

Babcock Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

8–11 March 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
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Staff work very well with large employers to develop apprenticeships that meet the specific training needs of the employer, and improve the performance of their staff and their businesses.
- Leaders and managers use data and information about apprentices' performance very well to monitor progress and take action to support those whose progress is insufficient.
- Apprentices develop skills that are highly relevant to their job and their career aspirations.
- Apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills well; a high proportion achieve grades in these subjects at a higher level than expected.
- Apprentices who have had a long break from education, or who have previously gained few formal qualifications, develop the confidence and ambition through their apprenticeships that enable them to make good progress in their career.
- All apprentices continue in, or progress into, permanent employment and most progress into higher level jobs as a result of their apprenticeship.
- Assessor/trainers are well trained, supported effectively by their managers, and have the necessary industrial expertise to ensure their apprentices work at the standards expected by industry, often at a higher level than that demanded by the qualifications they achieve.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- The proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship within the expected timescale is too low and has not improved quickly enough.
- The provider does not engage sufficiently with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) to understand fully, and meet, local employment needs.
- The proportion of apprentices who are aged 16 to 18 has not increased sufficiently.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Babcock Training Limited is one of the largest providers of apprenticeships in England with over 14,000 apprentices in training at the time of the inspection. The provider has apprentices throughout the country. These are managed through 11 regional offices, supported by a national quality team and a central processing team based in Bristol. The provider is part of the Babcock International Group, and has grown over the last 10 years through a series of acquisitions of smaller companies.
- A large majority of apprentices are aged 24 and over and employed in hospitality, retail and health and social care with a smaller number in active leisure, business administration and management and engineering. Most apprentices are employed by large employers, particularly those on engineering apprenticeships.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship on time by reducing the number of learning and assessment sessions that are cancelled and ensuring that all apprentices start their training promptly once enrolled.
- Ensure all employers provide time for apprentices to complete work that contributes to their qualifications.
- Make greater efforts to develop close links with local enterprise partnerships, and other local stakeholders, to ensure managers fully understand local employment trends and requirements.
- Target information, advice and guidance at young people leaving school or college, and work with employers to increase the proportion of apprentices who are aged 16 to 18.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have a clear strategy that is communicated well to all staff. This strategy focuses on providing high-quality apprenticeships in the industries in which Babcock Training Limited has developed expertise over a long period and built a strong reputation with employers. Leaders have, over many years, critically evaluated the quality of provision well, and implemented improvements to ensure the apprenticeships are valued by employers. As a result, leaders and managers have developed the resources, programmes, staff and delivery models to a high standard. Employers are very complimentary about the quality of training provided.
- Leaders engage well with large employers to ensure their staff receive good training through their apprenticeships. Nearly three quarters of apprentices, except in service sector apprenticeships, are employed in large companies that have large numbers of apprentices trained through Babcock Training. The provider works closely with these employers to develop apprenticeship programmes that are closely tailored to the needs of each industry and company. For example, in motor vehicle, staff provide comprehensive training in the underpinning principles of motor vehicle engineering, supplemented by training that is specific to each manufacturer. Where employers run their own training programmes alongside the apprenticeships, Babcock Training has produced a complementary apprenticeship programme.
- Employers' satisfaction with the service they receive from Babcock Training is very high. They appreciate the careful planning of the apprenticeships and the amount of support that staff at all levels provide to apprentices and employers.
- Leaders and managers evaluate the quality of apprenticeships well and have a perceptive understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Leaders have clearly identified targets for improvement and the actions they need to take to achieve these. They monitor closely their progress on completing actions to improve provision. Leaders and managers use surveys well to capture apprentices' views about their experiences and respond well to concerns that apprentices raise. Apprentices are highly satisfied with the training they receive.
- Performance management is robust. Managers regularly review their staff's performance and use one-to-one meetings effectively to improve the quality of individual staff members' work and outcomes for their apprentices. Staff are encouraged to achieve their potential through a number of training schemes which ensure a consistently high quality of practice across all programmes. New staff are set high standards by their managers and are nurtured well to achieve these through comprehensive induction, support from mentors and regular performance management meetings with their manager. Staff like working for the provider and share their leaders' aspirations for their apprentices.
- Senior leaders clearly define the accountability and responsibilities of managers. Staff know what is expected of them and work diligently to achieve well and meet expectations. Clear policies and procedures underpin the strong sense of purpose, values and commitment displayed by staff across the provider.
- The business processes that support assessor/trainers have been developed well over many years to ensure the size and complexity of the provision does not allow individual apprentices to become lost in the system. Management information provides staff at all levels with quick access to information about individual apprentices' progress and quickly alerts them to any concerns. Managers use this information well to review apprentices' progress regularly with assessors. However, managers have not ensured that all assessor/trainers are sufficiently focused on improving the proportion of apprentices who complete within their expected timescale.
- Assessor/trainers have a wide range of resources to use with apprentices that are tailored well to their employer's needs. Most apprentices have access to good resources on a website but, for a small number of subjects, these resources are underdeveloped.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the employers they work with place apprentices in permanent jobs that provide them with the opportunity to progress in their career at the end of the apprenticeship. Most employers provide the support, time and guidance their apprentices need while studying their apprenticeship. However, a small minority of employers are not sufficiently committed to supporting their apprentices. These employers do not take sufficient interest in their apprentices' progress; they do not provide them with time to complete work. They tolerate their apprentices cancelling training and assessment sessions at short notice. Managers are well aware of this problem and are in the process of making improvements. It is too soon to judge the impact of these improvements.

