

# Inspection of Baltic Training Services Limited

Inspection dates: 1 to 4 August 2023

## Overall effectiveness

**Outstanding**

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

## Information about this provider

Baltic Training Services Limited is an independent learning provider based in Darlington. It provides training to apprentices across England and to adult learners in the north east. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,370 apprentices studying at levels 3 and 4. The majority of apprentices were studying information and communication technology (ICT), software and digital marketing. There were 272 learners enrolled on short adult learning programmes in lean manufacturing, logistics and warehousing funded by the Tees Valley Combined Authority. The large majority of apprentices are over the age of 19. The provider does not subcontract any of its provision.

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

Apprentices and learners benefit from the positive culture that staff create. They value the well-planned training sessions that they experience and the technical expertise of their coaches. Apprentices and learners recognise that their training supports them well to build new knowledge and skills they can use in their day-to-day work or to gain employment.

Apprentices and learners demonstrate consistently positive attitudes and are highly committed to successfully completing their programmes. They make effective use of the support sessions and review meetings they attend to understand fully what they need to do to improve. They value the feedback from their coaches and act swiftly in response to it.

Most apprentices and learners are punctual to learning sessions and have very good attendance. Apprentices are expected to attend an online waiting room before the start of a session to ensure that there are no technical issues that could impact on a prompt start to the lesson. On the rare occasions where apprentices fall short of these expectations, coaches and managers work well with employers to agree actions.

Apprentices benefit from a highly effective personal development curriculum. They complete a number of short courses at induction, which includes topics such as safeguarding, equality and diversity and fundamental British values. Coaches help apprentices to use mnemonics to remember what they have learned. They discuss the content of these courses with apprentices during their progress reviews to reinforce their knowledge and to confirm their understanding. This training is further consolidated within the curriculum through discussions of monthly 'hot topics', which include topical issues and current affairs.

Adult learners understand the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion at work. They learn how to behave respectfully when working with colleagues from different backgrounds and understand that there is no place for racist and sexist behaviour in the workplace. Learners understand the importance of reporting any instances of bullying or harassment at work that they experience or witness.

Apprentices and learners feel safe and know how to report any concerns. They have a very good understanding of the risks when working in an online environment. They understand the consequences of unsafe data handling and the implications of general data protection regulations where this is relevant to their working practices.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear curriculum strategy, which they implement very successfully. They provide apprenticeships across England which focus on developing technological and digital skills. The curriculum offered is chosen as a result of

leaders' extensive knowledge of the labour market and their close working relationships with external stakeholders. Leaders also provide short courses to unemployed adults to improve their chances of gaining employment in areas of skills shortage, such as manufacturing, warehousing and storage, and logistics.

Managers work very well with employers to develop an apprenticeship curriculum that meets business needs. For example, following feedback from employers, staff included content on additional operating systems to the curriculum on level 3 and level 4 ICT courses.

Leaders and managers have an accurate oversight of the quality of the provision. They carry out a wide range of activities to ensure that apprentices benefit from high-quality training, such as observations of teaching, speaking to apprentices and employers, and reviewing apprentices' work. Leaders and managers carefully link the outcomes of these activities to staff training plans to develop the teaching skills of the coaches.

Leaders and managers work closely with external specialists to review the quality of the apprenticeship provision and to provide effective scrutiny and challenge. They use the reports that these specialists produce to identify precisely the strengths and areas for development and to create good-quality improvement plans.

Leaders and managers complete observations of teaching on adult learning programmes to check the quality of teaching. They rightly recognise the need to extend the range of activities to review the quality of the adult learning provision in line with the very good assurance arrangements they use with the apprenticeship provision. Leaders have sensible plans to implement these activities in the very near future to improve the adult learning programmes further.

Leaders and managers have effective oversight of the progress that apprentices and learners make on their programmes. They frequently review the information they hold and discuss it at management meetings. Programme heads become aware very quickly when apprentices are at risk of falling behind and arrange effective support for them.

Leaders and managers have made substantial improvements to the teaching of functional skills courses in English and mathematics for apprentices. They have introduced high-quality sessions taught by specialist tutors, which are rightly valued by apprentices. Staff provide intensive support to the very small number of apprentices who were enrolled on English and mathematics courses prior to these changes to ensure that they pass their functional skills examinations as soon as possible.

