

London Skills for Growth

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

12–15 December 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Traineeships	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved and are now good.
- Senior leaders have an ambitious improvement strategy and have ensured that staff are committed to it. Staff have remedied the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- The board of trustees has taken bold and effective steps to strengthen its partnership with a local group of colleges. In doing so, leaders and managers have secured the long-term future of the organisation.
- Staff have developed effective partnerships with local employers to offer a wide range of meaningful work experience opportunities matched to the career choices of learners.
- Leaders and managers work well with partners to develop courses that meet the needs of learners. They provide apprenticeships in subjects, such as childcare, where there is a high demand locally.
- Senior leaders, managers and staff hold high ambitions for their learners. As a result, learners develop the skills needed to be successful on their courses.
- Apprentices in hairdressing develop good technical skills and in childcare understand the stages of child development. As a result, apprentices are asked by their employers to take on additional responsibility in their workplaces.
- The proportion of apprentices achieving their qualification has improved and is now high.
- In a minority of classroom-based lessons, learners do not turn up on time. As a result, they miss important introductory instructions or activities.
- The proportion of learners who achieve level 2 functional skills mathematics, although improving, remains too low.
- The quality of classroom-based teaching on traineeship programmes is not consistently good.

Full report

Information about the provider

- London Skills for Growth is a charity and an independent learning provider based in Bexleyheath, south east London. The organisation delivers apprenticeship frameworks in business administration and childcare and apprenticeship standards in hairdressing, from three sites in Bexleyheath, Stratford and Woolwich. In addition to apprenticeships, the provider also delivers traineeships and has recently reintroduced study programmes to meet the needs of learners better.
- On 1 August 2017, Bromley College Corporation (trading as London South East Colleges) became the sole member of the charity. London Skills for Growth remains an independent charity but now sits within the LSEC group. The partnership will help to ensure that opportunities for progression to further study are available to learners.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the punctuality of learners attending classroom-based lessons.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for learners on traineeship courses. Leaders and managers should ensure that:
 - tutors fully use the skills learned in their professional development
 - the purpose of activities in lessons is clear and learners participate fully
 - tutors set more complex and challenging work for the most able learners to ensure that they can fulfil their potential
 - tutors provide regular feedback on learners' work so that they understand what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders and managers should continue to implement their strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics and to increase the proportion of learners achieving their level 2 functional skills qualification.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders, managers and staff hold high ambitions for their learners. Staff are effective in their engagement with and support for young people who are disadvantaged and furthest away from the job market to improve their skills, gain employment or move into further learning.
- After the previous inspection, senior leaders launched an ambitious improvement strategy. They have worked hard to ensure that there is widespread staff commitment to this strategy. They have remedied the key areas for improvement, and have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers make effective use of a good range of management information and data, including examination results, outcomes from observations of teaching and learning, attendance data and student progress information, in their regular reviews with tutors about their performance. As a result, leaders and managers hold tutors accountable for their own performance, as well as the progress and results that learners achieve.
- Senior Leaders make accurate judgements on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They use this information effectively to plan training for staff in order to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers work well with partners to develop courses that meet the needs of learners. Apprenticeships are offered in subjects, such as childcare, where there is a high demand locally. The recently reintroduced study programmes and the traineeship programme meet local needs well. Managers have successfully secured two contracts from local authorities to provide levy-funded apprenticeships.
- In a minority of areas, strategies to improve are not fully effective. For example, leaders and managers have not increased the proportion of learners achieving qualifications in mathematics, or tackled the poor punctuality of learners on traineeships and study programmes.

