

TheLightBulb Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates	26–29 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have been successful in resolving the majority of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- Quality improvement arrangements have been effective in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Almost all apprentices remain in employment and progress in their careers. Nearly half of all adult learners referred by Jobcentre Plus progress to employment.
- Leaders and managers promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity well.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills and knowledge; they become more confident and an asset to their employer.
- Knowledgeable, caring and supportive teachers and assessors facilitate a positive learning environment that motivates and inspires learners to participate and achieve.
- Leaders and managers have implemented the requirements of the Prevent agenda well and ensured learners know how to keep themselves safe.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Teachers and assessors do not use the results from assessments of learners' starting points and progress sufficiently well to set precise targets for improvement.
- Teachers and assessors do not reinforce the development of learners' English and mathematics skills consistently effectively during lessons and assessment visits.
- Managers do not analyse the attendance of learners at classroom-based learning and off-the-job training to inform them of attendance patterns and specific actions to take.
- Leaders do not focus sufficiently well on planning for the future development of the company.

Full report

Information about the provider

- TheLightBulb Limited (TLB) is an independent learning provider established in 2003, based in Basildon, Essex with additional training venues in London, Milton Keynes and across the East Anglian region. The large majority of provision is delivered by the provider's own staff and the remainder by subcontractors. The majority of apprentices are from within Essex and specifically the Thames Gateway. Skills levels within the region are lower than the national average at level 3 by seven percentage points.
- Approximately 2,000 adult learners are on classroom-based courses, referred by Jobcentre Plus, each year. TLB has around 250 apprentices. The largest proportion of apprentices are in business administration and law, with the remainder in health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise, education and training.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers and assessors provide detailed written targets, based on learners' starting points and ongoing assessments, so that learners and apprentices know exactly what they need to do to improve the standard of their English, mathematics and personal and social skills.
- Develop staff capability and confidence in English and mathematics so that they are able to promote and include these skills in their teaching and assessing and challenge learners and apprentices to develop and apply these essential skills.
- Include the analysis of attendance data in reviews of the quality of provision so that any trends in attendance can be identified and suitable actions can be taken to bring about further improvements.
- Ensure leaders and managers focus on planning for the future of the provision and the programmes that will be required to meet emerging local and national needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the last inspection, the Chief Executive Officer and managers have secured clear improvements in the quality of provision and dealt well with the majority of weaknesses identified. They have successfully established a culture of achievement, which has contributed significantly to improving outcomes for learners.
- Senior leaders, managers, subcontractors and staff work closely with employers, partners and learners to ensure that individual programmes are tailored to meet personal and local employment needs. Staff working with Jobcentre Plus ensure that learners' individual development needs are met and the available employment opportunities are made known to them. Staff use their local knowledge well to update learners about job opportunities. As a result of this careful planning, learners develop skills and qualifications that match employment needs well.
- Leaders and managers have improved the process for observing the quality of teaching and learning, which is now robust. Observers complete detailed and accurate records of the lessons they observe and focus well on the impact on learners. Managers use evidence from observations effectively to develop individual staff and plan organisation-wide training. Leaders manage the performance of staff very rigorously and deal with underperformance quickly. Since the previous inspection, they have ceased working with underperforming subcontractors and brought much of the provision in-house.
- Target-setting for staff is matched well to their individual roles and managers monitor staff performance closely against these targets. However, records of discussions between managers and their staff at individual reviews are not captured with sufficient rigour, resulting in records that are too brief and lack the detail needed to accurately monitor individuals' progress.
- Leaders have improved the self-assessment process and use a wide range of information to inform judgements, including learner and employer feedback. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and reflects most of the findings of the inspection team. The quality improvement plan is detailed and highlights all areas for improvement. However, managers need to focus more on defining the difference between actions and their intended results. Subcontractors' self-assessments are less thorough and actions are not always clear or detailed.
- Leaders have given the development of learners' English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills a high priority. Managers used a clear and concise strategy to bring about improvement resulting in a significant rise in the number of apprentices who achieve their qualifications. Subcontractors focus on developing these skills and including them in short training programmes, relating the skills to vocational topics effectively. However, leaders and managers accept there is still more work to do to ensure that the inclusion of English and mathematics is applied consistently in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and managers promote equality and diversity extremely well. In January 2015, leaders launched an equality and diversity calendar as an excellent base around which to develop this work. Managers have trained staff well; they are now confident to discuss sensitive issues such as disability, labour exploitation and sexuality effectively. As a result, learners have a very good understanding of the topics of equality and diversity and model respect for all.
