

# SBC Training Reinspection

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Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 15 June 2006

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – inadequate

## Description of the provider

1. SBC Training (SBC) was founded in 1978 and has provided a range of government-funded training since 1982. The main training centre is in Shrewsbury, with smaller premises in Whitchurch. SBC has 35 members of staff. A managing director is responsible for the quality of the provision and is supported by a training manager and a general manager. Eighteen training team staff are allocated to occupational programme teams, each led by a programme manager.
2. SBC has contracts with Shropshire, Black Country and Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). Shropshire is the lead LSC. Learners are geographically widely dispersed within the LSC areas. The provider offers national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and apprentice programmes in social care, construction, administration, business management, retailing, customer service and warehousing. Train to Gain contracts are operated through consortium arrangements. SBC is a member of six such consortia but does not act as a lead. In addition, SBC carries out commercial training. This was not inspected.

## Overall effectiveness

## Reinspection Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Leadership and management and quality improvement are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The provision in social care and building services is good. Administration and business management provision is satisfactory.
4. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process draws on evidence from a wide range of sources. Use of data to inform the evaluation of the quality of the provision is effective. The report is accurate and identifies most of the findings inspectors identified. It is detailed and self-critical. The development plan is monitored frequently and in detail. Links between the plan and the operational and strategic objectives of SBC are clear. Grades at reinspection matched or were higher than those in the report.
5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Unlike at the previous inspection, SBC now has good arrangements for quality improvement. Success rates have increased markedly between 2005–06 and 2006–07 overall to above the national average. Standards for most areas of learning and leadership and management are good and substantially improved since the previous inspection.

## Grades

grade1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Social care</i>		<b>3</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	79	4	
Other government-funded provision	9	3	
Train to Gain	78	3	

Construction, planning and the built environment			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Building services</i>		<b>3</b>	
NVQ training for young people	15	3	

Business, administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Administration</i>		<b>4</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	32	4	
<i>Business management</i>		<b>3</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	44	4	
Other government-funded provision	30	2	
Train to Gain	28	2	

## Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Health, public services and care			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Social care</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	35	2	
Train to Gain	103	2	

Construction, planning and the built environment			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Building services</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	13	3	
Train to Gain	49	2	

Business, administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Administration</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	24	2	
<b>Business management</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	34	3	
Other government-funded provision	16	3	
Train to Gain	51	3	

## About the reinspection

6. This reinspection graded the leadership and management and quality improvement, which were graded as unsatisfactory at the previous inspection in June 2006. Equality of opportunity, which was graded as satisfactory previously, was also graded. Overall grades for health, public services and care, construction, planning and the built environment, and business administration and law were given. All three areas were judged to be adequate at the previous inspection. Most contributory grades were awarded as at the previous inspection. However, due to the low number of learners no contributory grade for other government-funded provision in social care was given. At the time of the reinspection there was no NVQ training for young people in building services. Instead, both apprenticeships for young people and Train to Gain were graded. Unlike at the previous inspection, at reinspection there were learners following other government-funded and Train to Gain provision in administration. However, due to the small number of learners these areas were not graded. The reinspection was carried out over two visits. The first visit by one inspector focused on aspects of leadership and management. The subsequent three day visit by six inspectors made judgements on all aspects of the provision that were

subject to grading at reinspection. The quality of provision in health, public services and care, and construction, planning and the built environment is now good. The provision in business administration and law is satisfactory overall. Leadership and management and quality improvement are now good. Equality of opportunity remains satisfactory.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	19
Number of learners interviewed	28
Number of staff interviewed	22
Number of employers interviewed	11
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	17
Number of visits to the provider	2

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

### Strengths

- Clear and particularly effective direction set by managers
- Good use of management information
- Thorough target-setting
- Particularly effective action to engage learners from targeted minority ethnic groups
- Systematic and good arrangements for quality improvement

