised monitoring system that will monitor all elements of the framework, identify issues and implement a plan so that all learners are supported to achieve within the agreed time.
- Improve reviews so as to set and modify challenging short, medium and long term targets so that learners' progress can be centrally and effectively monitored and all parties know what should be done and by when. Ensure that all learning plans show learners the milestones they need to complete to achieve their apprenticeship.
- Improve the quality assurance arrangements to enable managers to better monitor performance and identify issues at the earliest opportunity, including routine analysis of data to monitor performance of apprenticeships, by age, gender type of apprenticeship and assessor.
- Improve the planning of individualised apprenticeships to meet the needs of the users, by establishing a delivery plan which embeds work-related assignments and projects into the framework delivery, thus developing learners' work-related knowledge and skills and improve employer engagement.
- Implement the use of technologies such as emails and online learning to support learners. Schedule 12-weekly reviews that include assessors, life coaches and employers to meet the needs of all users.

Information about the inspection

31. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local skills funding agency, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the previous three years.
32. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Gordon Franks (Training and Personnel)**

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners				
Full-time learners	314	0	178	136
Part-time learners	80	80	0	0
Overall effectiveness	4	n/a	3	4
Capacity to improve	4			
Outcomes for learners	4	2	3	4
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4			
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4			
How well do learners progress?	3			
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3			
How safe do learners feel?	3			
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3			
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	4			
Quality of provision	3	n/a	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3			
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3			
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2			
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			
Leadership and management	3	n/a	3	4
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3			
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a			
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3			
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3			
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2			
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3			
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4			

*where applicable to the type of provision

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