- Leaders and managers work closely with employers, particularly in engineering and health and social care, to identify shortages in skills and to target recruitment of new apprenticeships to tackle these shortages. However, as a result of only limited contact with LEPs and other local stakeholders, managers do not consistently capture sufficient information to ensure that their apprenticeships are closely aligned to local employment priorities.
- Leaders have recognised that they have taken insufficient steps to increase the proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18. In the last year, they have increased the number of staff responsible for improving relationships with schools and local stakeholders, and are taking steps to promote their apprenticeships to school leavers. These activities have yet to lead to an increase in the proportion of 16–18-year-old apprentices.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance is provided by members of the executive board of Babcock International. Reports to this board are thorough and regular; managers systematically report progress towards meeting key performance indicators. Staff at all levels understand the well-defined targets and the consistently high standards that senior leaders set for the provision.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Leaders, managers and staff demonstrate a robust and effective approach to safeguarding and welfare issues. They assess risk appropriately and take swift action to tackle any concerns to ensure apprentices are protected from harm and are well supported. Staff take quick and decisive action when apprentices report negative experiences in the workplace; for example, they speedily tackle issues such as bullying, harassment or discrimination.
 - Training and resource materials are of a high quality and have been developed to ensure that all staff have been trained on e-safety, fundamental British values, and the risk of extremism and radicalisation. Integration of these themes into their work by assessor/trainers is at an early stage.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Apprentices make good progress as a result of the well-planned training programmes and the careful support and encouragement they receive. Assessor/trainers are well qualified and experienced in the occupations in which their apprentices are employed. Their expertise, conduct and experience make them good role models for their apprentices.
- Apprentices have a wide range of qualifications and experience at the start of their programme. Assessors recognise this well and tailor the apprenticeships to take account of apprentices' prior knowledge. For example, in one company, assessor/trainers have worked closely with managers to raise the standards of work of a disparate group of new employees to a consistent level at which they are ready to take on jobs as departmental managers. An assessor holding an initial meeting with a young kitchen worker, who had only been in England for a few months, rapidly set up a good working relationship with the young person who soon began to explain to the assessor their role in the business and what they hoped for from the apprenticeship that they were just starting.
- Training and assessment programmes are well planned. Employers feel closely engaged with planning the training and assessment of their apprentices. Most assessor/trainers keep employers informed about how well the apprentices are doing. Visits to apprentices are frequent and their regularity increases if the apprentice needs more support. In some vocational areas, however, too many planned meetings between assessors and their apprentices are cancelled, often due to the demands of the employers' business, and this slows down the apprentices' rate of progress.
- Most apprentices are set clear targets by their assessors. These are recorded on the progress tracking system and are reviewed regularly. Despite this, a minority of apprentices are not making good progress and will not succeed on time. In a small number of cases, apprentices have been slow to start their training at the beginning of their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices produce work of a good standard and develop good vocational skills. They are well motivated and enjoy both their time in the workplace and their studies. Assessor/trainers are skilled at nurturing apprentices' enthusiasm for their work. They develop strong working relationships with apprentices and a high level of mutual respect exists between these two groups.
- The development of apprentices' skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) skills is an integral part of their training programmes. Most apprentices develop these skills well and a very large majority of them pass their functional skills tests at the first attempt. Assessors are responsible for making sure they develop these skills; they are well supported by a team of specialist trainers in these subjects. Assessor/trainers are in receipt of training that successfully develops their own

