

Chapman Bennett Associates Limited trading as easyastraining

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		18–22 May 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
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:

- a very large majority of apprentices gain their qualification within the planned time
- apprentices achieve high standards of work because their employers and training consultants have high expectations of them
- training consultants support apprentices very well so that they enjoy learning and make good progress
- training consultants give very good individual coaching to develop apprentices' skills and knowledge and they apply what they learn to their job roles confidently
- most apprentices gain promotions or increased responsibility at work or progress to further training as a result of succeeding in their apprenticeship
- leaders, managers and training consultants maintain very good links with employers and the local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) in the areas where they work so that the training they offer meets the needs of those areas very well
- apprentices benefit from good information, advice and guidance and understand what they need to do to further their careers.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- training consultants do not set sufficiently precise short- and medium-term targets to ensure that apprentices are fully aware of the skills they need to develop as they progress through their programme
- training consultants do not give sufficiently detailed written feedback to apprentices to help them learn from all the development points identified in reviews and assessments
- not all apprentices are routinely stretched sufficiently to attain the levels of English and mathematics of which they are capable
- managers do not focus the observation of teaching and learning sufficiently on evaluating the quality of apprentices' learning.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop training consultants' skills in writing precise short- and medium-term targets for apprentices to support them fully in developing the specific skills they need. Ensure training consultants use these targets effectively with apprentices and their employers so that they all understand what needs to be achieved to help apprentices make the very best progress in developing their work- based and wider skills.
- Ensure that training consultants give apprentices detailed written feedback on assessed work so that they can remember and apply advice about how to improve, and have information readily available to relate the theory they learn to their workplace experience and practice.
- Help all apprentices to improve their English and mathematics to the highest level of which they are capable by using the information gained when they enter the programme to plan how to develop these skills through their work activities. Continue to develop on-line learning resources and short, interactive videos so that apprentices have easy access to a wide range of stimulating learning resources in order to develop their skills independently.
- Improve the observation of teaching, learning and assessment so that observers focus on evaluating how well assessments, reviews and training sessions enable apprentices to learn and the extent to which training consultants challenge apprentices to achieve their full potential.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Chapman Bennett Associates Limited (CBA), whose training provision is called easyastraining, currently have around 535 intermediate and advanced apprentices in business, and specialise in customer service, management and administration. They also have a very few hairdressing and retail apprentices, but are no longer starting apprentices on these programmes.
- Outcomes for apprentices are good. In 2013/14, overall success rates were high and almost all apprentices who achieved the framework did so within the planned period for completion. The success rate for apprentices aged 19 to 23, the largest age group, was particularly high both at intermediate and advanced level. Success rates were also high for the small number of retail apprentices, but low for the very few on hairdressing programmes. At the time of inspection, apprentices are making good progress and success rates remain high.
- Progression and job-advancement rates are high with almost all apprentices progressing in some way. For example, most apprentices are given new responsibilities in work or gain promotion, and around half progress to advanced apprenticeships or their company's internal training programmes.
- Managers monitor data carefully every month against equality indicators, and there are no differences in the achievement of any groups of apprentices, all of whom have high success rates. They also monitor data relating to the ethnicity of apprentices who start a programme across the east and south-east of England and their learner profile matches closely that of the areas they serve.
- Apprentices work to a high standard. Their programmes help them gain confidence in their skills, for example learning to use databases effectively. All are employed before they start their training, and many are knowledgeable about their job role. During the apprenticeship they become more thoughtful about how they can work well and aware of how they can improve their working practices. Apprentices gain useful social skills. For example, apprentices who find

communication with customers challenging are coached in ways of using polite and appropriate phrases which empowers them to interact successfully with members of the public.

