

Bridge Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

23–26 November 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Learners do not make good enough progress in written English and mathematics.
- Classroom teaching is poorly planned in mathematics, employability and childcare, and is not clearly linked to learners' aspirations.
- Teachers do not integrate sufficient careers advice and guidance in their planning of learning.
- Attendance, although improved, is low, slowing learners' progress and delaying the start of their work experience placements.
- Current governance arrangements do not provide the necessary support and challenge for the effective management and quality assurance of the provision.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners make good progress in developing their personal and social skills, and improve their speaking and listening skills.
- Learners gain good practical skills in hairdressing, beauty therapy, motor vehicles and construction because enthusiastic vocational tutors provide good practical teaching and individual attention to learners.
- The management of behaviour is good. Learners show consideration, tolerance and respect in classrooms, workshops and the workplace.
- The vast majority of learners have a background of poor participation at school, but when at Bridge Training they begin to take part in learning, recognise the value of gaining new skills and achieve qualifications.
- New employers are enthusiastic about working with Bridge Training because learners are well prepared before they start work experience.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Bridge Training was established in 1985 and became a limited company in 2002. The company is situated in Gloucester City Centre and recruits learners from across Gloucestershire. It offers qualifications in hairdressing, beauty therapy, motor vehicle studies, construction, child development, business administration, information and communication technology (ICT), functional skills, GCSE mathematics and English.
- This inspection was of study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 who have low educational achievement. The vast majority of the learners have a poor record of attendance at school or were educated at home. Many learners are referred directly by Gloucestershire's elective home education team or the youth and schools support teams. The local authority provides additional funding for four learners with high needs. Five learners aged between 14 and 16 attend on a part-time basis.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Establish an independent advisory board with the necessary skills to support and challenge the management team.
- Improve learners' attendance and punctuality further by developing and implementing an effective strategy that motivates and rewards learners.
- Ensure that all staff have appropriate qualifications to teach English, mathematics and ICT functional skills in their subject area and that staff integrate functional skills in their lessons.
- Implement the new system for the observation of teaching and learning so that staff know what they must do to improve their teaching.
- Improve the planning of learning so that it motivates learners and encourages them to achieve the highest possible standards.
- Integrate careers advice and guidance into all relevant learning activities so learners are aware of the possible progression routes available and can make informed decisions about their next stage.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, significant changes to the management team have led to improvements in the quality of the provision, particularly in practical skills and work experience, but have also hindered the progress in the teaching of mathematics, employability and childcare. The quality improvement plan focuses well on improving the areas of concern and maintaining the quality of the aspects of the provision that are good.
- Senior managers do not monitor quality improvement well enough. The managers review the quality improvement plan every six weeks but the plan does not include timescales against which managers can measure progress. The links between the quality improvement plan and the action plans are unclear and it is difficult to assess progress overall.
- Management arrangements to assess and improve the quality of teaching and learning require further improvement. Records of observations about the quality of teaching and learning are too descriptive and, in a minority of cases, grades awarded are too generous. The new head of curriculum development has recognised this and has implemented a new system for observing teaching and learning. It is too early to assess the impact of this strategy.
- The strategy to improve attendance needs further development. Most learners arrive at Bridge Training with very poor histories of participation in education. Learners' attendance at Bridge Training has improved over the last two years but still requires further improvement. The coordination of the attendance strategy was revised recently so that reception staff and tutors work together more effectively to record and follow up absence. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of the newly established scheme to reward learners' improved and maintained attendance.
- The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. Managers gather learners' views through monthly surveys and issue a full questionnaire to all staff. The self-assessment report has identified most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors but insufficient weight has been given to the weaknesses.
- The provision of English and mathematics is a priority for senior managers with all teaching staff required to gain an appropriate qualification. However, tutors have not fully integrated functional skills into their teaching, nor do they recognise sufficiently the importance of teaching English and mathematics in the context of vocational training.
- Bridge Training leaders and managers have focused well on developing learners' employability skills. The number of employers willing to accept Bridge Training learners has increased significantly. More learners are gaining realistic work experience and plans are well advanced for every learner to complete a work placement as part of their training. Working relationships between Bridge Training and employers are very good.
- Initial information, advice and guidance for learners are very good and ensure that they are placed on the right course with the right support. However, too little careers advice during and at the end of their training makes it difficult for learners to make informed choices about their next steps.
- Staff organise work experience very effectively, matching learners well to suitable employment opportunities. The well-briefed and committed employers work closely with Bridge Training so that learners gain skills successfully, become more motivated and enjoy their work. The phased introduction of work experience ensures that learners become work ready and able to benefit from the good-quality work placements offered.
- Leaders and managers monitor closely and accurately what learners go on to do after completing their course. However, they do not routinely review this initial information to check whether learners maintain or change their destinations.
- Tutors promote learners' understanding of fair treatment and the avoidance of bullying and harassment well, but learners do not fully understand why knowing about different faiths, races and genders is important.
- The strategy to prepare learners for life in modern Britain, for example tolerance, democracy and the rule of law, is well established and effective. It includes outside speakers and employability sessions as well as question and answer sessions in lessons. Staff challenge inappropriate language or behaviour constructively and firmly.
- Staff are very aware of particular issues for learners with various levels of disability, and assess these learners carefully. Resources are good to meet most learners' specific needs and the links to outside agencies to provide a specialist service where necessary are good.