- Although learners' attendance is good, leaders and managers do not scrutinise attendance data as part of their quality assurance processes. As a result, managers are unable to identify any poor attendance patterns related to different subjects or locations. However, teachers and assessors report any absenteeism promptly to either employers or Jobcentre Plus staff.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance arrangements are good. The Chief Executive and the Operations Director have a detailed understanding of the quality of provision. They support and challenge each other and work closely with managers and staff to ensure that learners are making good progress.
 - Independent consultants are used effectively for key aspects of the operation, for example to scrutinise financial arrangements and provide challenge in relation to the effectiveness of safeguarding and the Prevent duty.
 - Although senior leaders have focused well on improving the quality of provision, they have given insufficient attention to planning for the future. The current strategic plan is almost at an end and arrangements for detailed planning involving employers and partners are underdeveloped. As a result, staff are not clear about the future development of the company.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Leaders and managers have detailed and effective safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring that learners are safe and develop safe working practices. Managers take swift and effective action when issues arise. Learners' understanding of safeguarding is good and learners feel safe.
- Managers make appropriate checks on employers, including health and safety policies and recording employers' liability; teachers and assessors promote safe working practices at all times.
- All employers receive useful handbooks covering equality and diversity and safeguarding, and a letter about the Prevent policy. However, leaders and managers have yet to review these with employers to ensure they have a good understanding of the material.
- Leaders focused well on an early introduction of activities to support the Prevent duty. They ensured that all staff, including subcontractors' staff, were trained prior to the September introduction of the Prevent duty. Leaders made good use of external expertise to support and challenge the organisation to ensure the smooth and effective development of this work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers use their experience and knowledge well to ensure that learners and apprentices develop the necessary vocational knowledge and understanding to improve their skills. For example, apprentices develop their knowledge of legislation, which they can link to their workplaces, and learners gain a valuable insight into the realities of working within occupational sectors such as health and social care. Learners appreciate the supportive and helpful feedback they receive from trainers, which motivates them and helps them to improve their work.
- Learning environments are bright and well equipped, especially in construction and warehousing, with good displays of learners' work and other relevant posters which promote equality, diversity and British values well. Adult learners enjoy attending courses that prepare them well to start a career in health and social care or the warehousing and storage sector.
- Staff provide learners and apprentices with good initial information, advice and guidance which help them make informed decisions about their future careers and learning programmes. Staff use screening activities well to ensure that learners and apprentices start the right course and the correct apprenticeship with the most appropriate employer. Apprentices receive detailed and vocationally relevant information booklets which clearly explain all aspects of the apprenticeship framework. Staff assess and record learners' personal and social skills when they first start their programme; subsequent reviews of progress show increased levels of self-confidence and communication.
- Staff support and care for learners and apprentices very well and quickly develop a good rapport with them, which helps to create a warm and welcoming learning environment. As a result, learners quickly improve their levels of self-esteem. Apprentices and learners receive very useful and comprehensive booklets about a range of local and national personal support services to provide additional support.
- Staff promote and reinforce equality and diversity very well. Learners and apprentices have a very good understanding of equality and diversity, developed through well-planned lessons taught by knowledgeable and experienced teachers. Learners and apprentices extend their understanding through the use of 'hot topics' discussed at reviews and access additional resources, including video clips, through the use of 'quick response' codes displayed on posters in classrooms. In lessons, apprentices are confident to discuss issues such as gender reassignment.
- While teachers and assessors ensure apprentices and learners develop their understanding of unfamiliar words and technical vocabulary in lessons, they do not enable them to master routine mathematics skills that are essential to everyday life. In addition, teachers and assessors do not routinely identify learners' and apprentices' spelling and punctuation errors so that they can improve their standards of written English.
- Teachers and assessors do not always challenge learners and apprentices sufficiently. In a minority of lessons, a few learners find work too easy while a small minority struggle to understand and take little part in the lesson. Apprentices are not challenged routinely to develop higher-level skills to enable them to reach their potential.
- Teachers and assessors do not always agree sufficiently precise targets with learners and apprentices to ensure that they fully understand the steps they need to take in order to improve further; they fail to involve all employers fully in identifying the skills and knowledge apprentices need. Targets for apprentices are frequently a list of tasks to complete and do not focus on what the apprentice needs to complete in sufficient detail so they can make more rapid progress. Targets to develop learners' English,

mathematics and ICT skills are not precise enough and do not relate sufficiently to areas for improvement identified at the start of learners' and apprentices' programmes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