### Weaknesses

- Insufficiently effective action to improve the rate at which learners complete
  - Inadequate use of data to compare the success rates of different groups
7. Managers provide SBC with a clear and particularly effective direction. The provider's aim is to provide a high standard of training for learners from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which relates clearly to employers' business needs. A strength at the previous inspection and in SBC'S self-assessment report is the good use of its external links and opportunities. These are used by the provider to maintain its apprenticeship provision, and develop and expand substantially its range of Train to Gain work to meet employers' needs for skilled staff, LSC priorities and learners' needs for good quality training. Managers' actions have resolved most weaknesses found at the previous inspection. Success rates overall are increasing substantially and in 2006–07 they were above the national average. Most Train to Gain learners complete by their targeted completion date. SBC is now a good provider. Most of the provision that SBC offers learners and the quality of leadership and management are now good. However, it is too early to judge if managers' actions are effectively increasing the success rates for advanced apprentices in some areas. Managers, in remedying issues and raising standards, make good use of thorough business and development plans. The plans include clear action points, responsibilities, dates and targets to develop SBC further. This area was a weakness at the previous inspection.
8. Since the previous inspection, the provider has made good use of its management information system to improve success rates for Train to Gain and particularly for apprentices. Useful computerised systems collect and provide information on learners' gender, ethnicity, additional learning requirements, disabilities, starts, withdrawals, progress and success rates. Managers have a good knowledge of how well learners are progressing and the relevant success rates. They identify particularly effectively actions to remedy issues. A very helpful feature of management information arrangements is data which alerts assessor trainers and managers to learners with the potential to leave early and not complete successfully.
9. SBC has thorough arrangements for target-setting to increase learners' success rates. The provider has overall success rate targets for apprentices and advanced apprentices and for Train to Gain learners. There are separate targets for each area of learning. The setting of targets is based on the provider's previous performance, national averages and the need to increase learners' success rates. Particularly challenging targets for 2006–07 were met.



Managers regularly review the achievement of targets. The achievement of success rate targets is a key feature of the monthly meetings between managers and assessor trainers.

10. Communications are effective. Managers meet frequently to discuss the quality of provision and SBC business needs. Agendas for meetings are pertinent and include what is happening to the learners, equality of opportunity, health and safety and the work of managers, assessor trainers and administrative staff. In addition, programme teams meet regularly to discuss provision in particular areas of learning. Assessor trainers meet monthly with managers to discuss their performance and how this can be enhanced to improve the learners' experience. At quarterly intervals, managers provide briefings for all staff. Each member of staff has a job description to explain their role.
11. A strength at the previous inspection was the integration of literacy, numeracy and language support with the learners' main subject area. All learners receive assessment for additional support needs including those for literacy, numeracy and language. Assessor trainers provide support during visits to learners and at learning sessions. This support is still appropriately integrated with the learners' programme. For those apprentices and advanced apprentices that require more specialist help SBC has a dedicated member of staff to provide support. However, the provider recognises that the dedicated specialist support is not provided for Train to Gain learners.
12. SBC has established arrangements for staff development. Staff development is based on the business needs of the provider and the requirements of individual members of staff and learners. These are established through one to one meetings between managers and staff to review their performance and how this can be improved. At the end of the meetings, each member of staff has a set of personal and development goals to achieve. Managers review these regularly with staff to ensure they are being achieved. The range of development activities is wide and includes teaching and learning, initial assessment, learner support, guidance, verification, self-assessment and quality improvement.
13. Management arrangements provide resources and accommodation for learners to complete their studies effectively. Assessor trainers are appropriately qualified and experienced in the area of learning in which they train and assess. Learners have access to a range of learning materials and equipment. Assessor trainers have access to appropriate teaching aids to support learners.
14. Although apprentice overall success rates in 2006–07 were high, SBC recognises that there are issues around apprentices finishing their framework by the targeted completion date. Managers' actions since the previous inspection have led to a reduction in the time apprentices take to complete their programme of learning by a quarter overall. However, in the year following the previous inspection the proportion of apprentices succeeding by the targeted completion date remained similar to the previous year and was low.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 3**

15. SBC has carried out particularly effective action to engage learners from targeted minority ethnic groups. This strength has been maintained since the previous inspection. SBC has built very productive relationships with the Chinese community in Manchester to provide customer service, team leading and management training through Train to Gain

programmes. SBC has effectively used interpreters and translated publicity material to work with Chinese groups promoting the business benefits of training to relevant employers. Engagement with learners originally from Eastern Europe has been effective. For example SBC provides team leader and customer service training for migrant workers who are primarily within the hospitality sector. All learners receive an appropriate initial assessment and are suitably supported. Training and assessment practices have been developed to assist learning where use of written materials could act as a barrier to learning. At reinspection the overall proportion of learners from a minority ethnic background was 15.6% of the total profile. This is significantly higher than the proportion found in the areas SBC serves. The gender profile of learners in the areas of learning tends to conform to stereotype. Plans to improve access to learning for those disadvantaged by rural isolation are well developed. However, it is too early to make an assessment of their impact.

