

# Bestland Solutions Limited (trading as Training Associates)

Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–29 July 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for apprentices	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have made very good progress in dealing successfully with weakness identified through self-assessment and at the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders understand very well the sectors in which apprentices work. They maintain very good communication with employers and productive links with relevant sector bodies.
- Senior leaders have significantly improved the collection and use of performance data, with a clear focus on closely monitoring and managing the progress apprentices make; this has led to rapidly improving achievement rates.
- Highly supportive assessors ensure that apprentices make good progress through frequent, well-planned visits to the workplace that are arranged to meet apprentices' needs and working patterns.
- Assessors have relevant sector experience and knowledge. They use this to plan highly effective sessions that bring together theory and workplace practice well.
- Employers work closely with assessors and managers to give apprentices a good range of workplace learning, progression and career development opportunities.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Managers' observations of teaching and learning focus too much on assessors' actions and activities, and insufficiently on what apprentices learn and the progress they make.
- The feedback assessors provide on apprentices marked work does not always make it clear what they need to do to improve.
- The targets that assessors set for apprentices are not detailed enough to ensure that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- Bestland Solutions Limited trades as Training Associates (TAS) and is known only by this name. The company secured a direct contract with the Skills Funding Agency to provide apprenticeships in 2013 after two years providing apprenticeships as a subcontractor.
- Three main apprenticeship frameworks are offered to all age groups at intermediate and advanced level. These frameworks are: health and social care; supporting teaching and learning in schools; and early years and playwork. Plans to introduce higher-level apprenticeships are in place.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that observers of teaching, learning and assessment focus more on evaluating the learning that takes place in each learning session and on the progress apprentices make. Feedback to assessors should identify more clearly what they need to do to improve.
- Managers must support assessors to improve the quality of written feedback on apprentices' marked work, including good attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Managers need to ensure that assessors agree learning targets that will help all apprentices to progress at the rate of which they are capable.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and managers have made very good progress in dealing successfully with weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and through self-assessment. Managers have focused closely and resolutely on weaknesses and recommendations from the previous inspection and, as a result, achievement rates have improved significantly. Apprentices develop good workplace skills, almost all groups of apprentices now perform above national rates, and progression across apprenticeship levels and into further learning is good.
- Leaders and managers are approachable and communicate clearly and effectively with staff. Staff enjoy working for the company, understand and share its priorities and seek to improve the lives and opportunities for their apprentices. Where staff members have not engaged with the improvement agenda and performed to suitably high standards, managers have taken resolute action.
- Senior leaders, managers and assessors maintain strong and productive relationships with employers. Senior managers have a good understanding of the factors affecting training and employment in the care and education sectors and use this knowledge well to develop relevant training programmes for apprentices. Senior staff, for example, work successfully to maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders in local authorities, diocesan schools, the early years and childcare sectors.
- Managers have successfully revised quality assurance arrangements, putting in place a set of processes that staff clearly understand and that help raise the quality of apprenticeship training. Managers use data well to closely monitor and manage apprentices' progress. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision, and maintain progress against key performance and quality targets through a clear and straightforward quality improvement plan.
- Arrangements to assure the quality of training are generally effective, with assessors being observed during group training, in review meetings and during assessments. Staff understand the process well and support the drive towards improvements in teaching and learning. However, reports from observations tend to focus too much on teacher activity rather than on apprentices' learning and the progress they make in each session.
- Measures to ensure equality of opportunity for apprentices are effective. Managers review data on performance of identifiable groups and take swift action to deal with any disparities. No significant variations exist in the performance of groups of apprentices. Leaders work successfully with sector bodies, charitable trusts and other stakeholders to increase the diversity of apprentices wherever possible, but there remain few male apprentices on childcare and supporting teaching and learning in schools courses.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - The company has no governing body or trustee committee. Senior leaders are suitably self-critical and reflect well on their own performance as well as that of their staff.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Managers maintain a clear record of suitability checks on staff, and a very comprehensive safeguarding risk register outlines any concerns about apprentices who are experiencing difficulties.
  - Leaders have taken a good range of steps to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to promote the 'Prevent' agenda, and develop apprentices' understanding of the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. A minority of assessors still require further support to have the confidence to initiate and develop discussions with apprentices about some aspects of British values.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Since the previous inspection, managers have successfully supported staff to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, building on strengths and dealing with weaknesses. Managers and assessors have a strong commitment to support apprentices well to achieve their qualifications and to develop skills that enable them to succeed in employment and/or further training. Current apprentices are making good progress and the standard of their work is good.
- Assessors motivate and support apprentices well. They arrange sessions in a flexible way to suit apprentices' shift patterns, domestic commitments and the demands of their employment. Assessors visit apprentices frequently. At induction, a programme of monthly visits is arranged for the year ahead so