Leaders and managers have responded very well to the issue of a minority of apprentices withdrawing from their courses the previous year. They have implemented effective actions to reduce the number of withdrawals, such as encouraging employers to increase salaries on the level 3 digital marketer

programme. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who complete their programme is improving rapidly.

Coaches assess the starting points of apprentices accurately at the beginning of the programme. Coaches frequently review the progress that apprentices make and adjust their training plan if required. They use a wide range of effective assessment methods to check apprentices' understanding during sessions, such as questioning, discussions and written responses.

Coaches select the content of the curriculum very carefully to ensure that apprentices and learners gain the knowledge they need to be successful in their job roles. The apprenticeship curriculum contains valuable English and mathematics content that coaches identify as important. Apprentices know that effective communication is central to their work. They develop skills in report writing and verbal communication, which supports their ability to problem solve. Coaches support learners to improve the quality of their written English and provide helpful activities for learners to practise and apply their mathematics skills.

Highly qualified coaches deliver well-structured and carefully prepared sessions effectively so that apprentices and learners learn and remember what they have been taught. Adult learners value the range of interactive teaching methods that their tutors use, such as case studies and practical teamwork activities. This helps them to apply what they learn to the manufacturing and warehousing sectors. For example, learners on the level 2 certificate in lean organisation management techniques learn about effective teamwork before working with others to apply business improvement techniques to a manufacturing production line.

Apprentices develop significant new knowledge and skills. For example, on level 3 ICT support technician, apprentices produce high-quality projects which demonstrate what they have done at work to resolve end-user problems by upgrading hardware, recovering lost documents, or carrying out security checks to provide new network passwords.

Most apprentices and learners make very good progress on their programme and achieve their qualification. A high proportion of adult learners progress on to employment, and apprentices speak positively about the impact of the apprenticeship on their job roles. Apprentices state that their apprenticeship has helped them to pursue their goals and ambitions.

Most adult learners develop the valuable new knowledge and skills they need to work in the manufacturing and warehousing sectors. For example, learners on the level 2 certificate in warehousing and storage course develop their knowledge of the importance of completing orders accurately and on time and the consequences of an incorrect or delayed order. They understand how to package different items safely and securely. However, in a few cases, coaches focus too much on the knowledge requirements of the qualification rather than on teaching the specific skills and behaviours that adult learners need to develop.

Coaches provide comprehensive careers advice and guidance to apprentices and learners. Adult learners are supported well to develop their CV. They learn about interview techniques and the importance of professional personal presentation. Apprentices are confident about options available to them in the future, including progression to higher-level apprenticeships. They are able to identify new emerging markets and associated opportunities through career mapping and helpful links to a national careers website. Apprentices benefit from listening to a range of external speakers, which helps them to feel confident about their future plans and employability prospects.

Leaders, managers and coaches place a high priority on developing apprentices to become active citizens. Apprentices engage in a large number of innovative charity and community events. For example, they renovated a flat to welcome a Ukrainian family and collected for 'Sal's Shoes', which is a charity that provides shoes across the world to those most in need. ICT apprentices taught basic computing skills to older members of the community to enable them to communicate electronically. As a result, apprentices have a strong sense of community and the importance of being a good citizen in modern Britain.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding leads and their deputies attend appropriate training to be effective in their safeguarding roles. They work closely with a range of partners, such as local provider networks and regional 'Prevent' duty coordinators, to keep their knowledge current.

Leaders and managers have put in place comprehensive safeguarding policies to keep apprentices and learners safe. They implement safe recruitment practices to ensure that staff are appropriate to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

Coaches provide apprentices with excellent safeguarding resources through the 'Baltic Community Hub', an online system that provides information and advice to apprentices on how to stay safe when working alone, working online and socialising with friends. Apprentices have a strong understanding of radicalisation and extremism and the potential risks related to the digital world in which they work.

Coaches teach adult learners about safeguarding during the induction to their very short courses. Adult learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and know how to work safely in the workplace. They know the importance of wearing high-visibility jackets and safety boots in the warehouse environment and being vigilant of moving vehicles while managing stock and deliveries.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	58229
<b>Address</b>	Pioneer House Pioneer Court Darlington DL1 4WD
<b>Contact number</b>	01325731050
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.balticapprenticeships.com">https://www.balticapprenticeships.com</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Antony Hobbs
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 January 2015
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief operating officer, 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

Jacque Brown, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Steve Ingle	Ofsted Inspector
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