

Blackburne House Education

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates	14–17 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding provider

- Almost all learners complete their courses and achieve their qualifications.
- Learners develop excellent skills and confidence, which prepare them exceptionally well for employment and the next steps in their development.
- The behaviour of this very diverse group of learners is exemplary. Learners display high levels or respect for each other and for staff.
- Teachers use their experience and knowledge highly effectively to plan learning activities which engage learners, respond to individual needs and offer the highest challenge. Learners respond with enthusiasm.
- Adults' support for learners is excellent. It is responsive to learners' potential personal and learning issues that may impede progress.
- Outstanding partnerships, including with employers benefit women.
- Managers' successful improvement strategy has increased learners' achievements significantly since the last inspection.
- Governance is outstanding and has a strong impact on improvement, strategy and performance.
- Leaders' highly relevant vision and mission have high impact locally and nationally on women's issues.
- Managers and staff engage successfully with disadvantaged women throughout the area. Programmes encourage participation by those who are least likely to take part in learning.
- Managers do not collect and analyse information on learners' destinations in enough detail.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Women's Technology Training Limited, known as Blackburne House Education (BHE), is a registered charity and is part of the Blackburne House Group (BHG). BHG covers five separate social enterprises with a shared set of values that define their approach to the education, training and empowerment of women. A significant number of learners are refugees, asylum seekers, lone parents, the long-term unemployed, carers or women who have not previously achieved any qualification. BHE also offers provision for women in safe houses. Courses on offer are primarily for adults, mainly women, but a few women aged 16 to 18 and one apprentice also access courses within the centre. Most of the courses are between five and 24 weeks long.
- BHE is situated in Toxteth, one of the most deprived areas of Liverpool. The unemployment rate across Liverpool is much higher than the rate for the North West and the national average. The proportion of people in Liverpool with no qualifications, and the proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in education or training are higher than the respective national and North West rates. Fewer young people gain grades A* to C at GCSE, including mathematics and English, than nationally or in the North West.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Make better use of learners' destinations data to ensure that the success of all learners is identified accurately and celebrated.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Highly effective leadership and advocacy on behalf of women by governors, the chief executive and senior managers have created a very successful organisation. The culture is innovative, setting high expectations of staff and learners. These expectations inspire learners, raise their aspirations and promote respect and tolerance. High standards are expected and achieved.
- Staff engender very positive attitudes to learning, which help learners to develop confidence and self-esteem. Good-quality training programmes are in place which meet learners' needs well. They achieve high levels of success, which has a major and positive impact on them, the local community and the region in terms of promoting women's achievements.
- The senior team values staff highly for their work and they, in turn, appreciate the open and supportive management style. A strong vision and ethos of equality and fairness drive strategy, with clear objectives that include engaging with local, regional and national social and economic priorities to promote women's aspirations and achievement.
- Outstanding partnership working with key organisations and employers ensures that the responsiveness of the organisation is highly tuned to the needs of women locally, regionally and nationally. The outcomes for women achieved through the strong relationships with the construction industry exemplify this. New partnerships are under way, for example, to establish women's contribution through employment in logistics and the digital industry.
- Leaders and managers achieve high standards using performance management and professional development very effectively. They set challenging performance objectives for staff to take responsibility for quality improvement, including for the quality of their teaching, and targets to improve success rates. Although managers review learners' attendance rates regularly with staff, targets for these are not routinely set as part of the performance management process.
- Managers support staff well. Training and professional development arrangements are good. Staff benefit from regular and frequent professional development, training, updates, peer mentoring and sharing of good practice.
- Governors and the senior team, together with staff and learners, review and assess the quality of the provision accurately. Good use of data, and clear judgements identifying strengths and areas for improvement, lead to highly effective quality improvement planning, providing a sound basis for planning and managing the provision. Managers did not evaluate learners' destinations in the most recent self-assessment and further work is under way to extend the coverage of learners who have left in order to identify their destinations accurately.
- BHE's understanding of women's needs is exceptional and continues to develop as contemporary needs and challenges to women emerge in social and economic contexts. Staff plan and organise support and learning programmes so that learners achieve maximum benefit in developing skills and attitudes and make good progress from their starting points. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are good.
- Embedded in the ethos of the organisation, and in the way it carries out its work, is the promotion of equality and diversity. Effective training takes place so that staff become confident in reinforcing with learners values including democracy, tolerance of different cultures and religions, mutual respect and individual liberty. Staff are well informed through regular communications providing information on key safeguarding, equality and diversity issues. Senior managers analyse learners' outcomes thoroughly and intervene where they identify gaps in achievement for different groups of learners.
- Learners demonstrate through their behaviour in lessons and projects a highly developed understanding of equality and diversity, mutual respect and tolerance.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance is very effective and constructive support and challenge take place with the senior team.
 - The board oversees significant improvements and major strategic developments successfully to ensure that objectives are achieved for the education and training provision.
 - Financial and contractual oversight is thorough.
 - Board members define and articulate the core mission of the organisation clearly and, together with the senior team, set highly appropriate plans to achieve their goals.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - The arrangements in place meet statutory safeguarding requirements and include an up-to-date

record of all staff.

