

# Inspection of Barrett Bell Ltd

Inspection dates: 9 to 12 May 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Adult learning programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Information about this provider

Barrett Bell Ltd is an independent training provider offering niche training in gas engineering. The company is based in Hertfordshire, with training centres in Stevenage and in Watford. Barrett Bell Ltd has delivered training as a subcontractor since 2006. It gained its own funding contract in 2015.

At the time of the inspection, there were 99 adult learners studying the level 3 diploma in gas engineering. Approximately two thirds of the learners were studying at Watford, and the remainder were studying in Stevenage. Learners attend training for two days each week over 26 weeks. Many learners work in the gas industry on other available days. They shadow current industry employees to gain a good understanding of the career in which they plan to work.

There was a small proportion of learners with disclosed learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

Learners highly value the opportunities that studying at Barrett Bell gives them. Learners who are unemployed, whose education has been disrupted, or who want to improve their career prospects appreciate the ability to pursue a qualification that enables them to swiftly gain sustainable employment as gas engineers.

Learners develop new skills and knowledge swiftly on their course so that they can be competent gas engineers. They learn the appropriate behaviours and attitudes that are required to work in customers' homes and to work effectively in teams. Learners state that they find the work interesting and challenging.

Learners benefit from a flexible approach to learning that allows them to study on days that suit them. They value the opportunity to attend on a third day each week to have additional support for topics they have struggled with or to practise their skills. They enjoy their classroom lessons and have a positive attitude to the topics they are studying. At the end of their course, learners work with employers to put the practical skills they have gained into real-life situations. As a result, learners become confident in the skills they have gained and in their ability to gain employment.

Learners feel safe in the training centres and understand how to keep themselves and their customers safe in the workplace.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for the programme they offer, which meets the needs of a niche market in gas engineering. Leaders have established a curriculum that is informed by employers' needs for a skilled workforce and meets government energy initiatives, such as the use of smart meters.

Leaders have created a highly inclusive learning environment, where learners from a broad range of backgrounds, including those with disrupted educational backgrounds, ex-offenders and unemployed adults, study together collaboratively.

Tutors have high expectations of learners. At the start of the course, they swiftly ensure that learners understand the demands of the highly regulated sector in which they plan to work. Managers and tutors have sequenced teaching carefully so that the skills and knowledge learners gain are meaningful and logically presented. Learners understand early in their course about health and safety requirements of fitting gas boilers, and they understand the importance of combustion and how gas burns. Learners swiftly learn about the components involved in installing a gas meter and then progress on to testing the components, including the use of an emergency cut-off valve, to ensure that they and their customers are kept safe. As a result, learners are well prepared for their future employment.

Tutors plan early in the course to develop learners' mathematical skills so that they are relevant to what is required for working in the gas industry. Learners, many of whom do not have mathematics qualifications, learn swiftly to measure pressure, flow and pipe sizing accurately. They become confident to use formulae to calculate room volumes and to correctly determine boiler and radiator sizes. Learners write detailed accounts of the tasks they have completed. Tutors review and provide helpful feedback on written work. As a result, learners' written English skills improve. Learners have a very good understanding of technical terms used in the industry and can apply these appropriately when discussing the tasks they are carrying out.

Tutors are suitably qualified and experienced to teach on the course. They use their knowledge of the trade skilfully to teach learners the different tasks they may have to complete when they are working independently. Learners benefit from high-quality learning resources. As a result, they have an up-to-date understanding of the industry, including the use of dual natural gas and hydrogen meters. Tutors also ensure that learners work on older style equipment, such as imperial meters, so they have experience of the different equipment they may find in customers' homes.

Leaders are cognisant of staff well-being, and they provide helpful support for staff who require it. They have put in place a trained mental health first aider to support staff and learners. Staff highly value the support they receive. Managers have also focused on raising awareness of mental health for males, reflecting the large proportion of male learners and staff.