■ The governance of the provider

- Governance requires improvement. The current governance arrangements are insufficiently self-critical. There is no external body, such as an advisory board, to provide independent and impartial challenge and scrutiny of the management of the provision.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Bridge Training carries out all necessary checks on staff and maintains a central register of these checks. All work placements are subject to stringent prior evaluation of suitability and learners' safety.
- Vulnerable learners, and learners who pose a potential risk to themselves or others, are risk-assessed thoroughly and appropriately so that support can be provided to ensure the safety and well-being of all learners and staff.
- A number of safeguarding concerns have been reported, all of which have been investigated thoroughly. The management of the very few actual safeguarding incidents is effective.
- Bridge Training is making good progress in implementing its strategy to prevent the radicalisation of learners. All staff have appropriate training and are knowledgeable about the multi-agency programme to identify and provide support to people at risk of extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching and learning are weak in mathematics, employability and childcare lessons because learning is poorly planned. Tutors do not make enough use of the information available from initial and diagnostic assessment, and their planning for individual learning does not meet the needs of all learners. Consequently, too many learners in these classroom sessions work at the same pace and level. This means that some struggle while others are not stretched or challenged sufficiently. For example, one learner with very good mathematical skills was doing the same tasks as a learner with significant gaps in their understanding.
- Staff assess learners' needs and abilities comprehensively at the start of their programmes and develop flexible programmes for individual learners in consultation with parents and carers. Learners who have previously been learning at home, or have not been in structured education for some time, benefit particularly from this approach. Communication between tutors, parents and carers is very good.
- Assessment of learning for vocational qualifications is accurate and meets external requirements. Tutors mark learners' work appropriately but do not provide sufficient information on how learners can improve their writing skills. Learners are not working to sufficiently clear targets and these do not always include learning across all elements of their programmes, including English and mathematics. Learners and tutors are therefore not sufficiently clear about the progress that learners are making.
- Staff carefully and accurately identify learners' additional support needs. The appropriate in-class and individual support for learners with high needs enables them to take a full and active part in learning activities. Learning support for the very small number of learners with dyslexia is currently underdeveloped.
- Learners benefit from good training in the practical workshops. Tutors in practical sessions are good role models for learners. They use their occupational and industrial experience very effectively and learners develop good practical and technical skills, for example in hairdressing, beauty, construction and motor vehicles.
- Learners learn to use some of the technical language and vocabulary relating to their vocational work. They develop their speaking and listening skills well, learn to review their own and each other's work, and understand what they need to do to improve their skills further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- Tutors do not place sufficient emphasis on teaching learners to develop their organisational, time-keeping and self-evaluative skills well enough so they can take greater responsibility for their own progress and become successful independent learners. Too many learners rely too much on their tutors for direction and support, and too little on their own initiative.
- Learners' attendance has improved since the previous inspection but is not yet good. The majority of learners have had very low attendance in education in the past but their attendance improves while at Bridge Training. Staff work closely with learners, parents and carers to support and encourage learners to develop better attendance patterns and to take responsibility for their time keeping and punctuality at

lessons.