16. Since the previous inspection all staff have received equality of opportunity training. For example, trainers have received equality and diversity training that has focused on beliefs and values, relevant legislation and the use of the learners' progress review to monitor equality of opportunity. Staff now have an adequate understanding and knowledge of equality issues that allows them to appropriately support learners. Some individual equality and diversity training for employers has been carried out. However, despite wide marketing by SBC the take-up of other training by employers has been poor.
17. Since the previous inspection induction material has been improved to make it more useful and understandable to all learners. For example, it now includes a brief checklist to assist learners to monitor their knowledge of their programme. Unlike at the previous inspection there are adequate guidelines to assist staff in suitably reinforcing equality of opportunity during progress reviews. The process is now appropriately monitored as part of the quality assurance process. Relevant topics are covered through the use of a question bank. However, the list is limited and does not ensure an adequate coverage of work related issues. An appropriate record of discussions is made at the progress review. It is effectively referred to at subsequent meetings. Learners have at least a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities and how they are protected in the workplace. SBC has an appropriate complaints process that is understood by learners. Complaints raised by learners have been dealt with in a timely and confidential manner.
18. SBC uses its equality and diversity group to monitor three key performance targets. However, due to staffing issues attendance at the group has been sporadic. An adequate range of data is collected to aid programme management and for contract compliance needs. Recruitment data is appropriately analysed for equality and diversity purposes. However, data is not adequately used to compare the success rates of different groups. It is not effectively monitored to identify trends for use in action-planning for improvement.

## Quality improvement

## Contributory grade 2

19. At the previous inspection, arrangements for quality assurance were inadequate. This is no longer the position. SBC now has systematic and good arrangements which are improving provision for learners. Since the previous inspection, the provider has reviewed its quality improvement arrangements. SBC has a detailed quality policy and quality manual which set the standards for its work, particularly the training it provides to learners. A quality

calendar sets out when each quality improvement activity should take place. The quality forum of managers meets regularly to monitor the effectiveness of the quality improvement arrangements. When identified, members of the forum adjust the company's development plan to ensure action is taken to resolve problems. A regular programme of observations takes place that covers key stages of the learners' experience. Unlike at the previous inspection there are now clear criteria for observations. Observation forms contain detailed and thorough comments on assessor trainers' performance. Managers appropriately use the results from the observations to identify action for improvement. Although managers report the results from observations to the quality forum, there are no written summaries.

20. SBC has thorough arrangements to collect learners' and employers' views. Learners complete surveys at the beginning, during, and at the end of their training. Employers receive surveys during and at the end of their employee's period of training. The results of the survey are analysed and a written summary is presented to the quality forum. Managers take effective action to resolve any identified issues. For example, employers were concerned that they were not aware of the content of learners' training programmes. SBC provided further development for assessor trainers to ensure they kept employers informed on the content of learning programmes.
21. SBC has a rigorous self-assessment process that involves all staff. Learners' and employers' views effectively contribute to the process. The provider uses an external consultant to moderate judgements and grades. The self-assessment report is a thorough and informative document and provided a good basis for the reinspection. Inspectors' findings matched most judgements in the reports. Inspectors found some additional strengths and weaknesses. The report links effectively to SBC's development plan in providing actions to improve provision for learners.
22. The provider has effective internal verification arrangements. Quarterly standardisation meetings take place at area of learning level and across the provider to ensure assessment procedures are of the same standard. Learners' work is sampled to ensure assessments are accurate. Sampling plans to observe assessors are based on their past performance and experience. Assessors receive a written and oral report after assessment that is graded. Learners are also consulted for their views on the assessment. Managers provide reports to the quality forum on the standard of assessment.

