

Brooks & Kirk Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

15–17 February 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieve their main learning aims and complete them within the planned timescale is low.
- Senior managers have not ensured that staff improve their practice sufficiently to secure high achievement rates and good progress by all learners.
- Until recently, assessors have not focused sufficiently on ensuring that learners make good progress towards their main qualification aim.
- Assessors do not set clear targets for learners' personal and vocational skills development.
- Learners do not have a good enough understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.
- Managers do not make sufficient analysis and use of available data to identify trends in performance by all groups of learners and plan improvements to the provision.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers offer a good range of qualifications to all learners that meet local, regional and national needs and attract adults into learning.
- Learners enjoy their courses and benefit from participation in learning, such as progress into employment or promotion.
- Many learners achieve valuable additional qualifications to enhance their career prospects.
- Training for staff is well planned. Assessors receive good training and support to improve their practice.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Brooks & Kirk Ltd is an independent learning provider, with its senior managers and administrative staff based in Boston, Lincolnshire. It recruits learners from across the British Isles. Since 2014, the company has provided training funded through adult learning loans.
- The majority of learners are on level 3 qualifications in assessing vocational achievement, with a small number working towards health and social care qualifications. The vast majority of learners also work towards an additional level 3 qualification in education and training, which the company offers at no additional cost to the learner.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - helping assessors to agree challenging, time-bound targets that enable all learners to make good progress from their starting points
 - providing high-quality support for all learners to achieve their qualifications
 - identifying targets for wider learning, including vocational, personal and social skills development.
- Ensure that staff increase the proportion of learners who achieve their main qualifications within the planned timescale; do this by making effective and consistent use of the new arrangements to improve staff performance.
- Ensure that all learners understand the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, so that they are more aware of how to protect themselves.
- Make sure that managers analyse and use available data to monitor trends in the performance of all groups of learners over time and identify areas for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior managers were late in tackling the slow progress of learners towards achieving their main qualification. Almost all learners and staff have prioritised the achievement of additional qualifications above progress towards the principal qualification that learners enrolled for; as a result, too few have achieved their main aim, especially within the planned time.
- Managers have recently recruited additional staff to improve the monitoring of individual learners' progress. They have also introduced a robust system for monitoring and improving staff performance, so that assessors increase the urgency and frequency of contact with learners who make slow progress. The majority of current learners are now making at least the progress expected of them, although many have already passed the planned end date of their course.
- Managers support and challenge staff through the use of effective observations of teaching, learning and assessment; they identify good practice in the provision of individual coaching that helps learners overcome their significant barriers to learning, such as a lack of confidence in their ability to achieve or poor previous experiences of formal education. However, managers have been slow in implementing aspects of the quality improvement plan effectively.
- Managers collect feedback from learners who complete their training. Their evaluation of the quality of the provision is accurate. However, they make little effort to collect the views of learners who leave without achieving their qualifications. This is a lost opportunity to use their views to inform the continuing improvement of the provision.
- Senior managers analyse the achievements of groups of learners to meet their contractual obligations to the funding agency. However, managers place insufficient emphasis on identifying trends over time of the progress and achievement by all groups of learners.
- Leaders and senior managers have a clear vision and strategic direction for the company, which they communicate well to all staff.
- Senior managers regularly appraise the work of individual staff, using the results of their observations, staff performance data and learners' feedback. They identify a wide range of training and development opportunities for assessors. Managers provide good support for assessors who wish to gain additional qualifications, such as higher-level teaching qualifications.
- Managers ensure that the range of training meets local, regional and national needs effectively. For example, they provide health and social care courses for staff in local care settings, and education and training courses that help learners to build their confidence and improve their chances of gaining employment.
- Learners feel safe and know how to get advice and support if they experience bullying or harassment. Managers make sure that staff receive training on their responsibilities with regard to the 'Prevent' duty, and that they promote learners' understanding of fundamental British values. However, the extent to which learners appreciate the risks of radicalisation and recognise extremist behaviour is insufficient.

- Staff at all levels strongly promote the values of tolerance and equality of opportunity with all learners. The company provides a range of good resources that support learners in developing a secure understanding of relevant diversity topics and underpinning British values.