- Most apprentices achieve English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills at the level required for them to gain the framework. However, a small minority start their apprenticeship already having achieved the level required, and too many of these are not stretched to develop a higher professional skill level. Managers have taken action to improve this position, and apprentices are now encouraged to work towards level 2 English or mathematics qualifications or, if they already have these qualifications, develop their skills further.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good with some outstanding features; this is reflected in the outcomes for apprentices that are also good. Apprentices develop high levels of knowledge and improved communication skills that improve their performance at work. The large majority of apprentices are given increased responsibility at work; for example, a business administration learner working at a medical centre is now solely responsible for managing reception duties and bookings for child inoculations.
- Care and support are outstanding. Apprentices benefit from the high expectations that training consultants and employers have of them. They receive excellent support from the training consultants who are very good role models and have in-depth knowledge both of business and the new standards for business qualifications. This motivates apprentices to reflect carefully on their work practices. They are keen to improve their skills and as a result, make good progress in their job roles. Apprentices enjoy their programme and take pride in their achievements.
- Most sessions are well-planned and apprentices benefit from very good one-to-one coaching from training staff who make very effective use of a wide variety of learning activities to ensure that apprentices make rapid progress in all aspects of their learning programme. For example, effective questioning of one customer service apprentice resulted in him thoroughly examining his work practices so that he could develop more efficient ways of working to reduce customer complaints. In another session, an apprentice was coached very effectively and then used spreadsheets successfully to record budget information.
- Most apprentices develop good independent learning skills through using high quality resources that support their progress in between sessions. This further enhances their knowledge and research skills as they use information booklets and web sites to deepen their understanding of business and management topics. For example, a business management apprentice responded successfully to the challenge to research and analyse a wide range of approaches for conducting staff appraisals to improve his company's current practice. However, a few apprentices need further support to develop independent learning skills in the early stages of the programme so that they can make best use of the good paper-based and on-line learning resources.
- Initial assessment accurately identifies which skills apprentices need to develop in their work roles and the starting points for their English, mathematics and ICT skill development. However, not all training staff make sufficient use of this information when they plan learning sessions and as a result, a few learners are not challenged to achieve their potential.
- The induction process is well structured. Apprentices benefit from an informative session in their workplace from training consultants, where, with their employer, they consider and select appropriate programme units to complete for their apprenticeship. Training consultants provide on-going meaningful information, advice and guidance about future learning and career aspirations which encourages apprentices to plan for the next step in their learning at an early stage.
- Assessment practice is good. Training consultants make good use of a wide range of methods to assess and track apprentices' progress. They work closely with employers to enable apprentices

to gather a wide variety of evidence for assessment through direct observations, witness testimonies, work products and recorded professional discussions. Most apprentices benefit from receiving prompt, detailed verbal feedback from training consultants on completed work and on their performance in practical activities. However, written feedback to apprentices by training consultants is not of a consistently good quality and, in a few cases, it is brief, insufficiently detailed and does not provide sufficient information about how apprentices can improve their work.

- Short- and medium-term target setting requires improvement. Targets that training consultants set during progress reviews are often vague or relate to whole task completion rather than identifying specific skills and knowledge to be developed by apprentices. Apprentices are not always clear about precisely what they have to do between visits from training consultants to achieve their overall learning goals, although most complete all their tasks in the planned time.
- Skilful coaching by training consultants helps apprentices to improve their knowledge and acquire new skills in English. For example, they gain good written communication skills that they apply well to produce professionally presented business reports, letters and emails and good oral presentation skills, which are valued by their employers. However, not all training consultants consistently reinforce good punctuation and grammar outside of formal writing tasks.
- Apprentices develop increased levels of competence in mathematics and when using ICT and as a result, they are more confident in their job functions, for example, when calculating measurements and capacity for storing products and developing formulae to perform budget calculations using spreadsheets. However, the improvement of apprentices' English and mathematics skills is often limited to the level required for their apprenticeship and a few apprentices are not stretched beyond this to reach their full potential.
- Training staff promote equality and diversity effectively. Apprentices have a sound understanding of these aspects in the context of their work roles. For example, business management learners develop trust and respect between members of their teams resulting in a productive working environment. However, training staff do not regularly challenge apprentices' perceptions and understanding about the wider aspects of equality and diversity or engage them sufficiently in discussions and debates to deepen their knowledge further. Apprentices say they feel safe and they have a good awareness of health and safety within their work settings.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have very high expectations for apprentices to succeed within their planned time on programmes. Training managers monitor apprentices' progress against qualification aims closely through frequent meetings with training consultants and as a result, success rates are high. Managers motivate apprentices to perform as well as they can through giving their company's own distinction certificates to apprentices who have shown exemplary effort and quality throughout their programme. Just over a third of apprentices receive this award that enhances their future career aspirations.
- Leaders and managers are active in seeking out good practice from other providers with whom they work, and from the suggestions made by their team or apprentices. They are flexible and adapt processes promptly to implement improvements to enhance apprentices' experience, for example, apprentices requested more guidance on future career opportunities and managers put this in place rapidly and successfully. In order to meet the needs of apprentices, who are spread over a wide geographical area and are often the only apprentice in a work-place, managers have created good on-line resources. They are also in the early stages of creating lively interactive videos to further motivate and engage apprentices to develop their skills and knowledge between meetings with their training consultant.

