

Kettering Borough Council

Independent Learning Provider

Inspection dates

6–8 October 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
Study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have been too slow in responding to the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.
- Too few learners have a work placement to help them develop employability skills.
- Assessment and feedback to learners is weak; learners' work routinely remains unmarked for several weeks.
- Employers' views do not contribute to learners' progress reviews or action planning.
- Management data on learners' destinations is unreliable.
- Learners are not well prepared for employment because they do not develop regular patterns of attendance during their programme.

The provider has the following strengths

- The rapid pace of recent actions to tackle weaknesses is beginning to have a positive impact.
- Learners' behaviour is good. They are respectful and manage their emotions and feelings appropriately.
- Learners receive good individual support to help overcome identified barriers to learning and to keep themselves safe.
- Staff and careers advisors provide good impartial information, advice and guidance both before and during the programme.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Kettering Borough Training (KBT) is a service area of Kettering Borough Council that offers employability training through a study programme funded by the Education Funding Agency. It is also a subcontractor for apprenticeship programmes, which were not in scope for this inspection. All training is located in premises in the centre of Kettering. Unemployment in the area is lower than the national rate, but achievement of five GCSEs at grade C or above is slightly below the national rate.
- Learners are aged 16 to 18 and almost all have a range of barriers to learning, such as dyslexia, autism and mental health difficulties. Many have a history of underachievement at school.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers, including the governance board, must ensure that the pace and momentum of recent improvements is maintained and continues to tackle weaknesses identified at inspection.
- Implement in full the requirements of the study programme, particularly the requirement that all learners should develop useful employability skills through high-quality work placements and that data on their destination after completing the programme is accurate and reliable.
- Ensure that tutors mark and return learners' work promptly, especially in the early stages of their programme, so it is clear what they have to do to improve and make progress.
- Continue the good work that managers have started in developing links with employers and ensure employers are fully involved in assessing and monitoring learners' progress.
- Prepare learners for employment better by carefully monitoring patterns of attendance and taking swift and robust actions to ensure they attend all learning sessions and work placements punctually.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- KBT's leaders and managers have failed to ensure high standards of provision for learners. For too long, the culture and ethos of the organisation was one that focused on the pastoral care and support of young people, rather than on providing a high-quality learning experience centred on the development of employability skills. Current managers have begun to challenge successfully this ethos.
- Following the last inspection, the long-term absence on medical grounds of KBT's manager resulted in a period of relative decline in the company's performance and slow progress in tackling the weaknesses identified in the inspection report.
- Managers have recently strengthened KBT's quality improvement arrangements, but the impact of this on teaching and learning is not yet fully evident. As a consequence, teaching, learning and assessment continue to require improvement.
- Feedback from learners is gathered and appropriate actions taken to make improvements. Self-assessment is an inclusive process and many of the judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate. However, the report gives insufficient weight to weaknesses of the study programme and, as a consequence, the self-assessment grades are unrealistically high.
- Learners receive good impartial careers advice and guidance from the local authority, which prepares them well for their next steps. Curriculum management and planning is effective in meeting the needs of current learners, and the study programme is now well structured and suitably individualised. However, curriculum management of the programme in 2014/15 was inadequate, which resulted in poor outcomes and an unacceptably low number of learners benefiting from work experience.
- More recently, the pace of improvement has increased significantly following a senior management decision to allocate responsibility for the study programme to KBT's apprenticeship coordinator. This appointment has led to a wide range of necessary initiatives, such as the introduction of a more robust induction programme, a structured plan for a second intake of learners in the current year and a more rigorous approach to performance management. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives.
- KBT's study programme has suitable breadth, depth and relevance for learners, many of whom have a disability or specific learning needs. Managers take appropriate account of regional employment priorities, and the company's relatively new sales and marketing coordinator has been particularly effective in making links with employers and other stakeholders to promote the work of KBT. As a consequence, managers are planning work placements for current learners that meet their needs and aspirations
- KBT staff actively promote equality and diversity in the classroom through the use of good learning materials and resources, and by the use of inclusive language. Posters and displays in the classrooms tackle a range of sensitive subjects such as online grooming and cyberbullying. Learners are respectful of each other and of staff. KBT's analysis of achievement data has identified slightly better outcomes for girls in English compared with boys. Teachers are taking appropriate actions to narrow this gap. The promotion of British values is particularly good, although the language used in the teaching materials is not always suitable for KBT's learners.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - KBT's board, established a year ago, comprises well-qualified and capable members who understand the organisation well.
 - Board members understand what the organisation has to do to improve, but the board has not driven these improvements sufficiently rapidly. As a consequence, KBT's overall effectiveness continues to require improvement.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and KBT carries out appropriate checks on staff and workplaces.
 - Staff understand their safeguarding duties and support learners particularly well to help them stay safe.
 - Learners feel safe and know who to contact if they feel vulnerable or threatened.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good. Too many lessons lack effective planning and do not inspire learning. However, in the more successful lessons, teachers engage learners well with a range of interesting activities, which helps them to make good progress.
- Much assessment is neither timely nor accurate. Teachers have failed to assess the large majority of learners' assignments this term. As a result, learners have not had sufficient feedback or guidance on how they can improve. Of the employability skills portfolios completed by learners in 2014/15, many contained substantial amounts of work that was not marked.
- Teachers do not sufficiently develop learners' English skills in vocational subjects. They fail to correct routinely inaccuracies in spelling and grammar. For example, in a final version of a job application letter, a learner had misspelt two key words, yet the teacher assessed the work as correct.
- In 2014/15, teachers did not review learners' progress with sufficient detail or frequency. Reviews lacked structure and did not contribute to meaningful short-term targets or record the progress learners made in developing their self-confidence and wider social skills. Managers have recently revised the review process so that it now provides a structure for setting targets and recording progress. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of this initiative.
- The majority of employers do not participate in formal reviews of their learners' skills. This severely inhibits employers' understanding of the programme, as well as limiting their contributions to target-setting.
- Staff have a good understanding of individual learners' needs, including their barriers to learning. During an extensive induction, all learners complete diagnostic assessments in English and mathematics. Teachers then work with individuals and small groups to build quickly an accurate picture of the needs of each learner.
- Staff are acutely aware of learners' needs and use individualised activities to help them make progress and achieve. Teachers give particularly good support for those with learning difficulties, including learners with autistic behaviours or tendencies.
- Teachers are well qualified and experienced in working with learners with additional social needs. They manage behaviour well.
- Teachers are skilled at building on the mutually respectful relationships which exist. They promote equality and diversity well and fundamental British values are covered appropriately during induction.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