## Areas of learning

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Social care</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	35	2
Train to Gain	103	2

23. SBC currently has 138 learners in social care, of whom 18 are advanced apprentices, 17 are apprentices and 103 are following a Train to Gain NVQ Level 2 programme. All learners receive an initial assessment, a job analysis, and identification of preferred learning style. This is followed by a one day induction programme. Learners are provided with off-the-job training and support sessions by their assessor.

#### *Social care*

##### *Strengths*

- High success rates on Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes
- Good use of individual learning plans and progress reviews
- Particularly effective actions to improve the quality of provision

##### *Weaknesses*

- Low success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes

### Achievement and standards

24. Success rates on Train to Gain and apprenticeship programmes are high. Train to Gain timely success rates have improved from 28% in 2004–05, to 61% in 2005–06 to 71% in 2006–07. The overall success rate in 2006–07 was 76%. Success rates for apprenticeships have also improved from 19% in 2004–05, to 36% in 2005–06 to 60% in 2006–07, well above the national average. The time taken for learners to achieve apprenticeships has reduced from 112 to 89 weeks. SBC has now set a target for successful completion of the full apprenticeship within 65 weeks of starting the programme. However, it is too early to judge progress towards this goal. Most learners on all programmes acquire good vocational skills. They also develop in confidence and can apply their new skills to a wide range of situations they encounter in the workplace. The range of employers is good. However, success rates for the relatively small number of advanced apprentices are low. For 2004–05 the success rate was nil. By 2006–07 this had improved to 8% but was still well below the national average.

## The quality of provision

25. Use of individual learning plans and progress reviews is good. Since the previous inspection both documents and the process have been reviewed and new documents have been developed. All learners have up-to-date documents that are actively used to plan and monitor their progress. Learners have a good understanding of the part that the individual learning plans and progress reviews play in supporting their learning. They clearly inform the learners as to what actions they need to complete to achieve their programme and improve their practice. Detailed targets are set and monitored to measure learners' progress and achievement that sufficiently challenge their abilities. Learning plans and reviews are effectively used to give useful feedback on the additional help learners receive and whether further support is required. Recorded actions on the progress review form are detailed. Comments are evaluative and provide the learner with good guidance and direction to aid their progression. In some cases assessors give informal feedback to employers before or after the progress review, however, the practice is not consistently applied.
26. Induction is satisfactory. It is usually memorable to the learner and provides a good foundation for them when starting their programme. Learners are given a detailed information pack and have a satisfactory awareness of relevant equal opportunities, appeals and complaints procedures. Learners appreciate their induction and report that it gives them more confidence at the start of their programme.
27. As identified at the previous inspection, learners receive satisfactory training. One-to-one sessions are well planned to cover the knowledge requirements of the learner's programme. All learners benefit from access to a range of satisfactory resources that are used within the learning sessions. Working relationships between learners and assessors are good. All assessors are observed regularly on all aspects of the learning process.
28. Assessment practices are satisfactory overall. Assessments are well planned and detailed. Assessors complete an action plan before each assessment, which outlines the resources needed to complete the assessment including assessment methods, location and agreed actions. This is agreed and signed by the learner and the assessor. The quality of learners' portfolios is at least satisfactory. Portfolios are well presented and contain a satisfactory range of evidence. A variety of assessment methods are used to assess learners' competence. All relevant documentation is completed and signed. Observations of assessments that have been completed are recorded in detail and are clearly linked to the requirements of the programme. Learners usually receive prompt and constructive feedback on assessment outcomes. Internal verification processes are satisfactory and include regular NVQ portfolio sampling, sampling of assessment plans and assessment feedback. The internal verifier completes regular reports of the internal verification activity that is discussed within meetings used to standardise practice.
29. Additional learning support is satisfactory. All learners have an initial screening during their induction, which is followed by diagnostic testing. Ongoing support for literacy, numeracy and language is effectively provided by assessors and a programme specialist. Additional support is fully established into the apprenticeship programme. The impact of the support that is provided is carefully monitored during progress reviews. Relevant staff training is provided on an ongoing basis for assessors to improve their knowledge in this area.