Leaders and managers are proud of the quality of the learning they provide for learners. They support new tutors very well to understand the high standards that are expected of them in the classroom. As a result, tutors skilfully use a range of relevant assessment methods to check learners' understanding of the topics they have been taught. They use practical and written assessments thoroughly to check learners' knowledge. Tutors use their assessments to identify gaps in learners' knowledge, revising topics accordingly. However, when using questioning in lessons, a minority of tutors do not routinely use probing questions to check learners' deeper understanding of topics. Too often, the same learners respond to questions, while others do not contribute.

Tutors support most learners very effectively in the classroom. They provide extra support for learners who find topics challenging, and learners can attend for an additional day each week if they wish to revise areas. Although tutors provide support for the small proportion of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, tutors do not have a good enough understanding of specific learning difficulties or disabilities or how to support learners who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve their qualifications as well as their peers. However, too often, they make slower progress during the course and do not develop strategies to become independent learners.

A high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications. The highly effective links that leaders have developed with local and national employers result in most learners gaining employment when they complete their course.

Leaders provide a broad range of staff development opportunities for tutors and administrative staff. They provide time for staff to attend training but do not routinely ensure that staff attend the relevant training to meet the priorities of the organisation. For example, they do not use the outcomes of lesson observations to plan individual tutor's professional development. Staff do attend training that is required to meet legislative requirements, such as in safeguarding.

Learners have a good understanding of fundamental British values associated with their future employment. They have a detailed understanding of the importance of legislation in the gas industry and apply this knowledge consistently in their practical work. Learners appreciate the importance of understanding different cultural beliefs and values so that they can be considerate about the expectations of different customers when they enter their homes.

Tutors create a calm and professional learning environment, where learners demonstrate respect and tolerance to each other and to their tutors. Learners display positive attitudes to their learning, and most take detailed notes and record lessons so that they can revisit them. Most learners attend their taught sessions and, as a result, make good progress. When learners do not attend, managers take appropriate action to improve the levels of attendance. However, a small minority of learners do not attend lessons frequently enough, and too many do not attend lessons punctually.

Leaders and managers have not planned an effective personal development curriculum to ensure that all learners have an in-depth understanding of the broader issues that affect their life and work. Learners' understanding of topics such as healthy relationships vary between different groups. Too often, tutors only teach specific topics when an opportunity arises. As a result, too many learners have only a cursory understanding of these issues. Learners have a good understanding of the careers available to them on completion of their course.

Senior leaders have put in place useful governance arrangements. As a result, they benefit from external support and challenge. However, although senior leaders gather relevant data on the quality of the provision, they do not routinely analyse or present data sufficiently well. For example, they do not have a good oversight of learners' attendance or the development needs of individual tutors. Consequently, those with responsibility for governance do not have sufficient overview of these areas to provide the challenge required or identify how to secure improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. They have put in place a broad range of policies and procedures, which they use effectively to keep learners

safe. Staff responsible for recruitment are appropriately trained and carry out relevant checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable learners.

Managers ensure that staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty during their induction and that they attend frequent training to keep them up to date.

Managers and tutors prioritise health and safety. As a result, learners have a good understanding of how to work safely as gas fitters.

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

- Leaders must ensure that they plan a comprehensive personal development curriculum so that all learners have a consistent and in-depth understanding of the broader issues they might encounter in their life and work.
- Leaders must ensure that tutors have a good understanding of how to support learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learners who speak EAL so that they make good progress in their studies.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance must carefully consider the data that they gather and ensure that they analyse data thoroughly so that they can accurately identify the main areas for improvement.
- Leaders must ensure that all learners attend their lessons and arrive to taught sessions punctually.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	1247997
<b>Address</b>	Unit L Gunnells Wood Park Gunnells Wood Road Stevenage SG1 2BH
<b>Contact number</b>	01438727667
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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Bill Barrett Bell
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent Learning Provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23 to 26 October 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director, 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

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