

# Dimensions Training Solutions

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**Inspection date**

8 November 2007

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**Inspection number**

316794

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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](http://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](http://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, Dimensions Training Solution inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Hairdressing and beauty therapy

## Description of the provider

1. Dimensions Training Solutions Ltd (DTS) is a private training company operating as a work-based learning provider since 1983. The company has five training centres in Barnsley, Sheffield, Wakefield, Leeds and York, with the head office based at the Barnsley centre. DTS has contracts with South and West Yorkshire LSCs to provide apprenticeships in hairdressing. DTS provides training for 194 apprentices and 26 advanced apprentices. In addition, the company provides hairdressing level 1 qualifications to key stage 4 learners from four purpose built salons located within school premises in Barnsley, Wakefield, West Leeds and Northallerton. At the time of inspection, DTS provided training to approximately 500 key stage 4 learners.
2. All learners on the apprenticeship programmes are employed through a network of approximately 160 employers. Of the 220 learners, eight are from minority ethnic groups and 20 are men. Currently 68% of learners match the LSC's criteria as requiring additional learning support. All learners follow the DTS induction process and then attend off-the-job training one half-day each week for hairdressing theory, literacy, numeracy, key skills, portfolio-building and some practical training. Employers take the primary responsibility for occupational training and the skill development of their learners. Recruitment is mainly through employer referral, connexions, career events or progression from the key stage 4 programmes. Most assessments are completed in the learner's salon and learners' progress is reviewed every eight weeks.
3. The chief executive, a director of operations and a director of finances and resources, head a team of seven managers. Each manager has a specific responsibility and these include skills for life, learner and employer engagement, quality improvement, quality systems and training. Additionally four centre managers, six assessors and two literacy and numeracy tutors make up the remaining apprenticeship staff team. A further twelve staff work within the key stage 4 provision.
4. The number of young people leaving school with GCSE grades A\*-C in Barnsley, Wakefield and Leeds are 50%, 58% and 52% respectively against a national average of 58%. Unemployment in all three areas is at or about the national average. According to the 2001 census, minority ethnic groups in Barnsley, Wakefield and Leeds are 2%, 3% and 11% against a national average of 13%.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Achievement and standards</b>	<b>Inadequate: Grade 4</b>
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	<b>Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>

## Sector subject area

<b>Hairdressing and beauty therapy</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. The quality of provision, leadership and management and the capacity to improve are all satisfactory. Hairdressing provision is satisfactory, as is equality of opportunity. Achievement and standards are inadequate. DTS has implemented a number of well-considered strategies to increase the diversity of the learners it recruits. However, their success to date has been limited. Learners receive good individual support and guidance throughout their training from both DTS and supportive salon employers.

#### Capacity to improve

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The provider's capacity to improve is satisfactory. DTS has undertaken major re-structuring in the last twelve months. In previous years, the provider took little action to improve provision. However, in the last year the provider has implemented many effective strategies. A number of the strategies are new and it is too early to judge their full impact on learning. However, success rates have risen significantly. Tutors and managers monitor the progress of learners and take effective actions to support those learners who are falling behind target. The use of management information systems is effective in assessing where to put in greater support for learners. Learner recruitment, retention and success rates all have annual targets that staff understand and work diligently to achieve. The recruitment of new staff satisfactorily matches the demands of the growing programmes. Management is inclusive, taking good account of staff views. Since the re-structure, staff morale and motivation is high. Self-assessment is an inclusive process and the strengths and areas for improvement are reasonably accurate. However, many of these are drawn directly from the previous inspection report, indicating slow progress in taking relevant actions.

## Key strengths

- Good skills development
- Very supportive individualised learning
- Very effective monitoring of learners' progress

- Good and supportive employers
- Good management of change
- Effective strategies to improve success rates
- Good strategies to increase progression onto apprenticeship programmes
- Good partnership working

## Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates for advanced apprentices
- Slow completion of apprenticeship framework
- Weak target-setting
- Insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- Slow implementation of actions to address weaknesses
- Insufficient monitoring of the learner experience

