

# SBC Training Limited

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

26–29 July 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

- Leaders and managers have successfully addressed all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Clear vision and strategic direction by the leadership team have developed provision that meets both local and regional priorities and employers' needs.
- Apprentices quickly develop good vocational skills and expertise along with well-developed English, mathematics and problem-solving abilities, enabling them to excel at work.
- Assessment is fair, accurate and timely; trainers conduct frequent workplace reviews of apprentices' progress using accurate tracking data.
- Support for learners is good. Qualified and experienced trainers successfully help most apprentices to remove barriers to their learning, develop new skills, and gain the confidence to take responsibility for their own progress and to become successful at learning.
- Targeted information, advice and careers guidance meet individual needs and enable learners to make informed choices about the next stages in their learning and careers.
- Success rates are high for all learners and have improved over the last three years. Apprentices achieve their qualifications well and produce work of a high standard. Outcomes for the few 16- to 18-year-old learners on traineeships are outstanding.

### It is not yet an outstanding provider

- A few trainers do not always plan their teaching and learning well enough to ensure that training sessions meet all learners' individual needs.
- Trainers do not always provide enough detail in their written feedback to enable all apprentices to understand fully what they have to do to further improve their work to the best of their ability.
- A few apprentices do not have a sufficient understanding of British values, or the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- SBC Training Limited was established in 1978 in Whitchurch, Shropshire as a personnel consultancy. Since 1983, the company has been engaged in the provision of publicly funded training. SBC Training is now based in Shrewsbury (Shropshire), with most of its training provided to learners in Shropshire and the West Midlands. At the time of the inspection, 334 learners were on programme, with most enrolled on apprenticeships in health and social care, business administration, and engineering and manufacturing. The company also provides adult learning programmes and traineeships.
- In Shropshire, the number of adults of working age who are not working and in receipt of benefits is lower both than the national rate and that for the West Midlands region. Just over half of the residents of working age in Shropshire are qualified to NVQ level 3 or above, while the number of young people aged 16 achieving five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is above the national average.

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

- Ensure that trainers plan teaching and learning to meet the needs of all learners by taking into account the result of assessments and their prior attainment when they start on programme, helping them to reflect on their learning by deeper questioning and setting challenging extension activities that extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Improve the quality of written feedback that trainers give to apprentices about their progress so that they understand fully what actions they need to take in order to further improve their work and perform in line with their abilities and potential.
- Ensure that all staff use learning activities such as progress reviews and tutorials to develop and extend apprentices' knowledge of British values and their understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation so that they can confidently apply this knowledge both in their workplaces and in their personal lives.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders and managers have a clear strategy and vision to provide high-quality training for learners, which staff and employers understand well. Leaders set ambitious targets for the success of learners that have resulted in improvements in performance across the provision.
- Leaders and managers have worked hard to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and have made substantial improvements against each concern raised by inspectors. Outcomes are now good, quality initiatives are leading to consistently high standards in provision, the focus on English and mathematics has developed learners' skills, and trainers use technology to enhance learning. Managers have revised the English and mathematics strategy and supported its implementation with staff training. As a result, learners are producing work of a consistently high standard.
- Leaders and managers have maintained strong partnerships within the region. They have good links with the local enterprise partnership and with other local employer and training provider networks, which helps them align their training to meet local and regional priorities.
- Managers' experience gained from their early involvement in trailblazer programmes helps ensure that the workforce development needs of employers are met. They have developed a successful traineeship programme for learners aged 16 to 18 in response to a need identified by local employers to encourage more young people to consider a career in engineering and technology. To date, virtually all trainees have progressed into sustained employment as apprentices.
- Managers have strong partnerships with employers. They carry out regular reviews of employers' experience of SBC Training and act quickly to redress any concerns. Employers value the professionalism and levels of communication with SBC Training staff and they are clear about the benefits apprentices add to their business.
- The self-assessment report is accurate, evaluative and captures well the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. Managers involve all staff and incorporate the views of learners and employers in the final report. The quality improvement plan is well aligned to the self-assessment report and managers monitor it regularly and closely to bring about improvements. Managers quality assure the single subcontractor effectively.
- Managers evaluate the quality of training accurately, identify appropriate areas for improvement and provide clear feedback to trainers. However, observation records do not always focus on the impact of learning sufficiently, or how learner's individual needs are being met in lessons.
- Managers successfully use the outcomes of observations to inform the quarterly staff development activities and to inform the monthly meetings held with trainers to discuss their performance. At these meetings, managers agree actions with trainers to address any areas for improvement in their individual development plan. However, these records are not sufficiently specific and do not include challenging timescales by which the improvement action should be completed.
- Managers encourage a good culture of tolerance and inclusiveness among learners, and trainers promote diversity successfully in lessons and reviews. Managers ensure that all groups of learners achieve well. They monitor the gaps in the performance between different groups and have been successful in narrowing these over time.
- **The governance of the provider**
  - Leaders have strengthened governance arrangements since the previous inspection. They have devised new terms of reference for the board of directors that provide challenge to hold senior post holders to account.
  - The board includes a partially retired director, who does not attend senior management team meetings and is therefore able to provide oversight and scrutiny. The board previously met annually but now meets quarterly and receives reports from each director. Members are aware of the need to develop key performance indicators for directors to report against.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
  - Leaders and managers have continued to strengthen safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection. The two designated officers have updated their training and have good links with the Shropshire safeguarding board. Learners feel safe and know who to contact should they have any safeguarding concerns.
  - Managers have had a strong focus on training staff on the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, e-safety and on fundamental British values, which has given trainers the confidence to raise issues with