- Information, advice and guidance for learners during and at the end of their programme lack coordination and are not integrated effectively across the curriculum. Too little use is made of the careers advice and guidance material available at the centres to help learners make informed choices about further learning or employment.
- Bridge Training's recent involvement with Gloucestershire's sustainable travel organisation has the potential to help learners consider traveling further and to places they had not considered possible, although it is not yet possible to judge the impact of this initiative and not all learners benefit from these activities.
- Staff have particularly good skills and expertise in helping learners to improve their personal and social skills. Staff set clear boundaries and have high expectations of learners. In turn, learners respond very positively and increase greatly in self-confidence. Learners become motivated to learn and behave well. They learn how to work well cooperatively as part of a team, and how to treat each other and the staff with respect.
- Staff provide very effective initial information, advice and guidance so that vulnerable young adults start to participate successfully in the learning process. They work closely with parents, carers and a range of agencies, including the youth support team and elective home education advisers, to support learners back into a carefully planned, flexible individual programme that helps them return to full-time education.
- Learners make good progress in building their confidence and self-esteem as they work in a safe, positive learning environment. They learn to value and respect others, and improve their social skills when relating to others.
- Learners' behaviour in lessons is good. They receive good support from staff in managing their emotions effectively. Learners develop their ability to interact in an adult environment and ask for help when they are unsure of the next steps or do not understand instructions. Staff signpost learners promptly for help with personal issues to the relevant counselling, housing and other support agencies so they can continue their learning journey towards successful employment and participation in adult life.
- Learners develop good speaking and listening skills as a result of the encouragement and support of staff. A high proportion of learners arrive at Bridge Training with very poor communication skills with many unable to initiate or maintain a conversation with an adult. As they become more confident, learners are able to hold discussions and conversations in a range of situations.
- Learners feel safe and develop positive relationships with staff. They feel confident that any concerns they raise will be taken seriously and managed appropriately. Staff have developed a comprehensive programme to expand learners' knowledge about how to stay safe and lead healthier lives, but it is not yet fully implemented and it is too soon to judge its full impact.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Learners' progress and achievement in written English and mathematics require improvement. Too few learners achieve qualifications in motor vehicles, hairdressing and beauty therapy despite developing good practical skills in these areas.
- Not all tutors routinely and consistently reinforce some fundamental employability principles such as good time-keeping or keeping Bridge Training informed about absences. However, generally, learners make reasonable progress towards their next stage of education or employment.
- Given the very low starting points, the majority of learners make good progress in the areas of confidence, social skills and taking personal responsibility for their actions.
- The proportion of learners progressing on to positive destinations has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Over three quarters of leavers progress on to higher qualifications or other training, or into part- or full-time employment. Where learners have not progressed successfully, Bridge Training is aware of the reasons and maintains contact where appropriate. Employment destinations include leisure, hospitality and retail roles, or working in garages, horticulture and construction.
- The standard of practical work is good. Staff have good industry experience and encourage learners to achieve well and to reflect on their own performance. Learners in the practical trades and motor vehicle area are able to describe the new skills they have acquired since starting the study programme, and the progress they are making. One construction learner was able to describe very clearly why his plastering was not up to the required standard and what he needed to do to produce work that would be acceptable on a construction site. Learners respond well to the healthy competition that takes place in the practical skills areas.
- In practical situations, learners improve their ability to estimate, measure and problem solve. For

example, construction learners make up their own plaster mixes using the correct ratios, while motor vehicle learners use gauges and meters correctly, and estimate the capacity of fuel tanks and the volume of coolant required for different radiators.

- Learners currently placed with employers are prepared well and show high levels of proficiency. Employers value the good preparation learners receive and the care and attention taken to ensure that learners are matched to job roles and suitable for the company.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	259
Principal/CEO	Mark Harrod
Website address	www.bridgetrainingltd.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	115	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	N/A	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	4							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Nigel Evans, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dr Charles Clark	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kathy Tyler	Ofsted Inspector
Margaret Garai	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the strategic development manager, 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 and telephone calls 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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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

