

# B-Skill Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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<b>Unique reference number:</b>	50585
<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Philippa Firth, His Majesty's Inspector
<b>Inspection dates:</b>	1 and 2 November 2023
<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	B-Skill LMT YBN Delta Bank Road Gateshead NE11 9DJ

# Monitoring visit: main findings

## Context and focus of visit

B-Skill Limited was inspected in February 2023. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

## Themes

**What progress have leaders made to ensure that adult learners benefit from an ambitious, well-planned and well-implemented curriculum?**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have reviewed and redesigned the hairdressing curriculum. Hairdressing programmes now provide learners with well-planned opportunities to develop the theoretical knowledge and practical skills they need to progress into self-employment, to a job role with an employer or on to higher-level qualifications.

Tutors ensure that learners take incremental steps in developing their practical skills. Learners on the level 3 course progress quickly from the basic cutting and colouring skills they learn at level 2 to using more advanced techniques. Most learners refine and hone their skills and gain confidence in their abilities. However, the impact of the full curriculum has not yet been realised and tested, as it is in its infancy. Leaders and managers are monitoring the impact closely.

Tutors use a range of suitable teaching strategies to help learners know and recall more. They use demonstrations effectively in beauty therapy and hairdressing programmes to illustrate specific treatments and techniques. Tutors break learning down into smaller chunks, and this helps learners to understand the sequential steps involved in providing treatments and allows them to practise and perfect their skills. For example, tutors provide a step-by-step demonstration of a colouring technique, and learners then practise their skills on mannequin heads to develop their competency before they move on to colouring the hair of salon clients.

In a few instances, learners do not benefit from feedback from their tutors that helps them to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. For example, on the level 1 hairdressing certificate, tutors do not specify clearly enough how learners have developed their plaiting skills, which is a core element of the qualification.

**What progress have leaders made to ensure that adult learners on hairdressing programmes benefit from effective work placements or work-related learning?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have taken steps to support learners in carrying out work placements or work-related learning at suitable salons. On the level 1 introduction to the hair and beauty sector course, tutors encourage learners to seek placements that will help them to gain practical skills before they progress on to the level 2 course. As a result, a few learners work in a voluntary capacity at local salons. This helps them to understand the demands of the hairdressing industry and to refine their skills in aspects such as washing and blow-drying hair.

Learners benefit from the opportunity to book hairdressing chairs or beauty beds in the commercial salons at the provider's satellite centres. They are able to practise their skills when they are not in training sessions. Tutors supervise learners to make sure that they work to industry expectations, can manage their commercial space professionally and meet the health and safety requirements of the industry.

A few learners across courses at all levels are yet to secure a work placement or work-related learning opportunity. Managers and tutors are aware of this and are monitoring the situation closely. Managers have planned further work experience opportunities for learners on level 3 hairdressing who have not had an opportunity to work in the industry. These learners can now work in the commercial salons at each centre once they have completed 26 weeks on the programme.

**What progress have leaders made to ensure that staff evaluate accurately the quality of education provided to learners at satellite sites.**

**Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, leaders have employed a new head of quality and curriculum, who has introduced a cycle of quality assurance processes to make managers at the satellite centres more accountable and to improve the quality of teaching. The quality team observes teaching to identify what tutors do well and what they need to do to improve. Most members of the quality team identify the teaching skills that tutors need to improve, such as their questioning techniques. However, leaders and managers do not provide tutors with professional development opportunities to help them to improve their teaching practice.

Managers frequently visit and work at the satellite centres to monitor the progress that learners are making. This helps managers to assure themselves that the quality of the provision is of at least the expected standard and to take action if it falls below that standard. For example, when managers identified that learners at one satellite centre were not progressing well enough, support was swiftly put in place and learning time was extended so that learners were able to achieve their qualification.

Most hairdressing and beauty therapy teachers continue to work in the industry as practitioners. They are well qualified and keep their vocational practice up to date through webinars and training on how to use new equipment. As a result, they are able to share current practice with learners.

Governors are in place who are highly experienced in improving education and training in the further education sector. Leaders and managers provide governors with a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision across all centres. As a result, governors are able to challenge leaders and hold them to account about the quality of education that they provide.

**What progress have leaders made to ensure that apprentices and learners have access to high-quality and impartial careers advice and guidance?**

**Significant progress**

Leaders and managers have taken swift action to provide learners and apprentices with impartial careers advice that helps them to know the range of progression routes relevant to their apprenticeship or vocational course. A few staff are completing a level 2 initial advice and guidance course so that they can better support learners and apprentices to make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

Tutors discuss career options and progression routes at induction and at each progress review meeting with learners and apprentices. Consequently, learners and apprentices are very aware of the career options that are open to them once they have completed their course. Apprentices on the level 3 youth support worker programme learn about the potential courses they could access following their apprenticeship, such as the level 4 in professional development and the degree in youth work.

Tutors provide learners with rich information about a variety of careers. Tutors teach learners about self-employment and how to set up their own salon. Learners gain crucial knowledge, such as how to write a business plan and manage finances, including insurance and tax arrangements. This careers advice helps learners to work in a self-employed capacity during and after their programmes.

Tutors encourage learners to complete courses that will help them to increase their commercial expertise, such as by providing additional services to clients. Learners are better prepared for employment in the career pathways that interest them. On the level 3 beauty therapy programme, tutors encourage learners to complete a skin-cancer awareness course. Learners gain an understanding of the signs of skin cancer so that they can recognise these when providing treatments and are able to advise clients to seek further assistance from their doctor, which could potentially save lives.

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