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Inadequate: Grade 4

7. Achievement and standards overall are inadequate. However, learners develop good commercial hairdressing skills. They work confidently and professionally while providing services to clients. Good commercial salons provide learners with continued exposure to good quality customer care and technical expertise. Learners use this effectively in improving their own skills. Many learners nearing the end of their apprentice programme are already working as salon stylists. Advanced apprentices are knowledgeable and give good advice on products to enhance the highly commercial styling services they complete for their clients. Assignments are well presented, making good use of word processing and visual images.
8. Apprentice overall success rates have improved over the past three years from 41% during 2004-05 to 60% during 2006-07 and are now satisfactory.
9. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices are poor and have remained consistently low over the last three years. DTS have taken some good actions to improve them and success rates for 2006-07 have improved to 46% from a very poor 8%.
10. The progress of learners towards their framework is poor. Timely success rates of all learners are poor with little improvement during 2006-07. Advanced apprentice timely achievements are particularly poor and over the last three years have been 17%, 5% and 18% respectively. DTS have taken actions to reduce the number of learners who remain in training beyond their expected completion dates. During 2005-06, 28 learners remained in training and this reduced to 12 during 2006-07. Too many learners leave their programme early. Of the learners due to finish training in 2007-08 and 2008-09, 49% and 33% have left early without completing the framework. However, all of the apprentices who started six months ago remain on programme.

### Quality of provision

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Tutors are very responsive, providing good supportive tailored learning and individual coaching. Learners and tutors develop a good rapport. Learners are confident in asking for additional help and clarification. Literacy and numeracy specialist staff work individually with learners giving support as part of the occupational training. Learners needing additional tuition or assessment attend an extra session once a month, as do learners who want to complete their framework early. For learners requiring further support, tutors increase the already frequent visits to employer salons. Learners receive on-the-job occupational training together with literacy and numeracy support at a salon with large numbers of learners. Individual coaching includes a strong focus on developing learners' understanding of the framework in order that they can work independently and manage their own learning. Learners are able to very effectively cluster occupational assessments and explain how they plan to achieve their key skill assignments. Teaching and learning of background knowledge is satisfactory. In better lessons, tutors use a variety of strategies to keep learners engaged.



Less effective sessions lack challenge with insufficient use of direct questions to check learning. Training resources are satisfactory overall. Training centres are modern and are in prime city centre locations making them easily accessible for learners. Increased use of information and learning technology was an area for development in DTS's self-assessment report. Few sessions observed during inspection included its use.

12. The monitoring of learner progress is comprehensive and good. Learners have a good knowledge of their accomplishments and assessments still to complete. Staff monitor learner progress well through the monitoring documents in learner portfolios and wall-mounted progress records. Tutors plan effective interventions for learners making limited progress. DTS have very recently introduced an electronic monitoring system but it is too soon to judge its impact.
13. Learners benefit from good and supportive employers. Most learners have good in-salon training, with some employers developing training plans linked to learner targets. Employers and learners effectively plan practical tasks to support the successful achievement of their occupational qualification. Additional enrichment activities for learners at the training centre are limited. However, many learners benefit from the wide range of activities arranged by their individual salons.
14. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessment records are detailed and assessor feedback is effective in supporting learners to improve practice. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. Learners have effective literacy and numeracy support based on initial and diagnostic assessments at induction. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory and DTS are in the initial stages of promoting the five key aspects of the government's *Every Child Matters* framework.
15. The setting of learner targets is weak. Many individual learning plans do not clearly identify the planned completion date for individual units. Too much emphasis is placed on the duration of the programmes with insufficient emphasis on the potential and experience of the learner. Short-term targets on reviews are broad, not time bound, and at times relate to whole national vocational qualification (NVQ) units.
16. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is insufficient. Employers have limited involvement in planning their learners' training. The employer completes most of the practical training but individual learning plans do not identify the employer's contribution. DTS has a detailed scheme of training but this is not shared with the employers. Employers have insufficient information to plan their learner's practical development. However, their response to any development needs identified during the eight weekly reviews is good. Currently, no formal system for monitoring the quality of on-the-job training is in place. Some learners who have been on programme for four months have not received training in the workplace.

