

DBC Training

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

6–8 June 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Strong leadership and a well-organised staff team achieve high standards in the provision for apprentices. Improvement strategies implemented by leaders and managers are successful.
- A very large proportion of those apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeships sustain employment, and gain additional responsibility or promotion.
- Current apprentices are making good or better progress as a result of effective teaching, learning and assessment.
- Employment coaches are skilful; they provide apprentices with good support which enables them to develop good personal and technical skills that are valued by employers.
- Apprentices are positive in their attitude to learning, take pride in their work, attend well and are punctual.
- Leaders and managers respond well to local and national priorities and use their networking skills very effectively to improve the provision and introduce good practices.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Too few apprentices achieved their apprenticeships within the planned timescales in 2014/15.
- Opportunities and advice for apprentices to move on to higher level qualifications have been limited.
- Managers do not collect or analyse feedback from employers sufficiently.

Full report

Information about the provider

- DBC Training (DBC) operates from Derby with apprentices across the East Midlands region. It offers a range of provision through its Skills Funding Agency (SFA) apprenticeship contract and a large European Social Fund (ESF) contract, which was not part of this inspection. DBC also provides traineeships as a subcontractor for the East Midlands Chamber.
- Apprenticeships are provided in administration, management, accounts and finance, information and communication technology (ICT), customer service, retail and team leading. DBC employs 30 staff overall with a team of four specifically working with apprentices. The managing director oversees the day-to-day running of the organisation, supported by a senior management team. DBC also offers a small amount of privately funded training to individuals and employers.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of apprentices who complete their framework within the planned timeframe by:
 - planning training programmes carefully with employers and apprentices
 - setting clear targets for learners
 - taking swift action to support apprentices who are at risk of not achieving their targets on time.
- Ensure that opportunities for apprentices to move on to higher level qualifications are available and taken up where applicable.
- Provide information and careers advice for all apprentices to enable them to understand clearly the routes they can follow in their chosen occupation.
- Collect and use feedback from employers to support the planning of apprenticeship programmes and to broaden the range of skills apprentices can develop through their training.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The directors and senior managers provide strong leadership for the apprenticeship provision. They have an ambitious vision, a determined drive for improvement and have implemented successful strategies since the last inspection, which have resulted in improved standards in performance and quality.
- The senior team implements highly appropriate strategies for apprenticeship provision with an emphasis on putting learners first through the values of the business. Staff respond well to this by putting sound training plans into operation and working effectively with employers to develop apprentices' personal and technical skills. While contact with employers is regular and frequent, not enough information or feedback from employers is collected to further improve and develop apprentices' training. Managers have recognised this and plans are in place to address the issue.
- Since the previous inspection, DBC has restructured the staffing team and changed and improved systems and processes for managing apprenticeships, which are now effective. They have kept the apprenticeship provision relatively small. This has been a considered leadership decision in order to ensure that staff, systems and processes are in place and working well before expanding.
- Managers and staff understand the importance of developing apprentices' English, mathematics and ICT skills. They are guided by an appropriate strategy, which is implemented successfully by the whole team. The focus on raising standards is proving highly effective with high pass rates in these subjects. Plans are in place and actions have been already implemented to extend further the development of English and mathematical skills to include those apprentices who have already reached the minimum standard for the apprenticeship framework they are working towards.
- Although a relatively new provider of apprenticeships, DBC demonstrates a good track record in providing training programmes to meet the needs of learners and respond to local and regional priorities. The training centre in Derby is well resourced and apprentices can, and do, take the opportunity to gain additional qualifications such as in payroll administration.
- DBC works closely with the local economic partnership in the region and the managing director is a member of the provider advisory board. The senior team networks effectively with training providers, collecting and sharing good practices which benefit apprentices, as in, for example, the use of e-portfolios.
- Managers evaluate accurately the quality and performance of the apprenticeship provision and together with the staff team, rigorously implement quality improvement actions which they plan carefully and review regularly. The vast majority of these actions are proving successful already and apprentices are making good progress and achieving on time in 2015/16.
- Managers set clear, specific and measurable targets for staff aligned with business planning and review their performance frequently and regularly. Staff benefit from individual and team meetings which focus on performance. Performance management arrangements are robust. Staff development is extensive and has a clear impact, particularly on the very effective use of interactive learning resources with apprentices.
- DBC puts a high priority on its responsibility to promote equality and diversity, which it carries out very well. Apprentices articulate a sound understanding of equality and diversity and are able to demonstrate this in their behaviour, for example, in showing mutual respect. Regular updating and staff training and development support this priority. Managers ensure that apprentices have good opportunities through their training to understand the importance of equality and diversity and what is expected of them in the workplace.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Sound arrangements are in place to oversee the quality and performance of the apprenticeship provision and provide support and challenge to managers to improve the provision.
 - A newly appointed, suitably experienced director has recently been appointed with specific responsibility for vocational skills and has begun to have a positive impact on the development of the apprenticeship programme. External expertise from peer-group networks are also used to support and challenge the leadership team.
 - The board of directors and senior managers review and develop the apprenticeship provision, aligning it to the needs of the area, and work closely with other partners to meet broader strategic economic goals.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - DBC meets all necessary requirements and maintains an up-to-date record of staff checks in relation to safeguarding.