- In 2014/15, KBT's managers provided work placements for only half the learners enrolled on the study programme. As a consequence, too few learners developed their employability skills and self-confidence in work.
- Current learners on work-experience placements make good progress in developing their vocational skills, although teachers do not record these skills accurately in reviews of progress. A learner in the retail sector took great pride in his job role and was a valued member of the team. He worked reliably and to a high industry standard. However, KBT staff had not checked with the learner's supervisor on the progress he was making.
- Attendance requires improvement. This was low in the majority of lessons during the inspection.
- Learners have insufficient understanding of whether their English, mathematics and employability skills will be accredited. Most learners appreciate the importance of developing these skills and are keen to do so, but they are not aware of opportunities for achieving recognised qualifications.
- Pre-course information, advice and guidance have improved and are now good. There are strong partnership arrangements with the local authority careers service, who visit weekly to provide high-quality impartial guidance, which helps learners make informed career choices.
- During the extensive induction, learners develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities as learners and as future employees. They further develop these skills on an accredited employability skills course, which prepares them well for the workplace.
- The majority of learners have many barriers to learning and, in a minority of cases, communication difficulties. Nevertheless, learners' behaviour is good, both in lessons and in communal areas around the centre. They are polite and respectful and manage their emotions and feelings appropriately.

- Learners feel safe and are aware of how to report any concerns they may have about their safety. They have a good understanding of the dangers of cyberbullying and grooming and of how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremist ideology.
- KBT promotes a culture that supports learner welfare. Teachers understand learners' individual needs well and they provide sensitive support, which learners value.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- At the time of the inspection, the academic term had just begun and learners had been on the programme for only five weeks. The large majority of learners have a range of personal and educational barriers to learning. A minority also have specific learning needs such as autism or dyslexia. KTB's staff provide good pastoral and learning support, which is helping the majority of current learners make at least the progress expected of them.
- Success rates for learners in 2014/15 were poor. Of the 32 learners recruited over the year, 10 left the programme without completing it. Achievement in mathematics was low and it was mixed in English, with outcomes good in reading, but poor in speaking, listening and writing. Almost all learners achieved the study programme's core aim of employability skills, but KBT staff acknowledge that for most learners this core aim was insufficiently challenging.
- The data held on learners' destinations for those who completed in 2014/15 is unreliable, as it is largely based on learners' responses to a telephone survey, rather than using accurate information from employers. Managers have significantly strengthened the procedure for gathering learner destination data in the current year, but it is too soon to assess the impact of this measure.

Provider details

Type of provider	Local authority
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	32
Principal/CEO	David Cook
Website address	www.kettering.gov.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+
			19					
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
	0							
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:								

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Jai Sharda, lead inspector
Allan Shaw

Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

The above team, assisted by the apprenticeship coordinator as nominee, 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.

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