The governance of the provider

- The governance arrangements are effective. Senior managers have a close, detailed knowledge of all parts of the delivery of training. They hold staff to account for the quality of the provision and accurately identify areas for improvement. Senior managers are very aware of what staff do well to achieve the strategic aims of the company but have been insufficiently challenging about ensuring that all learners achieve their main qualifications.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding procedures are well considered and reviewed frequently. Managers have developed detailed policies and procedures with advice from a Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that they meet current government requirements and guidance. Staff recruitment checks to prevent the recruitment of unsuitable people are appropriate. Staff complete training on relevant regional and national priorities and take account of current guidance, which managers reinforce during the regular staff meetings.
- Staff understand how to keep vulnerable learners safe and ensure that learners know how to stay safe online and when using social networks. Managers have ensured that assessors have received training on the risks of extremism and radicalisation and have very recently provided additional learning resources on relevant topics. However, it is too early to judge fully the impact of these actions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The vast majority of training is delivered by distance learning, supported by a well-managed, online set of high-quality learning resources and regular telephone contact with assessors. This allows learners to have access to learning resources at locations and times convenient to them.
- The majority of current learners make appropriate progress with their learning, but for a significant minority progress is still too slow. The frequency of contact between assessors and learners has recently increased and all staff now place an increased emphasis on timely progress and achievement of qualifications when speaking with learners.
- Learners working towards health and social care, or the additional qualification in education and training, complete an initial assessment of their English, mathematical, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, assessors make insufficient use of this information to plan individual learning support, which has a negative impact on learners' progress.
- The very small number of learners who are working towards the assessing vocational achievement qualification do not complete an initial assessment; as a result, staff are not able to tailor their programmes to match individual learners' prior skills.

- Assessors do not have sufficiently high expectations of all learners. Assessment planning focuses on meeting the minimum academic requirements that learners are required to achieve. Learning targets focus on the completion of tasks or the submission of academic assignments, rather than the development of personal and vocational skills and in ensuring that learners make progress according to their potential. Learners are unclear of the need to meet these undemanding targets within a set timeframe.
- Assessors do not routinely identify targets for the development of vocational, personal and social skills, which would help learners to improve their employment and promotion prospects further.
- Assessors make reasonable adjustments to provide effective support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, they provide paper copies of learning resources and use digital voice recording to enable learners to submit work for assessment.
- Assessors are well qualified and use their expertise to gain learners' attention during tutorials. Their experience enables them to make the learning relevant to the learners' current job roles. As a result, most learners are well motivated to gain valuable qualifications.
- Assessors provide appropriate support for most learners to develop their English and mathematical skills. However, those learners with higher-level English and mathematical skills do not receive sufficient help to improve their knowledge and skills to a higher standard.
- Learners enjoy and benefit from their learning, for example through the development of useful ICT skills, improving their self-confidence and tackling difficulties which could inhibit future learning.
- Assessors provide good written feedback on learners' academic assignments and many provide useful advice to learners on how they can improve their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Most learners give insufficient priority to achieving their main qualification aim and, as a result, have made insufficient progress with their learning until very recently.
- Few learners are able to express confidently their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty, or clearly recognise the threat from extremism and how to protect themselves from radicalisation.
- Learners, many of whom have poor previous experiences of formal education or significant difficulties with learning, enjoy their courses and take pride in their work. Learners develop their self-confidence as a result of their learning.
- Many learners are able to demonstrate their new skills, including in English, mathematics and ICT, in their workplaces and take on extended job roles and greater responsibilities.
- Learners demonstrate their improved ICT skills through their increasing use of the secure portal, which enables them to have access to useful online learning resources and upload academic assignments.
- Assessors provide learners with sufficient independent information, advice and guidance to help them make decisions about their next steps in training and employment. In

addition, many learners conduct their own research and inform their assessor when their employment status changes.

- Learners are confident in their understanding of equality of opportunity, and demonstrate positive attitudes towards diversity in modern Britain. They use appropriate language and clearly relate their learning on these themes to their workplace activities.
- Learners feel safe and are confident in keeping themselves safe when using online learning resources and using social networks.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieved their intended qualifications in 2014/15 was low, and many learners made slow progress towards their main qualification, the certificate in assessing vocational achievement (CAVA). However, many learners achieve a relevant vocational qualification in education and training, which boosts their confidence and supports their long-term career aspirations.
- Managers have recently placed a much greater emphasis on increasing learners' progress and more focus on learners completing the main qualification that they enrolled for. As a result, current learners are now making at least the progress expected of them. A significant number of learners have accelerated their learning following more frequent and focused contacts from assessors.
- The very small number of learners on health and social care courses, and those who are working solely towards the CAVA qualification, make good progress in their learning.
- A high proportion of learners progress to employment, gain promotion or take on extra responsibilities in their workplace when they complete their course.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1236706
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	306
Principal/CEO	Mr S Kirk
Telephone number	01205 355464
Website	www.brooksandkirk.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	440	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the business manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and a range of other reports. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected within the report. They observed coaching sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Gerard McGrath, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bev Cross

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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