that assessors and apprentices can plan their visits. This also allows employers time to arrange appropriate work experience. Visits may be more frequent and assessors sometimes extend visits if apprentices need more support. This enables a large majority to continue to make good progress and complete their qualifications within planned timescales.

- The large majority of apprentices benefit from well-planned learning sessions in which they actively participate. There is a good pace to learning and activities. Most assessors use questioning well to generate discussion, check apprentices' understanding and help them to relate new knowledge and skills to their workplace. Assessors also use workplace activities well to evidence the criteria for apprentices' assignments. Assessors frequently discuss British values, equality and diversity, and health and safety in an effective way by relating current affairs topics and broad equalities topics to the workplace. In a small minority of sessions, assessors too quickly provide answers and solutions without leaving the apprentice time to think through the matter themselves. Most assessors use good-quality materials and resources to support learning, but in a very small minority of sessions, activities are inappropriate for the level of the qualification. For example, one assessor of a level three apprentice used a simple and unchallenging word search activity.
- Apprentices receive very helpful oral feedback during their review and assessment sessions and following the submission of their assignments. Feedback helps them to understand how to improve and how to undertake future assignment work. Most apprentice portfolios are well organised and show a good approach to their work. However, feedback on written work is often cursory and, while praising completion and quality, does not always help apprentices to improve. For example, assessors rarely identify spelling, punctuation and grammar inaccuracies in their marking of written work.
- Assessors agree targets in discussion with apprentices, and record and track these well. Conversations with each apprentice help them to understand the approach they need to take in order to achieve their next target. However, targets are nearly always task-based, do not focus on the wider development of apprentices' learning and are usually worded in a way that does not include the detail to which an apprentice may need to refer.
- Apprentices benefit from a comprehensive initial assessment that, in the majority of cases, identifies their existing skills and results in good planning of individual programmes. Learning plans generally build well on previous achievement. For a minority of apprentices, assessors do not always use results of initial assessment well enough to plan learning.
- Managers and assessors develop good partnership arrangements with very supportive employers. Together, they provide a good experience of work for apprentices that support their progress through the qualification. For example, one apprentice was in receipt of staff training from her employer which she was able to link directly with her apprenticeship programme. This allowed her to better order the units of the qualification she was undertaking. In response to discussions with employers, senior managers are about to deliver food hygiene and paediatric first aid courses for apprentices.
- Staff are well qualified for their roles and apprentices benefit from their expertise. All assessors have level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics. The majority have a teaching qualification and an internal quality assurance qualification, or are working towards them. Assessors are well qualified in their vocational areas and use their skills and experience well to promote enthusiastically the sector, and provide excellent careers advice to apprentices. For example, an assessor helped an apprentice taking her next steps to fulfil her ambition to be a childcare manager. Senior leaders provide a range of continuing professional development and training activities for staff, such as teaching qualifications, internal quality assessor qualifications and updating on topics such as 'Prevent', equality and diversity, and female genital mutilation.
- Staff support apprentices well to achieve their functional skills qualifications. Functional skills 'champions' and assessors provide effective one-to-one coaching and frequent workshops in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Following achievement of the level 2 qualification, assessors help apprentices develop these subjects further during the rest of the programme. For example, an apprentice calculated a staff-child ratio for a particular category of childcare and also undertook research to find out information that she was unsure of. Assessors provide additional learning support effectively.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good**

- Apprentices take pride in their work and increase confidence in their own abilities. For many, the apprenticeship is their first experience of learning since leaving school and virtually all enjoy the experience and consider taking further qualifications.