- Leaders and managers have particularly strong partnerships with employers and LEPs, especially LEPs in Greater Cambridgeshire and London. They plan the provision carefully to fulfil employment and training needs to increase the number of people who are skilled in customer care, administration and management to help them grow a range of tourism, retail, and service industries. Most employers work very well with the training consultants and apprentices at the beginning of the programme to choose appropriate units to make up the qualification. Managers support local needs and employers well by negotiating training with another provider when apprentices need to study in a subject area which they do not offer.
- Managers monitor and manage their teams' performance in achieving positive outcomes for apprentices well. They assess the quality of training consultants' support for apprentices regularly through meetings, data on the progress of apprentices, internal verification, observation of sessions, visit records and feedback from apprentices and employers. If training consultants fall below the targets they are set, training managers act promptly to create an action plan and carefully monitor their improvements. If the necessary improvements are not made following training and support, managers act appropriately to ensure that apprentices are well supported and their progress is not impaired.
- However, performance management to improve training consultants' teaching, feedback and marking skills is less well developed. Observations of teaching and learning are focused more on what training consultants do rather than how well apprentices learn and are challenged to perform to their full potential. The process does not always give managers detailed enough information to support individual members of staff to develop further their skills in helping apprentices to learn and in assessment practice.
- Managers provide good continuous professional development activities that are relevant for their staff, all of whom have very good industry, training and assessment experience, but few teaching qualifications. All training consultants take an introductory teaching course, all three functional skills at level 2 and assessor awards as well as receiving regular safeguarding and equality and diversity updates. However, not enough staff are qualified to develop apprentices' English and mathematics skills to a higher level. Managers employ teachers to create work books and learning activity packs that apprentices use to develop these skills themselves, but it is too early to judge the impact of this.
- Self-assessment processes are inclusive and thorough. Managers obtain regular feedback from staff about potential improvements and areas for development through a dedicated email address where staff can give comments and suggestions. They also use an on-line forum to share good practice. Managers maintain very good communications with staff through regular meetings and a motivating monthly newsletter.
- The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and informs the quality improvement plan appropriately. However, the time frames for improvement actions are not always sufficiently specific and it is not always clear how the improvement is expected to benefit apprentices. Managers create action plans for individual projects to improve provision and these have specific and time-bound targets that they monitor well.
- Managers promote equality and diversity well. They monitor data regularly and ensure that there are no gaps between the success rates for different groups of learners. They also monitor the profile of their staff and apprentices and ensure that these closely match that of the local communities. Managers choose marketing materials carefully to reflect diversity, and provide all apprentices with a calendar that highlights cultural and religious events to raise their awareness. They update staff regularly about equality and diversity issues, including training in how to support apprentices with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff are checked to ensure that they are safe to work with apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those who are vulnerable. All apprentices have a free telephone number to call if they have concerns. When concerns are raised, for example about workplace bullying, staff take prompt action to resolve the issues. Staff are aware of measures to prevent the radicalisation of apprentices, but formal training has yet to take place.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Chapman Bennett Associates Limited

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Business	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	965							
Principal/CEO	Ms Sarah Chapman							
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected							
Website address	www.easyastraining.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+		
	21	294	4	206	0	0		
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:	▪ N/A.							

Contextual information

CBA, whose training provision is called easyastraining, was set up in 2009, and was given its own contract to deliver apprenticeships in business in 2013. The company offers apprenticeships throughout the east and south east of England, including London. A few more learners are enrolled on intermediate apprenticeships than advanced. All apprentices are employed, and most are over 18 years old. The apprenticeships CBA offer reflect the employment needs for intermediate and advanced level customer service, administration and management in areas they serve.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Pauline Hawkesford

Seven 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 learners' achievements over the last year 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 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

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