skills in English and mathematics, and to become more skilful teachers of these subjects.

- Advice and guidance to apprentices on developing their careers are thorough and helpful. Assessor/trainers have worked in the industry themselves and they understand the next steps available to apprentices. They discuss these with their apprentices and help them to make sensible and informed choices about their careers, often using the helpful resources provided in the company's 'Your Future' module. Many apprentices are now in promoted posts following successful completion of their qualifications.
- Babcock Training and employers offer a wide range of additional qualifications and enrichment activities, especially to younger apprentices in the in-house academies. For example, motor vehicle apprentices take part in outdoor team challenges as part of their programme and rail apprentices complete an additional qualification in leadership and management.
- Assessor/trainers promote equality and the awareness of diversity well in reviews of individual apprentices' progress and in training sessions. Examples of where these aspects may impinge on apprentices' working life are included in their training.
- Assessment is fair; assessor/trainers use a wide range of assessment techniques to capture effectively evidence of apprentices' progress and competencies. These include the use of written testimonies, direct observations of apprentices at work and video or audio recordings of sessions. In a small number of cases, assessments and reviews take place in public areas where privacy cannot be guaranteed.
- Assessor/trainers provide good feedback on apprentices' written work, but in a minority of cases it does not provide sufficient detail to help apprentices understand how to improve their work. Not all assessor/trainers consistently identify and correct grammar and spelling mistakes in apprentices' work, and thus do not promote employability skills in this aspect of written work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Apprentices are enthusiastic and the great majority take a real pride in their work. They want to do well. They enjoy their learning and use their new-found knowledge and skills well to support improvements in their employers' businesses. Apprentices develop good team-working skills. They successfully work with others – a fact that is often commented on by their employers. They are highly regarded in the workplace.
- Apprentices develop confidence through their success. They can discuss their work and their progress with ease, and many clearly articulate what they are gaining from their time as an apprentice. For example, one assessor in a retail footwear chain helped an apprentice to become more confident in her abilities to succeed in English and mathematics when she was thinking seriously about leaving the programme. She is now doing well in both subjects.
- Many apprentices have not been successful at school, or have been out of learning for several years. Many of them find that the support of their assessor/trainers enables them, often for the first time, to enjoy learning and recognise the benefits it brings to their careers and personal development.
- Attendance at training sessions is closely monitored and is high. Apprentices make good use of their time in training sessions by being inquisitive and keen to learn, both at work and in one of the provider's residential academies.
- Employment rights and responsibilities are given a high priority. Apprentices understand, and have good opportunities to discuss, their responsibilities as citizens. Many of them complete the provider's Global Citizenship Programme, a series of activities that helps them to understand the global economy and the effects of their actions on the environment. A minority progress on to study further modules on healthy living and the value of an active lifestyle.
- Apprentices who receive extra help are very well supported. They have good access to additional specialist support to help them overcome, for example, difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. However, this support does not ensure that a small number of disabled apprentices or those with learning difficulties pass their apprenticeship. Apprentices whose first language is not English receive effective individual support to help them to become more fluent and to extend their vocabulary. Many assessor/trainers successfully help apprentices to develop the confidence to study English and mathematics to higher levels than they need to pass their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices feel safe both in the workplace and in training sessions. They are well trained to look out for the safety of their colleagues and customers as well as themselves. Health and safety procedures, including safe use of the internet and other computer-based systems, are covered well during their induction and training.