## **Leadership and management**

30. The leadership and management of the programme area are effective. Since the previous inspection actions to improve the quality of provision have been particularly effective. Staff supervision has improved and is now good. Support is well structured and focuses effectively on programme improvement. Monthly one-to-one meetings with the programme manager appropriately identify training needs and challenging targets are set and monitored. Extensive staff training has been carried out. This has included specific development activities for staff in the use of individual learning plans, the integration of key skills, effective communication, monitoring of equality of opportunity and diversity and the use of progress reviews. Assessors have good skills in these areas and are confident in their role. All staff receive regular observations by the programme managers of their performance in carrying out key learning processes. Since the previous inspection there has been a review of the whole learning process which has resulted in the key skills awards and the technical certificate awards being delivered at the start of the programme. The evidence used for the key skills and technical certificate is now cross-referenced to the NVQ. Most learners' progress has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

**Construction, planning and the built environment****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Building services</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	13	3
Train to Gain	49	2

31. SBC has 13 apprentices and 49 Train to Gain learners, all of whom are employed by Accord Training Solutions (ATS). Learners work towards an NVQ Level 2 in highways maintenance, and apprentices also work towards key skills. This locally devised framework has no technical certificate. ATS trains and assesses for the NVQ. Key skills are taught and assessed by SBC staff who visit ATS's training centre. Support for learners with additional needs is also provided by SBC.
32. Apprentices attend ATS's training centre for six, one-week blocks and spend the remainder of their time working with highway maintenance operatives. The programme lasts between 12 and 18 months. Assessors visit learners in the workplace to observe performance. In addition learners collect evidence through witness testimony and work products. To help make it easier to comply with site and machinery regulations, most apprentices are 18 years of age when recruited.

***Building services******Strengths***

- High success rates on Train to Gain programmes
- Good development of practical skills
- Good training
- Very effective learning support

***Weaknesses***

- Slow progress by some learners

**Achievement and standards**

33. There are high success rates on the Train to Gain programme. Eighty two % of learners on this programme have achieved their NVQ qualification. The planning of assessment is effective in allowing learners to demonstrate their competence in work situations. Assessors have significant experience in the industry which allows them to swiftly establish credibility with older learners and encourages productive working relationships. Success rates on the apprenticeship programme are satisfactory. Of the five learners that started in the most recent cohort, two have achieved the qualification and one is near to completion. Two other learners left early without completing the NVQ or their key skills.
34. Learners develop good practical skills. For example, they are able to appropriately explain and demonstrate sound practice learnt in the training centre to workplace traffic management situations. In addition, they can show good use of kerb laying and excavations techniques as applied to a variety of practical situations. All learners are clear

on which equipment they are allowed to use or prohibited from using. Learners develop an appropriate approach to training and often report improved self-esteem and confidence as a result of participating in learning. They contribute well to activities in the workplace where they work in gangs of three or four. Some learners have shown an interest in proceeding to higher level supervisory qualifications on completing the initial NVQ. For many learners the Train to Gain qualification is appreciated as the assessment process and the portfolio helps consolidate their knowledge into a recognised qualification and a record of their competence. ATS has a good record of developing its staff with several working towards higher level NVQs.

35. Progress of some learners on both programmes is slow. Some learners who have been on the programme for six weeks have yet to be introduced to their assessor and have not yet collected any significant evidence for their qualification. This is despite having carried out many valuable activities at work that are relevant to their programme. The first progress review for apprentices takes place after 12 weeks on the programme. This period is too long for some learners who need earlier guidance and support to start compiling evidence and to negotiate the pace of progress. For some Train to Gain learners the slow progress can be affected by work patterns which demand that workers deal with emergency situations such as flooding and road closures. This can also cause difficulties in providing opportunities for covering the range of activities required for the NVQ. However, alternative options are discussed and appropriate remedies implemented.

