

# Crackerjack Training Limited

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**Inspection date**

16 November 2007

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**Inspection number**

319146

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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, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Early years and play work

## Description of the provider

1. Crackerjack Training Limited is a small private training organisation and was founded in 1996. The company became a City and Guilds approved centre for training in 1998. Crackerjack Training contracts with Birmingham and Solihull LSC.
2. The company offers apprenticeships in early years and play work. All learners are currently working on placements within a variety of childcare and/or play work settings. Crackerjack Training works with learners who have specific needs, including dyslexia, learning difficulties and physical needs, and learners who have been excluded from school. There are currently 22 advanced apprentices and 18 apprentices. Most learners are female and are aged 16 to 18 years old.
3. There are two directors' of the company, three internal verifiers and eight assessor/tutors. The company uses three external trainers for some of its off-the-job training which is offered at five centres across the West Midlands. Three members of the team have the Adult Learners Support Level 2 qualification and all staff have regular training to support learners.
4. The managing director has overall responsibility for the management and quality of training and is responsible for business planning along with the commercial and financial director and the day to day planning and organisation of training.
5. Crackerjack Training has working relationships with a number of schools in Solihull, especially Lyndon Secondary School. The provider attend careers evenings and give talks to years 10 and 11 pupils. They are also currently working with other schools within the Birmingham and Solihull area. In September 2007, Crackerjack Training began working in conjunction with South Birmingham College, as a lead on the 14-19 apprenticeship in Health and Social Care.
6. The unemployment rate in Solihull is low at 2.2% compared with the regional average of 3.3% and the national average of 2.5%. Solihull has areas of deprivation which fall within the most deprived in England, with a concentration of deprived areas to the north of the district. At the 2001 census, residents from minority ethnic groups was 5% of the total population in Solihull compared with 9.1% nationally. The proportion of young people achieving a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 has increased since 2004 by 4% to 73% in 2006.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

## Sector subject area

Early years and play work	Good: Grade 2
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievements and standards are outstanding. The quality of the provision is good overall. Teaching and learning are good and the extent to which Crackerjack Training meets the needs and interests of learners and employers is also good. The support for learners is good. Leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity is good. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the well-being of young people are satisfactory.

### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

8. Crackerjack Training has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve. Quality improvement arrangements are clear. Crackerjack Training makes good use of realistic staff performance targets to improve timely and overall success rates. Assessors and managers use monitoring documents effectively to monitor each learner's progress and respond effectively to those who need additional support. All staff are encouraged to engage in their own training and development to raise standards and improve their own vocational background knowledge and skills. Staff feedback on centrally devised schemes of work and lesson plans is used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Crackerjack make good use of feedback from learners and employers to improve the quality of the provision.
9. All staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process. They work as a team to identify strengths and areas for improvement and confirm grades. Inspectors agreed with Crackerjack Training's self-assessment grades. Strengths identified in the self-assessment report match the findings of inspectors, although the report did not identify two key areas for improvement.

## Key strengths:

- Outstanding success rates
- Excellent standards of learners attainment
- Good teaching and learning
- Wide range of support for learners
- Good management of learning programmes
- Good strategies to support community cohesion

## Key areas for improvement:

- Inadequate formal recording of personalised learning
- Insufficiently thorough skills for life strategy

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Outstanding: Grade 1

10. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates for apprentices are high. Overall success rates in 2005/06 were 100% for advanced apprenticeships and 91% for apprenticeships. Unvalidated data for 2006/07 indicates that success rates have been maintained at 100% for advanced apprenticeship. There has been a decline to 67% in success rates for apprenticeship to date, but the number of learners is small. Portfolios show that most current learners are making good progress and are on target. Success rates for key skills tests are high.
11. The standard of learner's attainment is excellent. Learners are motivated to work well in their chosen occupational area. Standards of learner's work matches and in some cases exceeds their learning goals. Portfolios are of a high standard and are well presented, containing a good range of creative evidence. Learners develop new skills and improve their current skills so they have a good understanding of the underlying principles and background knowledge of their work and are able to apply this knowledge appropriately in the workplace. Employers identify significant improvements in learners' skills, abilities and confidence. Learners are better able to meet and plan for the needs of children in their care. The progression of learners to higher levels of qualifications and jobs is good. Inspectors' judgements matched most of the strengths and areas for improvements in the self-assessment report.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

12. The overall quality of the provision is good. Teaching and learning are good as identified in Crackerjack Training's self-assessment report. Tutors are well qualified, experienced and have kept up to date with their own professional early years training. Schemes of work and lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives, which are shared with learners before each session. A good range of activities take place with background knowledge and practical skills taught to a high standard. Learners share their own placement experience well and are able to make good links between theory and practice. Learners are encouraged to contribute and participate in all activities. Appropriate teaching methods are used to promote and extend learning. The pace of lessons is good, learner's interest is well sustained, key learning points are reinforced and regular checks are made to ensure that learning is taking place.
13. The support for learners is wide ranging and good. Good relationships are formed between learners and tutors who provide learners with support for personal and social issues. All learners are allocated to an assessor who visits each learner for a significant amount of time every month. Assessors are easily accessible, flexible and responsive to learners needs. Staff also provide advice and guidance on opportunities for employment and further education. Learners are able to access travel support. Any additional learning needs identified at induction are assessed on an individual basis and appropriate individual or group support is provided. Workplace supervisors have a good understanding of the NVQ requirements and provide learners with good quality supervision and support. The

work placements provide learners with the experience of team working and practical skills and help learners to understand the importance of punctuality and time management.