learners. A revised safeguarding policy now reflects these priorities and has clearer reporting guidelines for staff to use. However, a few learners have a limited understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders and managers adopt safer recruitment practices and carry out required checks on all staff including those of subcontractors. Staff carry out suitable health and safety risk assessments for learner placements.

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

- Apprenticeship programmes are well managed. Staff work closely with a wide range of local and national employers to ensure that they provide suitable learning opportunities for apprentices to develop their skills to a high standard. Most apprentices' starting points are assessed thoroughly. Trainers use their evaluation of apprentices' skills at the start of their course skilfully to plan learning that enables them to make good progress. The large majority of current apprentices are making good or better progress.
- The development of apprentices' English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills is good. Assessments carried out when learners start their programmes are thorough and accurately identify learners' development needs. Good classroom-based revision sessions prepare learners well for functional skills examinations. Trainers integrate English and mathematics into practical lessons and, as a result, apprentices learn to apply these skills effectively at work. A few apprentices undertake functional skills at a level higher than that required by their apprenticeship framework. Consequently, they are prepared for progression to higher-level studies.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills and knowledge because of the training they receive while at work and through well planned off-the-job training sessions. Trainers are enthusiastic, positive role models for apprentices and use their good occupational knowledge and experience effectively to deepen learners' knowledge and understanding. For example, administration apprentices develop the self-assurance to speak confidently on the telephone with international customers, effectively promoting their employers' businesses. Apprentices on electrical engineering programmes safely install street lighting to industry standards. Social care apprentices identify competently the signs of early onset dementia and manage service users' needs well.
- Learners aged 16 to 18 on traineeships and adult learners on short employability courses rapidly develop their confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to prepare successfully for interviews with local employers. Learners benefit from a good range of activities in classroom sessions, including practice interviews that they find interesting and enjoyable. Most learners progress to permanent employment at the end of their course.
- Assessment is good. Most trainers plan assessment sessions effectively and use a good range of resources and assessment activities, including technology, to assess learning. Trainers provide good support for learners during training sessions and outside of the classroom through email as well as in the feedback that they record in learners' electronic portfolios. Trainers work closely with employers to select the most appropriate qualifications and optional units, which closely link to each apprentice's job role. Employers value highly the contribution that apprentices make to their business.
- Trainers monitor apprentices' progress effectively. Learners know how well they are doing and what they need to do to stay on track to achieve their qualifications. Most trainers use probing questions and provide constructive feedback, which helps apprentices to improve their work. Apprentices work safely and have a good awareness of health and safety issues in the workplace.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners receive good course information that ensures that they join suitable programmes. Most apprentices benefit from additional training at work, such as first aid training that enhances their employability skills. Almost all apprentices progress to sustained employment on completion of their programme with corresponding increases in pay.
- In a few cases, trainers do not use the information gathered on learners' prior attainment and backgrounds well enough to plan learning to meet the individual needs of all apprentices. Consequently, less-confident learners are not sufficiently encouraged by trainers to join in with group discussions in order to elicit explanations that improve their learning and understanding, while the progress of more-able apprentices is impeded.
- A small minority of learners receive insufficiently detailed feedback on their work. Trainers do not identify precisely enough what these learners have done well and how they can improve their work further.