### **The quality of provision**

36. On and off-the-job training is good. Plans for the programme are well publicised to learners so they can prepare for weeks in the training centre. Activities in the centre combine practical and theory effectively with learners discussing a subject before practising related techniques. The centre has very good resources which accurately replicate situations found at work. There is good use of simulations in the centre to allow learners to develop their knowledge and understanding in a controlled setting. Links between on- and off-the-job training are effective. Team leaders are in the main aware of the need for learners to cover a range of activities. Learners frequently switch between teams to cover the necessary range for the NVQ. ATS's trainer has benefited from a coaching programme which has led to recent improvements in teaching and learning. Learning styles questionnaires are suitably used to assess learners in the centre. The outcome of the assessment is appropriately used to inform training strategies.
37. Support for learners with additional needs is very effective. Many learners have not been successful in compulsory education and have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Effective support is delivered either in class or one-to-one in ATS's centres. Learners value this model of support which is focused on their individual needs and informed by an effective initial assessment. In some cases details of the support learners have received at school has been passed to SBC so that activities can be planned more effectively. Particularly effective support is provided for learners with dyslexia. Most support is vocationally related and allows learners to quickly apply newly developed understanding to the workplace. However, in a few cases the material learners use for spelling and word structure has been developed for the care sector and is sometimes difficult for learners to relate too. Approximately 24% of learners have been identified as having additional learning needs, although not all have accepted the offer of support.



38. Assessment practice effectively meets the needs of learners and employees. The timing of visits is arranged so that assessors are able to maximise the effectiveness of their time on site. Most assessment is carried out by direct observation in the workplace. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessors meet regularly to discuss suitable sources of evidence. The verification sampling plan ensures all assessors are observed covering an appropriate range of learners and NVQ units. Unlike at the previous inspection, action-planning is now effective.
39. The breadth of the provision is satisfactory and effectively meets the needs of learners and the employer. Opportunities for progression exist and are publicised to those completing the Train to Gain NVQ or apprenticeship framework. Arrangements for recruitment and pre-course information are satisfactory. A taster day where learners spend time in the centre and visit a site has recently been introduced to help young learners make more informed choices.

### **Leadership and management**

40. Leadership and management of the provision are good. Since the previous inspection there have been significant improvements in the quality improvement arrangements that include those relating to the subcontractor. At the previous inspection arrangements were unstructured and meetings infrequent. Now monthly meetings are carried out that focus on the key training processes and relevant indicators that include learners' achievement and progress. Copies of awarding body verifier reports are shared with SBC and lesson observations have started to take place. The implementation of a quality improvement plan has been effective in raising achievement. Early indications suggest an improvement in the timely success of learners. SBC has made reasonable progress in encouraging ATS to self-assess the provision but acknowledges that further action is needed in this area. Staff development for both SBC staff and ATS is good. The self-assessment report was generally accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses noted at inspection. Learners had at least a satisfactory awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Equality and diversity is covered adequately during induction. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is appropriately reinforced during quarterly progress reviews.

**Business administration and law****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Administration</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	24	2
<b><i>Business management</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	34	3
Other government-funded provision	16	3
Train to Gain	51	3

41. SBC has 127 learners in administration and business management. In business management there are 30 apprentices and four advanced apprentices. Fifty-one Train to Gain and 16 ESF learners are following management programmes at level 2 and 3. In administration, there are 13 apprentices and 11 advanced apprentices. Learners are based in the Northwest and the West Midlands. They are employed within a range of organisations such as retailers, the hotel industry, children's nurseries, schools, recruitment agencies, IT consultants and solicitors. SBC recruits school and college leavers and those already employed in a relevant work role. Induction is carried out in the workplace. Learners have the opportunity to attend off-the-job training for technical certificates. SBC staff carry out training and assessment visits to learners at least every four weeks. Progress reviews are conducted every 12 weeks.

***Administration******Strengths***

- High success rates
- Good development of workplace skills
- Particularly effective employer engagement
- Good use of individual learning plans and progress reviews

***Weaknesses***

- No weaknesses identified

**Achievement and standards**

42. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates show an improving trend since the previous inspection when they were judged to be poor. Overall success rates for 2006–07 are high with success rates for apprenticeships of 70%. In the same period the rate for the comparatively small number of advanced apprentices was 100%. Most apprentices and advanced apprentices are now making good progress towards achieving the goals in their individual learning plans. Learners develop good workplace skills and can carry out a broad range of administration techniques. They produce good quality work documents including memos, reports, and other text documents. Many are able to effectively demonstrate the use of complex software, including databases and accountancy packages. Learners are developing very good professional and social skills, with many learners developing good time management techniques. They are able to organise and meet work deadlines to a good standard, reasonably expected of them at that stage in their

programme. The individual support from assessors is helping learners to become more self-confident in work. Learners are making good progress in their workplaces. Some have been promoted into more senior roles in their organisations, progressing to Level 3 programmes and also achieving another NVQ.

