

Inspection of Bedford Borough Council

Inspection dates:

20 to 22 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Bedford Training Assessment Centre (BTAC) is a department within Bedford Borough Council. BTAC registered as an apprenticeship provider in 2018 to provide apprenticeships internally to Bedford Borough Council employees and externally to levy-paying organisations. BTAC specialises in standards-based apprenticeships in health and social care, residential care, early years and teaching assistants.

BTAC offers apprenticeships in adult health and social care at levels 2 to 5, level 3 adult health and social care, level 3 supporting teaching and learning in schools and level 2 and 3 in early years and education. At the time of the visit, 24 apprentices were on programmes, 13 of which were adult health and social care apprenticeships. There are no learners in receipt of high needs funding and the provider has no subcontractors.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

The few apprentices studying level 3 adult care do not gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours due to their already extensive care sector experience.

Apprentices do not benefit from impartial careers advice and guidance. They are not aware of the career choices available to them.

Apprentices who need to improve their English and mathematics skills are frustrated by the lack of appropriate support that teachers provide. They do not enjoy their learning and struggle to apply the content to their work. As a result, they make slow progress, which inhibits their ability to progress onto higher levels.

Most apprentices value the support they receive from their vocational teachers and employers. Teachers know their apprentices well and arrange extra support sessions when apprentices need it.

Apprentices integrate quickly into their roles at work. Apprentices take on new responsibilities at work, such as key person roles in early years settings and team leader roles in adult care settings.

Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They talk confidently about safeguarding issues and how these apply to their job roles when working with children or vulnerable adults.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Too few apprentices remain in learning and complete their apprenticeship. Leaders do not involve employers sufficiently in the development of the apprenticeships. While leaders select apprenticeships to meet local priority employment areas, they do not involve employers in the order of learning to match what apprentices are doing in their everyday jobs. Leaders do not work with employers to enhance the curriculum by gaining employers perspective of what training they need for their workforce.

Leaders do not extend the learning opportunities for apprentices beyond the apprenticeship standard. As a result, too few apprentices have opportunities to develop and deepen their wider interests or talents. Apprentices do not have opportunities to extend their knowledge about healthy lifestyles and forming healthy relationships. Few apprentices have access to industry experts outside of staff at their place of work.

Too few apprentices develop the independent learning skills they need to become confident and resilient learners. Teachers do not motivate or encourage apprentices to overcome their barriers to learning and persevere with their studies. As a result, too many apprentices do not complete their programmes.

Apprentices benefit from taught sessions in groups, where they can share experiences with each other. For example, they usefully discuss the differences in health and safety working practices in the residential and community adult care settings in which they work.

Teachers do not make good use of apprentice's prior knowledge of English and mathematics. Teachers do not ensure that apprentices who require functional skills qualifications make sufficient progress in gaining new skills, particularly in mathematics. Assessors do not help apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills further.

Vocational teachers frequently recap previous learning to ensure that apprentices repeat and retain essential knowledge. They break learning down effectively into key learning concepts. Teachers plan regular breaks in online workshop sessions to allow apprentices time to reflect on new knowledge. For example, teaching assistant apprentices value the opportunity to discuss the signs that may indicate children are experiencing difficulties or are at risk of harm.

Teachers provide apprentices with constructive and useful feedback. Apprentices are given clear written feedback in addition to verbal feedback during one-to-one review sessions. Higher level apprentices receive constructive feedback to improve their academic skills in areas, such as referencing appropriately.

Most apprentices develop appropriate workplace behaviours as a consequence of the support they receive from their workplace mentors and managers. As a result, apprentices are equipped with the correct behaviours they need to progress in their job roles. Apprentices act as role models to the teams they manage. As apprentices move through the apprenticeship programme, they become more confident in applying their skills and knowledge to new scenarios by drawing upon prior learning and experience over time.

Assessors ensure that apprentices learn and understand the importance of British values throughout their apprenticeship. These are taught in their induction sessions, embedded into workshops and revisited in one-to-one sessions. As a result, apprentices have a deeper understanding of the importance of how difference, respect and law relate to their work and their lives.

Leaders and governors do not accurately assess the quality of education and training. They focus too heavily on finances and other operational matters. Leaders have not identified key strengths or areas for development. Leaders do not use accurate data to monitor the progress apprentices make towards achieving their qualifications. Governors do not have the information they need to hold leaders to account.

Staff have a limited understanding of the safeguarding risks within the local area. They do not receive routine updates from senior leaders within the council. As a result, teaching staff are unable to help apprentices understand the risks they face in society.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices receive the training they need in order to understand how to keep themselves safe at work and in training. They know when and how to report concerns at work about themselves or those that they work with to ensure that the correct action is taken.

Senior leaders and governors do not review the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements with sufficient rigour. They do not always identify potential safeguarding risks or take swift remedial action. Leaders ensure that apprentices cover safeguarding topics at induction and through units in the apprenticeship. However, leaders rely overly on apprentices' workplace managers to help apprentices secure their understanding.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should gather and analyse accurate information to ensure that they understand accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of education. They must put in place effective actions to secure improvements swiftly. Governors should review the information that they receive to challenge and hold leaders to account effectively.
- Leaders must involve employers in the development of apprenticeship programmes to tailor apprentices' skills development to the needs of their workplaces.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices receive impartial careers information, advice and guidance. Leaders must ensure that apprentices can make informed choices about the job roles available to them when they complete their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should rapidly implement a personal development programme, so that apprentices have access to information beyond their specialist learning. Teachers must enable apprentices to pursue their passions and interests in both their working and social lives.
- Leaders should inform teaching staff of the local risks of radicalisation and extremism. Leaders must ensure that staff use this information to provide training to apprentices of the risks they may encounter.
- Teachers should identify what level 3 adult care apprentices know and can do at the start of their programme and use this information effectively to plan a curriculum that is suited to the needs of individual apprentices.
- Leaders must ensure that staff accurately assess apprentices' existing English and mathematics skills. Staff must use this information to plan learning that enables apprentices to improve their skills in these areas. Staff must ensure that apprentices on functional skills qualifications improve their mathematical skills to gain their qualification.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50636
Address	138 Cauldwell St Bedford MK42 9AP
Contact number	01234 276339
Website	www.bedford.gov.uk/btac
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Alison Macaulay
Provider type	Community Learning and Skills - Local Authority
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the interim team leader, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Shane Langthorne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Kelley Malthouse	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Bamford	His Majesty's Inspector

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