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

- Apprentices enjoy their learning and improve their confidence and self-esteem; the vast majority interact well with their peers, trainers, employers, service users and customers. They take pride in their work and are enthusiastic about completing their studies and know how the skills they gain apply to their current and intended workplace roles.
- Most apprentices develop effective vocational, personal and social skills that they apply successfully within the workplace. For example, one engineering apprentice confidently described the sequence of activities to independently plan and carry out a range of complex high-precision machining tasks that met a customer's exacting specifications.
- The development of learners' skills in English, mathematics and ICT is good. They successfully apply these essential skills in their individual job roles at work. Trainers, who support learners to improve their standard of work, promote the value of good functional skills. There is a strong focus on independent learning and signposting learners to appropriate resources in English, mathematics and ICT. This aids their preparation for life and work.
- The large majority of apprentices benefit from access to a wide range of appropriate additional qualifications provided by SBC Training and through their individual employers that further aids their progress and preparation for future employment in their chosen sectors. For example, all engineering apprentices complete first aid awareness, health and social care apprentices undertake additional training relating to mental health, dementia awareness, duty of care, fluids and nutrition, and infection prevention and control.
- Most apprentices routinely produce good written and practical work for their level of study and to the standards of their vocational sector. The large majority of current apprentices are on track to complete their qualifications and most have completed, or are on schedule to complete, within the agreed timescales.
- Learners benefit from good advice and guidance. Almost all apprentices are clear about their next steps, they cooperatively work with their trainers and employers to plan realistic career pathways; this includes progression in their workplace, and almost all are in placed with businesses that lead to sustained employment opportunities. For example, in a distribution centre, one apprentice has recently been promoted to team leader, while in health and social care an apprentice was incentivised to apply for a deputy manager's role in a residential care home.
- Apprentices contribute well to their work settings, they are valued members of their employer's workforce and understand their roles and responsibilities as employees particularly well. Learners' attitudes to learning and behaviours in the workplace are good. Apprentices are punctual and attendance is high both in the workplace and while attending off-the-job training at the training centre.
- Apprentices are aware of and closely follow workplace policies and practices that promote their health, well-being and that keep them safe, including prevention of abuse and bullying. Apprentices have a good awareness of e-safety and know how to stay safe online and while using social media.
- Most learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. However, a few learners have too basic an understanding of British values and measures to prevent radicalisation and extremism. They cannot always confidently apply this knowledge to their vocational setting, including the relevance to service users and other clients in the workplace.

## **Outcomes for learners are good**

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications in the planned duration is high and has improved over time. In the current year, according to the provider's own data, the rate at which apprentices complete their qualifications within the agreed time has increased further. Success rates for adults attending classroom-based courses are also high. Outcomes for the few 16- to 18-year-old learners on traineeships are outstanding. Virtually all progress into full-time employment as an apprentice due to staff securing a good range of employers for these learners and matching them well to their work placements.
- There are few gaps in the achievement between different groups of learners. However, while apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged over 24 achieve in line with their respective peer groups nationally, they achieve less well than apprentices aged 19 to 23. In-year data suggests that this difference in performance has narrowed, but it is too early to judge.
- Apprentices and adult learners enjoy their learning, attend well and make good progress towards their learning targets. They feel that they have made a good career choice and are gaining new technical skills

that enable them to be productive within the workplace. For example, in business administration, an apprentice demonstrated how they successfully used telematics equipment to track, in real time, the location of parcels and the importance of keeping customers regularly informed as to the anticipated delivery time of their goods.

- Learners' achievement of functional skills qualifications is good. Trainers skilfully provide learners with a high level of support in these essential skills. Most learners and apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications at the first attempt, and make good progress from their initial starting points. A very small minority of learners achieve these qualifications at one level higher than required for their apprenticeship framework.
- Apprentices and adult learners develop good employability skills such as teamwork and communications. In vocational areas such as health and social care, engineering and business administration, they acquire good knowledge of how to work effectively, adhering well to safe working practices and in finding solutions to problems in the workplace for themselves. All apprentices benefit from undertaking additional training and, as a result, they become valuable employees.
- Virtually all learners secure full-time employment on completion of their apprenticeship. However, although progression opportunities have been enhanced through the introduction of higher-level apprenticeships in management and health and social care, few apprentices progress to the next level of learning.

## 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	562
Principal/CEO	Colin Thaw
Website address	<a href="http://www.sbc-training.co.uk">www.sbc-training.co.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	0	2	0	7	24	11	0	5
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	31	98	44	86	0	26		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	1		0		1			
Number of learners aged 14–16	n/a							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ Severn Financial Training							

## Information about this inspection

### Inspection team

Victor Reid, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
William Baidoe-Ansah	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick McKinley	Ofsted Inspector
Beverly Cross	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the director of quality, 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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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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