### **The quality of provision**

43. Programmes meet learners' and employers' needs through particularly effective employer engagement. SBC has high expectations of the contribution employers will make to the learners' programmes. Managers are encouraged to be fully involved in the planning for learning and in the reviewing of progress that their learners make. Workplace supervisors understand what is required of them to help learners complete their programmes successfully. They provide good opportunities for learners to develop their skills and use the NVQ to effectively plan development of skills to meet organisational needs. Employers make flexible arrangements to allow learners to provide workplace evidence and to attend off-the-job training focused on achieving the technical certificate and key skills. Technical certificate workshops are well structured and resources are of a good standard. Workbooks are developed and issued at the sessions and collated in a binder provided. Trainers are enthusiastic and good use is made of learners' workplace experience to illustrate key learning points. Key skills have now been well integrated with the technical certificate training and most learners are able to achieve their key skills much earlier in their programmes.
44. Good use is made of individual learning plans and progress reviews. The individual learning plan has been developed since the previous inspection and is used much more effectively. The plan now records all aspects of both on- and off-the-job training and summarises the specific learning that has been achieved. Employers' views are recorded in detail, particularly noting any development activity that the employer is providing. Learners and assessors have copies of the learning plans and these are regularly updated during assessment visits and progress reviews. Much greater use of observations and professional discussions are now being used in the assessment process. Learners update their own copy of the learning plan and note down when aspects of their programme have been achieved. Progress reviews are well used to aid learners monitoring of progress in reaching learning and personal goals. The recording of new targets is detailed and learners are fully involved in agreeing the timescales within which these targets will be achieved. This process encourages learners to take control of their learning and achievements.
45. The quality of training is satisfactory. Well-developed teaching materials are used and team teaching sometimes takes place in the workshops. Good use is made of computer generated presentations. However, there is little other interactive learning resources available. Longer term planning for learning and achievement has improved since the previous inspection. During the progress reviews learners and their supervisors discuss fully the skills they are developing and the progress being made overall. Learners receive comprehensive details of their programmes before they enrol. Individual support is satisfactory. Assessors provide appropriate individual advice and guidance during workplace visits and training sessions. Learners are well supported by their assessors when problems occur in the workplace. Adequate opportunities for moving to another employer are provided when they are unhappy at work. Support is also provided when health issues interrupt learning.

46. Induction is satisfactory with learners receiving relevant programme information. They also receive an outline of the technical certificate workshops. Appropriate health and safety and equality and diversity information is provided. Initial assessments arrangements are satisfactory. Workshops are provided to support learners where needs have been identified. Some learners who wish to extend their skills also attend these workshops.

## **Leadership and management**

47. Leadership and management of business administration are good. Both formal and informal communications are effective. Most of the aspects of poor performance identified at the previous inspection have been resolved. The improvement strategy has been well linked to improvements in learner success rates. A clear focus on improvements in quality standards has been taken. For both staff and learners challenging targets are set and achieved. Many of the aspects of improvement were identified in the self-assessment report although inspectors identified different strengths and no significant weaknesses. Assessors and trainers are appropriately qualified and have wide and relevant commercial, experience. Communications are effective with regular day-to-day support provided. Staff meetings are held regularly and alternate between communications and standardisation meetings.
48. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. There is an appropriate emphasis on ensuring learners are aware of issues that might impact on them at work. Staff have attended training sessions on equality and diversity issues which has enhanced their confidence and knowledge in discussing these aspects during the review process. All learners receive information on equality and diversity during their programme.
49. Internal verification is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection developments have taken place to improve its effectiveness. There is a plan for reviewing portfolios at key stages and there are five assessors and two internal verifiers, who can verify each other's assessment decisions. The internal verifier reports on assessor performance outlines clear action points. Mentoring and countersigning arrangements are in place and used for new assessors. There is a process of observation of assessors carrying out assessments and comprehensive feedback is given. This has impacted positively on learners, improving the quality of their work. A monitoring system has been developed which provides clear colour-coded information that identifies any slow progress.