- Adult learners become increasingly more self-confident and develop their personal, social and employability skills, such as communication, well. For example, learners who had previously been unemployed for long periods were able to tackle their confidence issues and quickly gained employment at the end of the course. Learners behave well in lessons, have high levels of respect for their peers and their teachers and work together well.
- Apprentices take personal pride in their progress and become more positive and enthusiastic about applying their new skills in future employment. They enjoy their on- and off-the-job learning, take great pleasure in the work they produce and conduct themselves in a professional manner, for example by attending meetings and appointments promptly and maintaining a high standard of behaviour.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. Adult learners attend training and work experience on time and are ready to learn. Effective communication with employers, Jobcentre Plus and learners ensures that on the very few occasions where learners are absent the reasons for their non-attendance are identified quickly and appropriate support is offered where needed.
- Apprentices work safely and have a good understanding of safe working practices. Employers assess risks effectively and ensure apprentices receive training on relevant health and safety measures. All learners receive detailed guidance on how to stay safe online through the use of good-quality booklets and electronic resources. Learners value and utilise the resources; for example, an apprentice used their knowledge of e-safety to ensure that their children stay safe while online. Business administration apprentices develop a good understanding of their rights at work, including contracts of employment, zero-hours contracts and statutory sick pay.
- Apprentices' understanding and application of British values are good. All apprentices receive a British values dictionary, which they use well to record their definitions of key words and phrases and then carry out research to confirm their understanding. In classroom-based learning, tutors are effective in promoting equality and diversity in modern Britain. As a result, learners are confident to discuss complex issues openly.
- Assessors carry out comprehensive exit reviews with apprentices which identify the impact all aspects of the apprenticeship framework have had on the apprentice. However, assessors do not always record the careers advice and guidance they give to apprentices or record the next steps the apprentice can take to further their learning and career. At exit reviews, learners are very positive about their experience with TLB and are able to identify the skills they have learnt.
- The majority of adult learners achieve additional qualifications, including training on forklift operating, construction skills certificates and in dealing with customers. However, on apprenticeships, assessors do not link sufficiently well with employers to ensure training packages available through the workplace are used to enhance the apprentices' learning opportunities.
- Apprentices' work meets the standards of the qualifications and learners develop good technical skills. Learners from Jobcentre Plus develop the skills they need to help them find work and gain meaningful employment. However, teachers and assessors do not reinforce or monitor the development of learners' English and mathematics skills sufficiently well. As a result, their written work and application of mathematical skills do not develop as quickly as their practical skills.

Outcomes for learners are good

- Learners on adult learning programmes, referred by Jobcentre Plus, make good progress. The vast majority achieve their qualifications and develop the skills they need to help them secure employment. For example, learners significantly increase their confidence and understanding of how to prepare for interviews.
- Since 2013/14, the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has risen significantly. In addition, the proportion who complete their training within the expected timescales has also increased. As a result, the majority of apprentices now complete their qualifications successfully and within the expected timeframe. The progress of current apprentices is good. Apprentices develop good technical skills; for example, a business administration learner skilfully used software to prepare an eye-catching presentation.

- Managers have been effective in identifying and reducing the gaps between different groups of learners. As a result, the gaps between male and female performance identified in 2013/14 have reduced significantly. There are no significant variations in the performance of any other groups of learners.
- The vast majority of apprentices remain in employment at the end of their training or progress their careers with other companies or through further education. Almost half of the learners from Jobcentre Plus progress into employment and for those learners who participate in work experience most secure employment at the end of the programme.
- The proportion of apprentices who successfully achieve their English, mathematics and ICT qualifications has increased significantly over the last two years and success rates are now high. Improvements in 2015/16 have continued and, as a result, achievement in these subjects already shows an improvement on the previous year's results.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes are good