- Staff teach learners how to protect themselves and others, covering bullying, online safety, safeguarding and protection of learners from radicalisation and extremism. Most learners have a good understanding but, in a small minority of cases, the reinforcement of key learning points with learners lacks sufficient impact.
- Two designated safeguarding officers, together with the staff team, review the organisation's policies and practices regularly.
- Staff and learners receive safeguarding and 'Prevent' training and have a sound understanding of how to report concerns or incidents.
- Good communication channels with other agencies and sources of support are in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Staff prepare learners exceptionally well for the next steps in their development. Learners on access to higher education courses develop extremely good analytical, critical and report-writing skills in preparation for the demands of higher education. Learners on courses for English, for speakers of other languages, improve their competence in oral and written communication, leading to greater confidence in everyday situations. All learners develop good employment-related skills such as working both cooperatively and independently, and arriving punctually.
- Teachers use their experience and knowledge very well to plan learning activities which engage learners, offer optimal individual challenge and to which learners respond with enthusiasm. Tutors are well qualified and have high levels of experience in each of their disciplines. Learners on health-related courses, for example, benefit from tutors' first-hand experience of working with a wide private client base. As a result, they gain useful information and advice on self-employment, thus broadening their career options. Learners in the early stages of teacher training are clear about the high expectations of the course. They see their tutor as a good role model and understand the relevance of drawing up their individual learning plans to support planning for their future career.
- Initial assessment is good. Tutors discuss course requirements with potential learners at open days and evenings to ensure that learners are directed to the appropriate course. During a two-day induction, learners carry out an assessment of their competence in English and mathematics. In conjunction with tutors, learners grade themselves on their confidence in a range of highly relevant skills. For learners on access to higher education courses, for example, these skills include essay writing, using a library and reading journal articles.
- Learners benefit from a high level of close, personal involvement in planning their learning to meet their needs. Learners agree individual targets, which tutors monitor through learners' reflective logs. Tutors record learners' personal circumstances that may adversely affect planned progress. As a result, learners can see how they are making progress against their original goals.
- Feedback through assessments and progress reviews is sound in the majority of cases. Oral feedback is good and supported, as appropriate, by written motivational comments identifying how well learners have achieved in the relevant unit or learning activity. In most cases, as a result of frequent and informative feedback, learners are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Tutors plan extremely well to ensure equality of opportunity. They present resources attractively and provide activities suitably differentiated to ensure that all learners can develop. However, on rare occasions, responses to questions are dominated by the more confident and articulate learners. The understanding of learners who are less confident orally is not checked.
- Tutors promote awareness of diversity well. In one access to higher education session, learners discussed policing methods in their home countries. In a health-related session, the tutor discussed how some other countries require doctors to be trained in complementary therapies. Tutors ensure that planned activities involve learners working cooperatively and supportively. Inspectors saw no tensions arising as a result of the wide diversity of learners' cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- Support for learners is excellent and very responsive to self-disclosed potential personal and learning issues which may impede progress. Practical support includes legal advice, bursaries, food parcels and workplace clothing where a need has been identified. Where learners have been diagnosed with dyslexia, staff provide learning resources on coloured acetates where appropriate. They send work to learners who may miss a session because of caring responsibilities. As a result, learners maintain their interest and their retention on courses is very good.

- Learners on functional skills courses enjoy their lessons and test results are good. In some programmes, mathematics skills such as working with percentages and volumes arise naturally. However, on a small number of occasions, tutors do not check essential spellings or take opportunities to broaden learners' vocabulary and their understanding of, for example, prefixes and common acronyms.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