## ***Business management***

### ***Strengths***

- Good development of personal and workplace skills
- Particularly effective training arrangements

### ***Weaknesses***

- Slow progress towards apprenticeship framework achievement

## **Achievement and standards**

50. Learners show an improvement in personal and social skills relatively early in the programme. They are able to demonstrate greater confidence in dealing with situations they encounter in a supervisory position, both as an individual and as part of a team. Most learners show good development of interpersonal skills to aid them in dealing with colleagues and external contacts. They can effectively apply their newly developed skills to solving a variety of workplace problems. Employers report a marked improvement in learners' skills as a result of the training and development aspects of the programme. This is reflected in the quality of supporting evidence in the learner portfolios which are well organised and presented.
51. Success rates for advanced apprentices improved substantially in the year 2006-07 and are satisfactory. This is the first year apprentices have completed the team leader qualification and success rates are satisfactory. Train to Gain success rates are slightly lower than those recorded at the previous inspection but they are still at a satisfactory level. The number of European Social Fund (ESF) learners has decreased significantly since the previous inspection but success rates are much improved.
52. Apprentices make slow progress towards achieving their full framework. The management team has introduced a number of measures to address this. However, it is too early to make a judgement on their impact.

### **The quality of provision**

53. Learners benefit from a very flexible approach to the delivery of training arrangements in the workplace. Some learners work in organisations with particularly complex shift patterns. Assessors have adapted learners training programmes to ensure that they can be delivered in a number of ways that best meets the identified need. Since the previous inspection the individual planning of learning has improved and is now satisfactory. SBC identify learners who would prefer or benefit from one-to-one rather than group sessions and provide training accordingly. SBC has tailored training delivery methods to take account of the nature of the different organisations. For example they are providing specific management training in a number of ways ranging from a two day course to short sessions suited to individual learning styles and learner preferences.
54. Progress reviews are satisfactory. They take place every 12 weeks and the employer is usually effectively involved. Since the previous inspection, the review documentation has been revised and the new version accurately captures progress since the last review together with any actions needed to be taken before the next review. The reviews include appropriate participation from both the learner and workplace supervisor. Suitable short and long-term targets are set and effectively monitored. The process is usually adequate to identify and drive forward both personal and programme related goals.
55. Assessment practices are satisfactory. Assessments are appropriately planned. Assessors use a diverse range of assessment methods including direct observation, product evidence, professional discussion and personal statements. Witness statements provide clear evidence showing how competence has been demonstrated in the workplace.
56. SBC staff work well with employers to ensure that learners have good support in the workplace. Most employers are involved in the discussion with learners to decide on the relevant optional units to be chosen for their NVQs. They provide appropriate

opportunities for learners to develop their skills and use the NVQ to effectively plan development of skills to meet organisational needs. Employers value the close support offered by assessors.

57. The individual learning plan has been developed since the previous inspection and is used much more effectively. They now record all aspects of both on- and off-the-job training and summarise the specific learning that has been achieved. Planning on an individual basis is much improved since the previous inspection with learners being set more challenging targets.

### **Leadership and management**

58. Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. Communications are satisfactory. Managers meet with staff on a monthly basis for a one-to-one discussion about issues relating to the assessor's performance and to discuss the progress of individual learners. Informal communication is frequent and effective. There are meetings every three months of all assessors for programme and standardisation purposes. This is also an opportunity to share good practice and discuss areas for improvement.

59. Unlike at the previous inspection, there is now sufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. Relevant issues are adequately covered during induction. Use of progress reviews to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues has improved. Learners have a satisfactory or better appreciation of their rights and responsibilities. They feel protected during their training and know how to use both the SBC and workplace processes if they have any concerns

60. Internal verification is satisfactory. The programme manager is also the lead internal verifier. There are nine assessors, four of whom are internal verifiers. All staff hold suitable qualifications and each assessor maps their competencies to the management standards they are delivering. Since the previous inspection significant improvements have been made to the internal verification system. A programme of support for assessors has been developed to ensure that they have the skills and confidence to deliver all aspects of the programme. They are observed on a regular basis during induction, progress reviews, assessments and training. Following observation, the resulting feedback is used to provide support and development. Assessors report that they are much more confident in their role as a result of the increased support. A new system of monitoring learner progress has been introduced. However, it is too early to make a judgement on its impact. All staff contributed to the contents of the most recent self-assessment report. The report's contents agreed with much of the inspection findings. The grade awarded at reinspection matched the self-assessment grade.