

Bridge Training Limited

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Employability training

Description of the provider

1. Bridge Training (Bridge) is a private training provider based in central Gloucester. It was established in 1989 and became a limited company in 2002. It provides entry to employment (E2E) programmes funded by Gloucestershire and Wiltshire LSC. It offers training on projects funded through the European Social Fund and as a subcontractor for a Department for Work and Pensions prime contract holder BTCV, but the number of learners is too low to report on this separately. It also holds contracts with local schools to provide vocational learning for learners in year 10 and 11, which is not in scope for this inspection. Government funded training accounts for around 80% of its income. At the time of inspection, 44 learners followed E2E programmes taking up options in construction, beauty therapy and information and communication technology (ICT).
2. Bridge employs 22 staff of whom 13 are trainers and tutors. The managing director is responsible for the overall management of the company's performance, supported by a senior management team.
3. In the year April 2006 to March 2007, unemployment rates in Gloucester were 4% compared with a national average of 5.3%. National Census 2001 data reports the proportion of the city's population from minority ethnic backgrounds at 7.5% compared with 9.1% for England overall.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Effectiveness of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Achievement and standards | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Quality of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Leadership and management | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade Good: Grade 2 |

Sector subject area

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Employability training | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The quality of provision is satisfactory and leadership and management are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity and social inclusion are good.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. Bridge has demonstrated it has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Steps taken to promote improvement since the previous inspection are satisfactory. It has successfully remedied most of the key weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. In particular it has taken effective action to improve its use of data, and implemented thorough arrangements to ensure learners' health and safety. Its arrangements for promoting equality of opportunity and social inclusion have improved and are now good. It has maintained standards in other areas. Positive outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching and learning have remained satisfactory. In recent months, it has successfully reversed a decline in outcome rates recorded between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Actions in development plans to improve the provision are appropriate. However, quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. Some quality assurance measures are not yet fully implemented.
6. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The range of views incorporated is suitably inclusive. Bridge collects feedback from learners regularly and systematically. Consultation with staff is good. Some external partners provide their views. Data on learners' achievements and ethnicity are used appropriately to provide evidence for judgements in the report. The process is regular and timely. Coverage of Bridge's activity is adequate, with judgements made against the common inspection framework. Judgements in the report are mainly self-critical and cover aspects with significant effects on learners, although some overstate the strengths of the organisation. Most grades in the report were higher than those given at inspection.

Key strengths

- Good development of range of provision
- Good individual coaching and personal support
- Good use of links with external organisations
- Effective action to promote social inclusion.

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient detail in targets set for learners
- Insufficient opportunities for learners to gain experience of work
- Incomplete quality assurance and improvement arrangements.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Progression rates are satisfactory and improving. In 2006/07, almost half of the 95 leavers progressed to employment, training or further education. Outcomes for learners for the first quarter of 2007/08 show an upward trend. In this period, two thirds of the 71 leavers have progressed, of whom over half have entered further education. Outcomes for learners from minority ethnic backgrounds have improved and are at the same level as for learners as a whole.
8. Achievement of qualifications is satisfactory overall. In 2006/07, 50 leavers achieved at least one externally accredited qualification. Almost half of these were vocational qualifications in plastering or woodwork at level 1. Success rates on the short course leading to the construction skills certificate of safety were particularly high at 95%. Many learners had not achieved a national qualification before joining the E2E programme.
9. Learners show improved confidence and self-esteem. Many learners make good progress in developing their personal and social skills, but this achievement is not recorded systematically. Learners' standards of work in the workshops and assessment portfolios are satisfactory. Overall attendance rates were satisfactory in 2006/07 at 76%.
10. Too few learners achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications. In 2006/07, only 11 of the 73 learners Bridge assessed as needing to improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills achieved a qualification. Bridge identifies this as an area for improvement in its current self-assessment report. However, many learners following vocational options develop a useful awareness of English and mathematics skills required in these occupational areas.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Bridge has successfully developed the range of provision it offers within its E2E programme. It has increased the range of national qualifications available to include awards in employability and wider key skills, and doubled the number of vocational options it offers. External specialist speakers regularly provide sessions on a wide range of highly relevant topics such as equality and diversity, and drug and alcohol awareness. Martial arts training effectively develops learners' confidence and self-awareness. Managers and staff have successfully prioritised integrating aspects of literacy and numeracy development with skills training in occupational workshops. Within schemes of work, occupational activities are comprehensively cross-referenced to the national core curricula for adult literacy and numeracy.
12. Bridge provides particularly responsive personal support. All staff are experienced in working with young people with a diverse range of needs. They provide sensitive and extensive help on a wide range of issues such as housing, finance and coping with complex personal circumstances. They are skilled at judging when to refer learners to specialist agencies. Some tutors also have specialist expertise which they use well in supporting learners with dyslexia and providing informal counselling.

13. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Practical training and individual coaching are particularly effective in the occupational areas. Tutors provide good training on safe working practices and set appropriately high standards for attitudes and behaviour. Learners participate well in most sessions and work hard to develop their skills. However, the range of resources and teaching and learning methods for literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is too narrow.
14. Information, advice and guidance on training and employment is satisfactory. Staff use the induction period well to help learners identify an overall progression aim and plan their programme. Induction includes an appropriate range of initial assessments and opportunities to sample the occupational areas Bridge offers. However, learners do not receive sufficient specific information on education and training available to them on leaving Bridge, such as the structure of apprenticeships.
15. Target setting is not sufficiently detailed. Learners' targets for the E2E programme overall are primarily recorded as the achievement of particular qualifications. Few have appropriate targets for developing personal social or employability skills. Initial assessments are not used effectively to clearly identify required action and support. Learners are often unfamiliar with their targets and some receive insufficient feedback on their progress. Target setting on individual learning plans for vocational and literacy and numeracy modules is weak, although the recording of general plans and achievements is satisfactory. Bridge's self-assessment report identifies inadequate use of processes to recognise and record non-accredited achievement and progress as an area for improvement.
16. Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to gain experience of work. Bridge does not sufficiently emphasise work experience in developing learners' employability skills. Some employers provide good quality and supportive work-placements and a high proportion of recent construction placements have led to a job or apprenticeship. However, too few learners have placements, an area for improvement identified in self-assessment. The range of work experience on offer is not sufficiently broad or flexible. Bridge does not provide options for learners unready or unwilling to spend most of each week with an employer. Learners do not have enough opportunities to visit employers, colleges or training providers to help them select from a wider range of possible progression routes.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

17. Bridge Training uses links with external organisations well, a strength identified in self-assessment. It has a strong working relationship with the local Connexions service. It developed successful vocational provision in plastering and salon services following information from the service identifying gaps in local provision. Weekly visits from a dedicated Connexions adviser contribute well to the pastoral support learners receive. Bridge has strong links with local schools through its provision of vocational training for their learners. Increasing numbers of these learners progress directly to Bridge's E2E programme on leaving school in July. Their attendance and behaviour is generally better than those recruited externally. Rates of progression to further education and apprenticeships from those who joined Bridge in summer 2007 are good. Bridge has well advanced, innovative projects using digital media to provide vocational training demonstrations and gather evidence for learners' portfolios of work. Funding and support for these comes through links with a professional association for learning providers and an awarding body. However, links with employers to provide work experience for learners are not sufficient.
18. Bridge takes effective action to promote social inclusion. Much of its marketing is successfully aimed at recruiting young people from groups facing significant barriers to participating in learning. More than half its learners have some form of learning difficulty. A third of its learners have a criminal record. Almost a fifth of its learners are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, double the proportion of those in the local population. Bridge works actively to increase the proportion of female learners it recruits, offering women-only taster sessions in construction skills during induction periods, and for female learners from local schools. Its salon skills option has successfully recruited men into an occupational area that traditionally appeals primarily to young women. It takes effective action to check that work-placements have appropriate arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity. It responds flexibly and appropriately to meet the needs of learners who travel from areas with poor transport links. Promotion of social inclusion was a key strength in Bridge's self-assessment report.
19. Operational management is satisfactory. Timetabling is flexible and allows learners a good choice of study options. Arrangements to assure learners' health and safety are sound. Measures to ensure personal security for staff and learners are suitable. Procedures to meet child protection and safeguarding requirements are appropriate. The management of work placements is effective. Formal and informal communications within Bridge are good.
20. Resource deployment is satisfactory. A good range of improvements to learning accommodation since the previous inspection includes new workshop facilities for plastering and beauty therapy. Classrooms are adequate. The information and communications technology learners use is satisfactory. Tutors' qualifications are mainly appropriate. Staff turnover is low. Staff value highly the support they receive from their peers and managers in professional and personal matters.

21. The use of data is sound. Data is timely and accurate. Managers use data effectively to identify areas for improvement in provision. For example, an analysis of data contributed well to the development of successful strategies to reduce the proportion of learners leaving without completing their programmes. Monitoring of attendance is routine. However, Bridge does not use data analysis sufficiently to establish trends over time. Collation and reporting is often month by month, with too few reports covering or comparing longer periods.
22. Bridge's strategy to meet learners' literacy, language and numeracy needs places a strong and useful emphasis on the integration of literacy and numeracy learning with vocational study. However, it does not sufficiently prioritise achievement of qualifications.
23. Quality improvement arrangements are not complete. Bridge has developed a range of appropriate quality assurance measures to standardise operating procedures, but these are not finalised or fully implemented. This is identified in its self-assessment report. Observations of teaching and learning are regular, but judgements and action planning in records of observations generally overestimate strengths and do not sufficiently identify areas and actions for improvement. Although managers routinely monitor targets on learning plans when learners attend monthly review meetings, target setting remains unsatisfactory in most areas.

What learners like:

- Friendly atmosphere
- Learning is such fun
- Different from school – ‘At school I used to get pushed to the back of the class - I feel like I’ve learnt more here’
- Teaching and coaching – ‘Staff help really well – they will talk you through until you understand’
- Good personal support from tutors – ‘they help with problems that have nothing to do with training’
- Opportunity to learn a trade
- Numeracy learning in the vocational workshops – ‘understanding ratios needed to mix plaster’

What learners think could improve:

- ‘Opportunities for work-placements linked to my training’
- Linking of vocational skill development and jobsearch activity – ‘making sure your jobsearch is targeted on the areas you have trained in and want to work in’
- Information and advice on progression opportunities – ‘I don’t know what an apprenticeship involves’
- Amount of written work – too much at present
- Range of levels of beauty therapy courses offered – none at level 2

Annex

Learners' achievements

Outcomes on **Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes** managed by the Bridge Training Limited from **2005/06** to **2007/08**

| Year | Number of leavers in the year | Achieved objectives rate* | Progression rate** |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 2005/06 | 103 | 73% | 64% |
| 2006/07 | 95 | 66% | 48% |
| 2007/08 (3 months) | 71 | 72% | 66% |

Note: 2007/08 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period