- Many of the learners attending BHE are from disadvantaged groups including refugees, asylum seekers, lone parents, long-term unemployed, ex-offenders and women who are carers. Adult learning programmes help learners who are less likely to access training and education to develop their skills, progress towards higher education or employment and become more independent in their communities.
- Learners make excellent progress in their levels of confidence, which they demonstrate in the classroom with high levels of involvement, confidently voicing their opinion and asking searching questions. They can articulate clearly how participation in their programmes has improved their knowledge, skills and attitudes and they take great pride in their achievements. Learners are looking forward to going on to study at university so that they can fulfil their career ambitions. Learners on a home maintenance course described how they have lost their fear of power tools, have developed a good knowledge of safe working practices and are prepared to tackle do-it-yourself tasks which they had previously thought were beyond them. Learners describe how family attitudes towards them have changed for the better, by them seeing that females have skills traditionally viewed as being in the male domain.
- Tutors provide highly effective sessions to ensure the well-being of learners, giving them the skills and techniques they need to deal with the stresses in their daily life and the demands of their studies. The learners greatly appreciate the emphasis on looking after themselves and the relatively small changes they can make in their lives to feel better and make good progress.
- Tutors ensure that learners develop the knowledge and skills needed for their planned progression routes to the standard required in academic or commercial settings. Learners speak very positively about their much-improved planning and organisational skills. Learners have a good standard of underpinning knowledge for their complementary therapy courses. Their increased knowledge of anatomy and physiology equips them well for consultation with, and assessment of, clients.
- Learners gain a great deal of benefit from a good range of work experience opportunities, developing their employability skills and understanding of expectations in industry. Learners on a media make-up programme are preparing to work with the make-up team for the passion plays at Liverpool Cathedral during Easter, where a professional set designer will verify learners' work. An in-house health spa reflecting industry standards, and which is open to the public, allows learners to work in a realistic setting, applying the skills they have learned in the classroom. Links are good with a wide range of employers who offer learners work placements at the end of their courses where they can work around their care responsibilities.
- Learners make excellent progress in their language skills and those who speak other languages take a more active role in the community and achieve the necessary qualifications and progress to higher education. A local performing arts group develops learners' speaking and listening skills very effectively through listening to different accents, singing and taking part in group activities. Learners on a creative writing course are inspired to write poetry and prose and take part in readings at the centre. Learners are increasingly confident in marshalling arguments in support of their views and have learned to debate respectfully, accepting that other learners may hold opposing views.
- Learners develop and use their functional mathematical skills very effectively. Learners in home maintenance can now see the relevance of mathematical concepts such as volume and area as they apply this knowledge to mixing adhesives and measuring surfaces prior to tiling.
- Learners feel very safe and protected in the homely and friendly atmosphere of the centre. Learners know what to do and to whom they should go if they have any concerns. Most learners know how to keep safe online. Staff give a high priority to the welfare of learners and support them exceptionally well when they have problems, for example with benefit payments. Learners receive food parcels and a local retail employer donates clothes for those who need them. A nursery on site offers good childcare.
- For a small minority of courses, such as entry-level functional skills and diplomas, attendance is slightly low, mainly due to learners who may be absent due to care responsibilities or being away to visit family overseas. Learners are mostly punctual and prepared well for their sessions. Those who are absent from sessions catch up with their work quickly with the support of their tutors.

- The behaviour of this very diverse group of learners is exemplary. They work very hard, showing tolerance towards each other and celebrating their differences. Learners support each other exceptionally well, helping each learner to be open to other views and opinions. When learning about the history of Liverpool, several topics stimulated discussions that explored social and ethical issues in a constructive and enlightened manner.

Outcomes for learners

are outstanding

- Success rates have improved consistently to be very high. Almost all learners completed their courses and were successful in 2014/15. The vast majority of learners who enrolled on programmes in 2015/16 remained on their courses. Success rates are high across the whole curriculum. Data show no significant gaps in achievement between different groups of learners.
- Learners make strong progress from their starting points and are extremely keen to build on their learning and progress further. Learners on construction courses display very good practical skills across a range of crafts and gain a thorough understanding of technical terms. They display very high levels of confidence when attempting new tasks and excellent teamworking skills when working together on larger, more complex tasks.
- Learners make excellent progress in developing their levels of confidence. Discussions in classes are highly participative, involving almost all learners. Increased confidence, skills and knowledge have resulted in most learners having highly raised aspirations. They speak confidently about the impact of their improved knowledge, skills and attitudes in their work and personal lives. Most learners enjoy their studies, embrace learning and recognise how this has helped them to progress.
- Most learners develop a sound understanding of mathematics and English. Learners on construction courses apply mathematics well to work out volumes and areas in order to estimate quantities of materials required and associated costings. Almost all learners develop a good range of skills to prepare them for employment or for the next stage of their education. Learners recognise how their learning, and their improved skills, prepare them better for employment and often use their new skills and knowledge in their personal lives.
- The majority of learners continue to positive destinations such as employment, further and higher education or voluntary work upon completing their courses. Learners with further barriers to progression, such as family or caring responsibilities and medical problems, are helped by BHE's managers and staff to overcome obstacles and to plan for progression on an individual basis. Many unemployed learners progress into jobs as a result of their improved skills and behaviours gained during their studies. Managers do not collect and analyse information on learners' destinations in sufficient detail.
- Learners develop an exceptionally strong understanding of equality and diversity and show extremely high levels of mutual respect and tolerance to staff and to fellow learners. Most learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism. A few learners did not fully recall the key points regarding online safety.

Provider details

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	647
Principal/CEO	Claire Dove
Website address	www.blackburnehouse.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+
	5	195	6	70	N/A	36	N/A	18
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	The provider has no subcontractors							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Bob Busby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derrick Spragg	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clive Blanchette	Ofsted Inspector
Jean Webb	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of learning, as nominee. 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.

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