- Suitable policies and procedures are in place and, together with learning sessions, are used effectively to protect apprentices from risks, including those associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Designated staff ensure that safeguarding systems and processes are working and review these regularly. There have been no reportable safeguarding cases in relation to apprenticeships.
- DBC works closely with external agencies to support safeguarding and to implement the 'Prevent' duty. Designated staff are well trained, have good networks and work closely with local agencies. They keep staff well informed and up to date about local priorities.
- All staff receive updates and training, which enable them to apply well the safeguarding arrangements and reinforce effectively apprentices' understanding, including that relating to the 'Prevent' duty, in learning sessions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of apprentices' work is good. The vast majority of apprentices are confident, make good progress and develop new skills rapidly in their job roles. Apprentices communicate well, work effectively and confidently alongside colleagues in the workplace, and deal with customers in a professional manner. They demonstrate good knowledge of the sectors in which they work. Apprentices value this as a benefit of their apprenticeship and describe clearly how they use these skills both in their jobs and in their personal lives.
- Employment coaches are well qualified and have good knowledge, skills and experience in their occupational areas. Apprentices benefit from regular and comprehensive reviews that explore progress and barriers to achievement. Employment coaches record these reviews well and apprentices use them to monitor their own progress. Reviews are valued highly and apprentices find them motivating.
- Well-planned, accurate, relevant and enthusiastic coaching and learning sessions successfully motivate apprentices and prepare them well to achieve the standards set for the jobs they do. A range of good-quality learning resources are used imaginatively by coaches during sessions. For example, learning about types of businesses and the way administration is organised is brought to life by using interactive resources. Apprentices are able to relate the learning to the context in which they work and their own role in administration. Employment coaches direct apprentices to further learning material to extend learning after the session.
- Employment coaches use initial and subsequent assessments well to support learning; they plan for and use a range of effective methods regularly and frequently. Apprentices value the different approaches they take to assess their progress, especially the opportunity for extended observation and feedback on their performance in carrying out tasks in the workplace. Employers also contribute to feedback. The quality of feedback by staff supports well the achievement of qualifications, offering measurable and detailed comment about what has been, and what needs to be, achieved.
- Apprentices know how to be good citizens. Teaching effectively develops apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity, respect and appropriate behaviours using topical issues such as the impact of the result of the European referendum on workers generally and particularly for workers from the European Union who work alongside apprentices. Other topics considered include, for example, apprentices in the freight transport sector considering the impact on their employer of lorry drivers who face the problem of illegal immigration at channel ports. Thorough preparation and planning by staff and the sharing of topical and well-researched subject matter across the team underpin the good approach taken.
- Employment coaches set training plans and learning targets that largely relate to the achievement of the main qualifications as determined by the framework that the apprentice is aiming to achieve. While these are important, the plans and targets lack information about what needs to be done to practise and further improve a range of skills to meet the immediate requirements of the job role and future skills required in the sector. Often, while these elements are discussed with apprentices, employment coaches do not include them as part of the training plan; they are not discussed and agreed with the employer in enough cases. A minority of learners are not fully challenged as a result.
- Apprentices develop English and mathematical skills well and all those who need to achieve the minimum standard required for the apprenticeship framework do so. Employment coaches give apprentices good support to improve their work. Staff review work and point out corrections and ways of improving English and mathematical skills in a supportive way.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