The governance of the provider

- Governance arrangements are effective. The board of trustees has overseen well the key strategic decision to secure the future of the charity. They took the bold decision to appoint LSEC as their sole charity member; as a result, they formally became part of the LSEC group. This is leading to some early signs of success. For example, staff have easier access to a wider range of training and can call upon additional expertise in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Trustees have steered London Skills for Growth skilfully during a period of significant structural change while maintaining an effective focus on improving the quality of the provision. They monitor closely the programme of work to tackle weaknesses in what the provider offers to learners.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Managers oversee safeguarding well through a safeguarding group that meets regularly to maintain, and to review, safeguarding incidents. Where staff or employers identify safeguarding concerns, they share their concerns appropriately with managers and safeguarding officers. They liaise effectively with outside agencies and with parents and carers where necessary. On a day-to-day basis, managers are vigilant about changes in learners' behaviour, and are quick to follow up any concerns that they have about learners' welfare.
- Managers ensure that staff are trained in safeguarding, including the duty to prevent extremism and radicalisation and promote British values. However, this has not yet had sufficient impact on learners' knowledge and understanding of what these issues mean for them in their workplace.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good. Tutors and assessors have engaged positively with the actions implemented by senior leaders and, as a result, the majority of apprentices achieve their qualification, and within the planned time. The vast majority of current apprentices, study programme learners and trainees make good progress. Learners enjoy their learning and have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Tutors and assessors use a good range of teaching and assessment methods to engage and challenge apprentices. This is particularly effective during group work. Sessions are interactive, lively, and at an appropriate pace to support apprentices in gaining the knowledge and skills needed in their job roles. For example, business administration apprentices develop skills in working with spreadsheets while they learn how to budget and plan trips for their managers. Tutors use questioning techniques effectively to check understanding and deepen learners' knowledge of the topic they are learning.
- Tutors and assessors use the assessment of apprentices', trainees' and study programme learners' starting points well to ensure that they have access to individualised programmes. In apprenticeships, assessors gain a thorough understanding of apprentices' prior skills, knowledge and achievements, and they use this information to decide on the length and level of programme. As a result, the majority of apprentices remain on their course.
- Tutors and assessors are well qualified and have good industry knowledge and experience. They use this well to link activities and discussions in off-the-job-training to apprentices' job roles. As a result, learners successfully put in place the skills they have developed at work. For example, business administration apprentices change budget codes accurately on work systems, and handle confidently incoming telephone calls about information and communication technology queries.
- The majority of apprentices, trainees and study programme learners receive useful and clear feedback on their work. Tutors and assessors check work frequently and their feedback supports learners to improve their work and extend their knowledge. For example, apprentices on hairdressing standards consider different hair types when

completing specific tasks, such as foil colouring and creating curls.

- The majority of assessors regularly assess apprentices' skills in the workplace and set clear and motivating targets. In the early years provision, assessors use targets well to support apprentices to develop their understanding of equality of opportunity. In hairdressing, targets are specific to the techniques apprentices need to develop to be a successful stylist. However, in a minority of progress reviews in business administration, and in traineeships, targets are too vague and focus on the completion of units only. As a result, these learners are not clear on what skills they need to develop, or how to go about doing so in order to meet the targets.
- Staff support those learners who need extra help well. Apprentices who need help to develop their written English skills get one-to-one support with particular issues such as spelling and grammar. Staff provide effective support to those learners on study programmes who suffer from anxiety. For example, they help learners travel independently. As a result, these learners make good progress and achieve as well as their peers.
- Tutors and assessors support apprentices well to develop their independent learning and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Apprentices use ICT and the internet effectively to research topics set for homework. In hairdressing, tutors use interactive ICT-based games to pose and answer quiz questions, testing apprentices' understanding.
- Tutors support apprentices and learners to understand discrimination, victimisation and harassment effectively. They help learners and apprentices to consider how to tackle prejudice by using well-thought-out scenarios.
- In mathematics lessons and one-to-one support sessions, tutors do not explain tasks clearly enough and teaching in these sessions requires improvement. There is little consolidation of learning and practising of mathematics skills. As a result, learners and apprentices do not understand basic mathematics concepts and make slow progress.
- In the majority of traineeship lessons, tutors do not clearly identify the purpose of activities or ensure that all learners take part and make the progress of which they are capable. In these lessons, trainees get confused about what they need to do and do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners are confident and clear on the details of their programmes. They have undergone a well-structured recruitment process to help ensure that they are on the right course at an appropriate level.
- Learners on traineeships and those that are work-ready on the study programme benefit from work experience placements that meet their longer-term career aspirations.
- Leaders and managers have successfully implemented new expectations for learners' behaviour, including dress code and attendance. Learners respond positively to this and, as a result, their appearance is professional and the vast majority of classes are well attended.
- Careers guidance is effective and the majority of learners progress to sustained

employment or further study. Tutors and managers provide clear advice and guidance on higher-level courses available at Skills for Growth and other local providers.

- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners in childcare are given increased responsibility for the welfare of babies and young children. Learners in business administration working in a law firm communicate well and in a professional manner with clients and solicitors, conveying important legal information.
- Learners have benefited from visits by local police to discuss gang culture, identified as a particular threat in parts of London. In addition, presentations on sexual health from external experts have helped learners' understanding of personal health and welfare. Learners have a good understanding of how to stay safe online, including the responsible use of social media.
- Learners make good progress in the development of their English skills. For example, they make good use of dictionaries to research spellings and the meanings of words used in their respective subjects.
- Learners feel safe in the training centres and in the workplace and know who to contact if they have safety or welfare concerns. With the exception of learners on childcare courses, learners have an insufficient understanding of how the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism affect them in their chosen career.
- Tutors and managers have not succeeded in improving learners' poor punctuality in a minority of lessons. As a result, learners miss important introductory instructions or activities and this disrupts the learning of those already present.
- Tutors in mathematics sessions do not always illustrate the application of mathematics as it relates to the workplace. As a result, learners are often unable to understand clearly how their newly acquired skills apply at work.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have successfully brought about improvement to learners' and apprentices' achievements. The proportion of learners who successfully complete their course has improved and is now very high.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualification in 2016/17 improved compared to the previous year and is now good. The large majority of apprentices, particularly in hairdressing and childcare, achieved their qualification, and within the planned time.
- The majority of learners on traineeships progress to employment or further study. The proportion of apprentices progressing from intermediate level to advanced level has improved and is high. The proportion of apprentices who progress to employment is high.
- There has been significant improvement in the achievement of male apprentices. As a result, male and female apprentices' achievements are broadly in line with each other. Learners from different ethnic groups and those with an identified learning difficulty or disability achieve at the same rate as all other learners.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills English and ICT qualifications at the first attempt is good and improving. As a result, more learners