14. Learner's induction is memorable and effective. It provides a good foundation for learner's apprenticeship programmes. Learners are given a detailed information pack and are made aware of equal opportunities and the appeals and complaints procedure.
15. Assessment practices are satisfactory. Assessors have a good understanding of the qualifications and framework. A good variety of assessment methods are used to assess learner's competence. Observations of assessments that have been completed are recorded in appropriate detail and are clearly linked to the NVQ standards. Learners receive prompt and constructive feedback on assessment outcomes at the earliest opportunity. Learners receive good support with portfolio-building and collecting of evidence.
16. Internal verification processes are good. There is a clear monitoring matrix and regular sampling of assessment activity, this includes observations of assessor practice, regular NVQ portfolio sampling, and sampling of assessor and learner meetings which include assessment plans and assessment feedback.
17. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. The range of learning materials is satisfactory. Learners have access to books, journals, handouts, leaflets and computers. Some good quality materials for practical simulations and teaching are also available to learners.
18. Some formal recording of personalised learning is inadequate. There are few clear targets set to measure learner's progress and achievement that will continue to stretch and sufficiently challenge the learner's abilities. There is little indication of whether any additional support learners receive, is effective or whether other support is required. Equal opportunities and health and safety issues are not recorded in any detail. Individual learning plans are not updated regularly.

## **Leadership and management**

**Good: Grade 2**

### **Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

19. Leadership and management are good as is the management of learning programmes. Off-the-job training is offered at five centres across the West Midlands, to improve learner access, and attendance is good. The teaching of background knowledge is well planned to meet learners' diverse needs. Tutors use centrally devised schemes of work and lessons plans.



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20. The approach to the delivery of good teaching and learning is consistent. On and off-the-job training is well co-ordinated and is effectively linked to work practice. Learners attend helpful off-the-job, drop-in tutorial sessions.
21. Strategies to support community cohesion are good. Managers and staff have a clear shared vision of improving the quality and standard of skills within the early years business sector. Engagement with employers is good. Employers benefit from the wide range of full- and part-time vocationally relevant courses from Level 1 to Level 4 that Crackerjack Training offer. The organisation works well to engage community groups in developing their skills in and running community crèches. Crackerjack Training is the lead provider of a 14 to 19 young apprenticeship programme and is about to start a responsive Train to Gain contract.
22. Crackerjack Training's communications with learners, employers and staff are good. Both learners and employers value the efforts Crackerjack staff make to respond quickly to their inquiries. Employers appreciate Crackerjack's professional approach. Assessors' regular meetings with learners are well planned to meet both the needs of learners and minimise disruption to the employers' businesses. Work relations with employers are good and assessors and learners work well together. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and a well-organised schedule of team and individual meetings supports good internal communications. Monthly assessor and standardisation meetings work well to help assessors focus on the needs of their work. Assessor's performance is effectively monitored against performance targets.
23. Equality of opportunity is good. Crackerjack Training works well with learners who have learning difficulties, disabilities and low self-esteem. Learners receive good equality of opportunity training during their induction and learning programme. Most learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity issues and are confident that they know what to do if they feel bullied or harassed in the workplace. Staff value Crackerjack's family friendly attitude which helps them manage their family and professional commitments well.
24. Arrangements for improving the quality of provision are clear. The self-assessment process is good. An individual learner monitoring sheet, introduced in September 2007, provides a good visual indication of progress against expected completion dates. Assessors are set realistic targets, linked to the achievement of qualifications or NVQ units twice yearly. Managers and assessors use these targets well to maintain and improve success rates. Assessors complete useful consolidated learner monitoring reports which managers use to monitor the completion of units.
25. Crackerjack has a good range of internal verification policies and procedures. Documentation is appropriately detailed. Planned monthly standardisation meetings are well structured and effectively used to compare and improve assessment practice. A satisfactory programme of lesson observations takes place three times a year. These focus on developmental needs of staff and improvements in teaching and learning.
26. Crackerjack skills for life strategies are insufficiently thorough. These strategies cover both literacy and numeracy and English for speakers of other languages. The literacy and numeracy strategy does not sufficiently describe the arrangements for completing diagnostic assessments of learners with low literacy or numeracy skills. Although these

learners are given significant support to successfully achieve their apprenticeship framework, insufficient attention is given to strategies to further improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills. Arrangements to complete a full assessment of learners spoken, written and reading skills in English are unclear. Arrangements to assess additional learning needs are also unclear.

## What learners like:

- The assessor visits – ‘My very helpful assessors’ regular visits help me complete my assessments’
- The assessment – ‘My assessors provide lots of information to help me with my knowledge and understanding’
- The tutors – ‘They make it possible for me to achieve’
- The tutors – ‘They respect you. You are treated as an adult and they make it fun to learn’
- The programme – ‘It is well organised’.
- The learning – ‘Good debate during off-the-job training sessions’

## What learners think could improve:

- The learning environment – ‘The lack of social areas for break times’

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by Crackerjack Training **2005 to 2007**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05-06	overall	9	100%	54%	100%	35%
		timely	11	73%	25%	73%	15%
	06-07	overall	17	100%	N/a	100%	N/a
		timely	17	65%	N/a	65%	N/a
Apprenticeships	05-06	overall	11	100%	58%	91%	55%
		timely	11	100%	38%	91%	30%
	06-07	overall	3	67%	N/a	67%	N/a
		timely	5	20%	N/a	20%	N/a

**Note:** At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006 to 2007 had yet to be fully validated

\* 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