- Adult learners account for the very large majority of the total number of learners. Learners referred from Jobcentre Plus follow short, full-time programmes to develop their skills, which usually last no longer than two weeks. Courses include preparation for work, building and construction, health and social care, customer service, warehousing and distribution, and transportation operations. Last year 1,896 adult learners enrolled on these programmes.
- Advice, guidance and assessment of learners at the start of their programmes are good. Learners are fully informed of future career opportunities. Those not yet ready for the programmes receive clear, impartial advice on alternative training and progression routes they can follow.
- Teaching and learning are good. Tutors quickly build effective working relationships with learners and create a positive learning environment which motivates and inspires them. Tutors provide good personal support for learners and work flexibly to help those needing additional help. Learners enjoy their programmes and the vast majority achieve their qualifications successfully.
- As a result of the good training, learners develop a good range of skills for employment, such as time management and effective team working. Learners develop positive attitudes and grow in self-esteem. They become more confident in their use of spoken English and consequently communicate more effectively in job interviews. Learners gain a good understanding of key terminology used in their vocational area, which prepares them well for subsequent work experience and employment.
- Tutors use their substantial vocational expertise very well to give learners a realistic understanding of their chosen area of work. This prepares them well for the day-to-day challenges they will face. For example, learners planning to care for the elderly learn how to treat those with dementia with dignity and compassion. Learners develop good, industry-related technical skills which are valued by employers. Learners who wish to work in the construction industry gain a good understanding of health and safety as well as achieving the associated, nationally recognised, externally accredited qualification.
- In the small number of weaker sessions, tutors do not ensure that all learners receive a suitable level of challenge, or check all learners' understanding sufficiently before learners complete their written assignments. Tutors do not focus sufficiently on improving learners' written English or mathematical skills and do not relate these skills sufficiently to learners' vocational areas.
- Leaders and managers work closely with Jobcentre Plus to plan and manage programmes which respond directly to the local needs of employers and prepare learners well for future employment.

Apprenticeships are good

- TLB provides a range of apprenticeships mainly in business administration, health and social care and supporting teaching and learning, mostly in the Essex area. There are 259 apprentices currently in training, of which 85 are at advanced level.
- Managers' successful drive to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been effective in significantly improving the number of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship and the English, mathematics and ICT aspects of the qualification framework. As a result, the proportion of apprentices completing their programme is increasing and is now good, as is the number who complete

within the planned timescale. Most apprentices remain in employment and the majority progress to the next level of study.

- Staff assess apprentices' needs well to ensure they are on the most appropriate qualification framework that matches their abilities and future career aims. Where a specific learning need is identified, such as an aspect of mathematics, staff ensure that appropriate support is put in place to meet this need quickly.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills and knowledge as a result of the training received while at work and the effective work of assessors during their frequent visits to learners' workplaces. Assessors are enthusiastic, positive role models for apprentices and use their good occupational knowledge and experience effectively to coach apprentices to understand the concept behind their practice. For example, an apprentice was challenged by an assessor to consider a range of strategies to support children's learning in a mathematics class. This improved the apprentice's understanding of successful strategies in supporting learning.
- The majority of assessors plan the training and assessment visits effectively and use a wide range of learning and assessment activities, including discussions, videos and electronic quizzes, to capture apprentices' interest and motivation. For example, assessors make good use of recorded professional discussions to collect evidence of competence in skills such as meeting customer needs effectively and dealing with customer complaints. The majority of apprentices use newly developed virtual learning resources to develop their skills independently. However, assessors do not monitor the use of these consistently.
- Skilful questioning by the majority of assessors helps establish the level of apprentices' understanding and ensures they participate effectively. However, in a few cases, assessors fail to use sufficient questions and resort to giving information without checking apprentices' understanding.
- Too few employers are involved sufficiently in the design and review of apprentices' training. The training undertaken by apprentices at work is not routinely linked to the apprenticeship programme and any additional qualifications planned by employers for apprentices are not always included in apprentices' learning plans.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2,208
CEO	Mrs Lesley Jones
Website address	www.thelightbulb.net

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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	0	41	0	31	0	4	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	63	103	5	80	0	8		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ STC (Specialist Trade Courses) ■ ALM Limited 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Shane Langthorne, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derrick Baughan	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mary Aslett	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Winchcombe	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Masterson	Ofsted Inspector
Kanwaljit Dhillon	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Operations Director, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View is a new website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too.

To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