develop the skills needed to progress on to further study.

- Learners' work is of a good standard. Apprentices work to a high practical standard in hairdressing, such as when supporting senior stylists in foil colouring.
- The proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18 who achieved their level 3 qualification in business administration in 2016/17 was too low. However, learners who are currently studying business administration make good progress.
- A minority of learners on traineeships do not develop the skills needed to progress on to employment or further study. Leaders and managers have recognised this and recently reintroduced courses that are better suited to meet the needs of learners. However, it is too early to determine the impact of this.
- While the proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills level 2 mathematics qualification is improving, it is still too low. As a result, only a minority of learners develop the skills needed to progress on to further study.

Types of provision

Apprenticeships

Good

- Leaders and managers plan courses well to meet the apprenticeship requirements. As a result, the large majority of learners make good progress on apprenticeship programmes and learners complete within the planned time.
- Apprentices develop good practical skills and knowledge. They are highly valued by their employers and produce good standards of work. For example, hairdressing apprentices develop the skills and behaviours necessary to become actively involved in cutting and styling complex hairstyles to a high industry standard, colouring hair using foil techniques and supporting senior stylists.
- Tutors and the apprenticeship managers collaborate well to ensure that the skills developed meet the needs of the apprentice and their employer. Workplace managers work with assessors to select the most relevant units from the qualification to meet job requirements. As a result, apprentices develop skills that are specific to their employment.
- Tutors support apprentices well to achieve their qualification. For example, learners requiring additional support for English and mathematics receive help from tutors in order to pass. As a result, learners make good progress towards achieving the qualifications.
- Staff make effective links between apprentices' on- and off-the-job training and learners benefit from frequent visits by assessors. Assessors make good use of electronic tracking to set targets for progression. Employers are appropriately involved in target setting and the overall progress of learners. They support learners in developing the specific skills they need to complete their apprenticeship successfully.
- In a minority of progress reviews, assessors set targets for learners that focus too much on the completion of work-related units and not enough on the important personal skills that will be useful in future employment.

Traineeships

Good

- The large majority of trainees make good progress, particularly towards their main learning goals relating to work preparation. This is achieved through well-planned and timely work experience and by tutors who provide good support and guidance that is personalised for each trainee.
- The large majority of trainees benefit from purposeful work experience which is relevant to their long-term goals and career aspirations. This helps them to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge for their chosen sectors. For instance, trainees in retail become confident in carrying out a stock analysis and managing suppliers and deliveries, while those in childcare learn how to maintain care routines for babies in a nursery.
- Tutors use information on learners' starting points to plan effectively an individualised programme of learning. This has led to learners who require a longer period to become ready for employment to be directed on to the new study programme.
- Tutors use reviews with learners well to assess and reinforce learning from previous lessons. As a result, learners make good progress towards achieving their targets.
- Tutors use, when appropriate, the opportunity to develop the moral and social development of learners by challenging their assumptions about people's appearance. As a result, learners develop the skills they need to live and work in modern Britain.
- Learners have a good understanding of discrimination, victimisation and harassment. Tutors develop these concepts well in lessons through well-thought-out scenarios, which enable learners to tackle these.
- In the majority of classroom-based lessons, tutors do not make the purpose of activities clear. As a result, learners become confused and uninterested in the tasks set, and end up talking rather than completing the task. Tutors do not always teach lessons that challenge the most able learners. Consequently, learners do not always achieve their potential or gain the high grades of which they are capable.
- Tutors do not routinely provide feedback or correct trainees when they have made errors in calculations or spelling. As a result, learners are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50092
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	705
Principal/CEO	Ashley McCaul
Telephone number	020 8304 8527
Website	www.skillsforgrowth.org.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+
	25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	148	56	53	63	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	84		-		84			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
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 chief executive, 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.

Inspection team

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Jane Hughes	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jon Bowman	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Francoise Beregovoi	Ofsted Inspector

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