## **Leadership and management**

**Satisfactory: Grade 3**

**Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, DTS has experienced significant organisational difficulties, resulting in a radical re-structure. Arrangements for establishing the new structure and managing change are good. Staff have clearer roles and responsibilities. Internal communication is much improved with clear meeting schedules and actions. Team working between centres is more cohesive and staff use of the internet is also improved. The DTS management style is open and empowering, encouraging the sharing of good practice with new ideas welcomed and shared enthusiastically. Staff are committed to improving the provision and willingly take on new procedures.
18. Strategies to improve success rates are effective. Although success and progress rates are still areas for improvement, a significant upward trend is apparent. DTS places much emphasis on eliminating out-of-funding learners. The identification and monitoring of learner progress is much improved. Individual support for learners nearing completion is now timely through increased drop-in sessions and assessor visits. Data collection and its use are improved with a new system now in place that gives accurate information on progression.
19. Strategies to increase progression onto apprenticeships are good. DTS have an active schools programme and recruit from 37 schools. Good resource management includes DTS establishing well-equipped salons in strategically located schools to support the programme. To promote social inclusion DTS targets schools in areas of deprivation. The programme has expanded considerably and now has some 500 learners. School staff are enthusiastic about the improvements in their pupils confidence, self-esteem and increased attendance in other lessons. Progression onto DTS programmes is currently 26%.
20. Partnership working is good. Dimensions work well with the standards body for hairdressing and have actively worked on behalf of other providers in changing a mandatory unit to optional. This has meant that learners both in-house and nationally progress more rapidly as they concentrate on processes more relevant to their salon. Partnerships with a range of work-based learning groups give staff many opportunities to update skills and benefit from joint training. They visit other providers and to bring good practice back to their own programmes. DTS use a partner provider to access a criminal records bureau checking service to ensure the protection of learners.
21. Staff development and appraisal are satisfactory. Strategic direction, financial planning including resource management and use of management information are also satisfactory. DTS's approach to *Every Child Matters*, management of skills for life and arrangements for internal verification and equality of opportunity are all adequate.
22. The implementation of actions to address weaknesses is slow. Some weaknesses identified in the previous inspection remain. In the period since the previous inspection success rates have declined significantly. Quality improvement plans are not sufficiently specific. Actions to support improvements are insufficiently measurable or time bound. The setting of staff targets has improved, though much emphasis is still placed on LSC compliance rather than qualitative targets. DTS collect insufficient feedback from learners and other stakeholders. The promotion of equality of opportunity to learners and staff has improved but they are still insufficiently knowledgeable. The promotion to employers is limited.

23. DTS insufficiently monitors the learner experience. They have implemented an audit of reviews and individual learning plans. However, this is a compliance audit and is insufficiently focused on the quality of learning. The provider relies on the employer giving practical training to the learners but there is no system to check on the quality of the training given. The planning of on- and off-the-job learning lacks definition. A comprehensive process for the observation of teaching and learning off-the-job has been implemented over the last year. Some good correlation of overall strengths and areas for improvement has been made to enable the provider to target training and development overall. However, emphasis on learning is insufficient and action points are not always recorded.

## What learners like:

- The ability to work at your own pace
- The town centre location of the training salons
- The modern classrooms and salons at the training centre
- The supportive and friendly tutors
- The increased visits from assessors if you want to achieve the qualification earlier
- The practical work in the salon

## What learners think could improve:

- Access to a hot drinks machine at the training centres
- The provision of lockers or secure storage for learners' personal property
- Increased time at the centre to include more practical training
- More trips to competitions and exhibitions
- Help with bus passes at a student discount
- Less note-taking during theory sessions
- A more thorough understanding of the review process
- More practical training by tutors when the salon does not offer this service

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners	Provider NVQ rate	National NVQ rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	74	31%	41%	22%	29%
		timely	81	26%	28%	17%	20%
	05-06	overall	26	8%	45%	8%	36%
		timely	22	5%	26%	5%	19%
	06-07	overall	28	46%	N/A	46%	N/A
		timely	28	18%	N/A	18%	N/A
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	162	43%	50%	41%	42%
		timely	170	24%	33%	24%	28%
	05-06	overall	208	*47%	55%	*46%	52%
		timely	221	17%	38%	17%	36%
	06-07	overall	184	*51%	N/A	*51%	N/A
		timely	167	32%	N/A	32%	N/A

**Note** 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006-07 had yet to be fully validated'

\* The data supplied by the LSC is unreliable

\*\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned.

\*\*\* Provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'