- Apprentices' understanding of radicalisation and extremism is less well developed. Assessors have been trained, have access to good resources and are starting to introduce these topics. However, many apprentices have a limited understanding of these topics.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Over the previous three years, the proportion of apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeships in health, social care and childcare, and hospitality, retail, and advanced engineering and motor vehicle has been consistently high. These subjects account for approximately two thirds of apprentices.
- In 2015/16, the proportion of apprentices who had completed their apprenticeship at the time of the inspection was significantly higher than at the same time in the previous year. A high proportion of apprentices in 2015/16 have completed their apprenticeship within the expected timescale. However, in a minority of subject areas, too many apprentices take too long to complete their apprenticeship.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their functional skills in English and mathematics at a higher level than demanded by their apprenticeship framework is high, and has increased significantly in 2015/16 compared to previous years. A very high proportion of apprentices achieve their functional skills at the first attempt. This is in marked contrast to previous years, when apprentices' failure to complete functional skills was a significant factor in their failure to complete their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices mostly develop their English and mathematical skills well and apply these confidently in their work and personal life. For example, a retail apprentice developed the skills and confidence to produce a well-written application for a supervisor's job. This, along with successful completion of her level 2 apprenticeship, secured her promotion.
- Apprentices develop new skills that build on their prior knowledge and experience. These skills are highly relevant to the industry in which they are employed and are highly valued by employers. Employers identify clearly the skills that they need their apprentices to develop, and most apprentices develop these well. An advanced apprentice in a care home, for example, used a combination of his prior knowledge and study to understand how to provide better care for residents with dementia.
- Apprentices apply their newly developed skills to their work. In hospitality, apprentices took responsibility for producing new desserts and 'specials', or took on responsibilities for supervising colleagues, as a result of the apprenticeship. In other examples, apprentices develop the competence to fill the skills gaps identified by their employers.
- Standards of apprentices' work are high, particularly in engineering. Higher ability apprentices in motor vehicle extend their knowledge and skills through an 'elite group' where they are encouraged to make faster progress, and achieve higher standards beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship.
- As a result of the apprenticeship, many apprentices move onto higher levels of training, gain promotion or move into jobs with greater responsibilities. For example, in active leisure, apprentices gain managerial posts as a result of completing their level 3 apprenticeship.
- The proportion of apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeship in business and team leading is low in a small number of large employers in the hospitality industry. Managers have taken swift action to improve these programmes, including securing greater commitment from the employer. Where it has not been possible to agree improvements with employers, the provider has stopped delivering the apprenticeships. As a result, in 2015/16 a significantly higher proportion of apprentices on these programmes have successfully achieved their qualification and a higher proportion of apprentices are making the necessary progress to achieve than in previous years.
- Managers have successfully increased the proportion of apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with a minority ethnic background, who complete their apprenticeship successfully. Despite this improvement, these apprentices are slightly less successful than others in completing their apprenticeship.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	28,210
Principal/CEO	Austin Lewis
Website address	Babcockinternational.com/training

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	31	0	32	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	1455	7370	510	4938	0	29		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	16		4		20			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Steven Tucker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Wilf Hudson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stella Butler	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jai Sharda	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Patricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Sharpe	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the director of workplace skills and guidance, 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 learners 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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