- Learners understand fully how to remain safe and how to make sure others are safe. They know what to do, and whom to report to, should an incident occur. This includes how to deal with extremism and radicalisation as well as bullying, safety online and child protection. Learners are able to explain the importance of understanding these dangers and the impact this has both on them as individuals and their workplace.
- Apprentices contribute very well to their workplace and are valued members of staff. Training and support are effective in helping apprentices to settle into what is, in most cases, their first experience of employment.
- Apprentices understand their rights and responsibilities as an apprentice, an employee and more broadly as a citizen. They have a good understanding of British values and take part in mature discussion with their employment coach about them. Current issues are used well to explore, for example, the importance of democracy and the rights workers have as a result of the democratic process in Britain.
- The vast majority of apprentices interviewed by inspectors offered good examples of how they have developed their confidence and handled pressure and conflict, as well as learning how to take responsibility for tasks. Almost all demonstrated and explained how they had improved communication skills. For example, an apprentice demonstrated skilful reception skills, clearly communicating with members of the public and working confidently to the standards set by the employer for meeting and greeting customers. In another example, an apprentice described how he understood how to delegate jobs and how to present information to groups with confidence.
- Apprentices take pride in their work and are well behaved and professionally presented and have high rates of attendance and punctuality. Apprentices understand well what is needed to meet the standards required at work.
- Not all apprentices are fully aware of how to achieve their next steps. They have aspirations but not all apprentices have been given sufficient information or advice about how to achieve their career goals. For example, an apprentice who has completed an intermediate-level apprenticeship would like to progress to an advanced apprenticeship in sales, but is not clear yet which qualification route to take and the available options.
- Employment coaches provide good individual support and guidance relating to apprentices' personal development, employability and skills development. However, they do not set all apprentices with learning targets to improve their personal development, behaviour and welfare and this slows their learning. This has been recognised by DBC and work is under way to introduce and record clearer targets to cover these elements of an apprentice's development.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- The learners in scope for the inspection were all apprentices, with most aiming to achieve frameworks with level 2 qualifications in administration and a few others in retail and customer service.
- In 2014/15, the large majority of apprentices achieved their apprenticeship with a high success rate, particularly for apprentices aged 16 to 18. However, for a minority, progress was slow and too many did not achieve their apprenticeship within the planned timescales.
- Apprentices who are in training in 2015/16 are making good progress. The retention of apprentices on their programmes has improved significantly from the previous year and is very high. The pace at which apprentices gain skills and confidence has increased and is now good.
- Achievements by different groups of learners are broadly equal, with no significant gaps in achievement or progress; this is monitored closely by managers.
- The first-time pass rates for those apprentices who require functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics as part of their apprenticeship framework are very high in the current year.
- Apprentices develop skills at work which their employers value, including in English, mathematics and ICT. Apprentices develop well in their work roles and take on responsibility, and the vast majority continue in the job for which they have been trained, with a few gaining promotion.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	61
CEO	Kerry Bentley
Website address	www.dbc-training.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)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	16	23	0	0	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ NA							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Derrick Spragg, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Gibson	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the chief executive officer, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider’s most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices 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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