- Well-qualified staff provide apprentices with good information, advice and guidance. As part of the recruitment process, apprentices receive good initial advice and guidance and this ensures that the vast majority make the right choices. Advice and guidance continue throughout the programme and assessors provide apprentices with high-quality information and advice to help them to plan their next steps. For example, a health and social care apprentice received excellent advice and guidance on securing a place on a degree course, which included good support to help write a personal statement.
- Employers value highly the skills and knowledge that their apprentices develop on the apprenticeship programme. The skills and knowledge they learn are closely related to apprentices' work because assessors help apprentices to choose the most useful qualification units in close liaison with employers. Apprentices also develop good employment-related skills and employers note a marked improvement in the confidence and teamworking skills of their apprentices.
- All apprentices have sufficient awareness of the importance of British values and of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation; those on teaching support programmes have an excellent awareness. The requirements of the 'Prevent' duty have been met and the majority of assessors are able to broaden their apprentices' awareness of these matters through monthly topical themes, which they use effectively to stimulate purposeful discussions. A minority of assessors would benefit from further development of their skills and confidence in delivering this important part of the learning programme.
- The standard of apprentices' work meets and frequently exceeds the requirements of the qualification and the needs of employers. Employers value very highly their close partnerships with managers and assessors and the programmes that help their apprentices gain new skills and knowledge.
- Assessors help apprentices improve their English and mathematical skills through learning that is carefully embedded within their programme, and through dedicated English and mathematics workshops. However, assessors focus too much on preparing apprentices to pass functional skills examinations rather than developing the broader skills and concepts that underpin proficiency in these subjects.
- Apprentices feel safe, and are safe in their places of employment, and know what to do if they have any concerns. Assessors provide good pastoral care and apprentices feel very well supported.

## Outcomes for apprentices

## are good

- Apprentices' achievement rates, both overall and within planned timescales, have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are now good. The two groups of apprentices whose performance remained slightly below national achievement rates during 2014/15 are now performing as well as their peers. The provider's own data shows that the performance of the very small number of male apprentices has improved during the current year, and apprentices aged 19 to 24 are now achieving as well as other age groups and well above the national rate for 2014/15.
- Managers have decided to discontinue an information and communications technology programme, which accounted for about half of all male apprentices. Assessors provide good support to the remaining apprentices, so that most are expected to achieve their qualifications, but for the majority this will be outside planned timescales.
- Apprentices make good progress from their starting points. Managers and assessors now more carefully identify apprentices' starting points, and most assessors use this information well to plan learning. However, the learning targets that assessors set for apprentices are insufficiently detailed to challenge all apprentices, especially the more able, to make more rapid progress.
- The majority of apprentices pass their functional skills examinations at the first attempt. The large majority of apprentices develop English and mathematical skills that help them in their working and home lives.
- All recent apprentices have remained in permanent or part-time employment on completion of their programmes and half are engaged in further learning, including advanced apprenticeships. On completion of their intermediate apprenticeships, a good proportion progress to advanced apprenticeships.
- Employers value the new skills and knowledge that their apprentices acquire. As a result, many apprentices gain additional responsibilities and improved career opportunities.

## Provider details

<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Age range of apprentices</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all apprentices over the previous full contract year</b>	430
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Jeremy Gilbert
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.tasgroup.org.uk">www.tasgroup.org.uk</a>

## 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+
<b>Total number of apprentices (excluding apprenticeships)</b>								
<b>Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	82	79	49	96				
<b>Number of traineeships</b>	16-19		19+		Total			
<b>Number of apprentices aged 14-16</b>								
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ None</li> </ul>							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Richard Beynon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barrett-Mold	Ofsted Inspector
Tricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Griffin	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of quality and delivery, 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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