

# Bhs Limited

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329382

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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' monitoring 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:

- Retail and commercial enterprise

## Description of the provider

1. British Home Stores Ltd (Bhs) was established in 1928 and became a limited company in 1931. It has its head offices in London and operates mainly within the UK but also has some overseas stores which operate under licence. Bhs is a retailer offering a wide range of goods including home furnishing and clothing. Its 184 stores throughout the UK employ more than 13,000 people.
2. Bhs started to deliver training in 2007, funded by The National Employer Service (NES) of the learning and skills council. This involved a pilot programme for 400 learners across 47 stores in England. Bhs delivers retail and wholesaling apprenticeships and Train to Gain retail programmes. At the time of inspection, there were 177 retail and wholesaling apprentices and 107 learners were enrolled on a Train to Gain retailing programme.
3. The NVQ manager at Bhs is responsible for all aspects of the programmes. The NVQ manager is accountable to the head of learning and development and is supported by an NVQ administrator. A subcontractor, Protocol Skills, provides key skills training and training for the technical certificates and carries out all assessments.
4. Bhs staff are trained to deliver the programmes on-the-job within each store. Store managers and six human resources business partners support these staff and have overall responsibility for the delivery of the programmes within each store.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Apprenticeships	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<b>Capacity to improve</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
<b>Achievement and standards</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Apprenticeships	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 2
<b>Quality of provision</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Apprenticeships	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Apprenticeships	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>		<b>Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>

### Sector subject area

<b>Retail and commercial enterprise</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Apprenticeships

Train to Gain

Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory overall. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are also satisfactory.

#### Capacity to improve

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. During this first year of its contract, Bhs has put into place some significant changes to the service level agreement it has with the subcontractor to improve the provision. A newly developed quality improvement plan is comprehensive and realistic however, until recently, Bhs have been slow to implement procedures to improve the quality of the provision.
7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report (SAR) is clearly focused on the learners' experience and inspectors agreed with many of the judgements and findings it contains. Grades in the report matched those awarded at inspection however, the report and its accompanying quality improvement plan are too recent for their effects to be judged.

## Key strengths

- Good development of confidence and workplace skills
- Good support for learners from store staff
- Good strategic management

## Key areas for improvement

- Poor access to computer-based portfolios
- Slow implementation of procedures to improve the quality of the provision

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Apprenticeships  
Train to Gain

Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory Grade: Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. They are good for Train to Gain and satisfactory for apprenticeships. Learners' development of confidence and workplace skills is good. Learners enjoy their training and develop good skills and knowledge of retailing. Learners, and their managers, recognise the significant improvements they display in their self-confidence. Learners develop good personal and general vocational skills. They quickly become confident at communicating with customers and colleagues, are well organised and have a high awareness of the need for safety and security. The standard of work in their portfolios of evidence is satisfactory. Most make satisfactory progress towards their NVQs, although slow progress is made by learners in some stores.
9. Success rates for learners on the Train to Gain programme are high at 86%. Many learners achieve useful additional qualifications in areas such as first aid, health and safety and manual handling. It is too early to make a judgement on apprenticeship success rates as the programme only started in September 2007. Although timely success rates appear low at 50%, very few learners reached their expected end dates at the time of inspection. The progress of those in learning is satisfactory. Inspectors' judgements confirmed most of the strengths concerning achievement and standards Bhs identified in its self-assessment report.

### Quality of provision

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Apprenticeships  
Train to Gain

Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Initial assessment is effective in identifying additional learning needs. Most learners with additional learning needs are well supported, although for some the time between needs being identified and their receiving support is too long. Provision of literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. Progress reviews are generally thorough however, in some stores line managers are not sufficiently involved in reviews and success in meeting additional support needs is not effectively evaluated. Assessment is suitable and thorough, and meets awarding body standards. Learners have a satisfactory induction that effectively covers programme requirements and other relevant matters such as equality of opportunity and health and safety. Training materials effectively promote learning, address the full range of learner needs and meet programme requirements. In some instances assessors do not use information about individual learning styles identified at the start of programmes when planning programme delivery.
11. Learners' and Bhs managers' access to computer-based portfolios containing evidence and information for their NVQs is poor. Some stores successfully use traditional paper

based portfolios or effectively supplement computer based portfolios developed by their subcontractor with comprehensive paper copies of their contents. Other stores have adopted computer based portfolios but do not provide sufficient internet access or complete paper copies for these to be effective. Learners do not have readily available records of the targets they agree with assessors, or of the evidence they need to collect before their assessor's next visit. Most managers do not have adequate access to electronic portfolios to effectively monitor learners' progress or identify additional support needs. The self-assessment recognises implementation of computer based portfolios is not sufficiently developed.

12. The extent to which programmes meet the needs of learners and their employers is satisfactory. Learners have a clear understanding of the direct relevance of their programmes to their work at Bhs and their career aspirations. Managers carefully select units of the NVQ to increase the skill base of learners and benefit store operations. For example learners' programmes include training in accepting deliveries and visual merchandising. In some stores, programmes successfully build on prior knowledge and experience, usefully incorporating elements of existing in-house training programmes. However, in other stores, learners duplicate work already covered during in-house programmes. For some learners, the match between their job roles and the NVQ they are working towards is poor, impeding their progress. While many learners are keen to progress to further awards, Bhs does not currently offer these.
13. Support and guidance for learners is satisfactory overall. Support for learners from store staff is good. Most store managers have a good understanding of the content of learners' programmes. They work well to ensure that learners have good opportunities for assessment and sufficient time away from the sales floor to work with their assessors. Learners who work only during peak trading periods receive equal levels of support. Assessors and line managers plan assessment visits carefully to fit learners' shift patterns. Learners requiring additional support for literacy and numeracy receive extra time to attend tutorials. Store managers are strongly committed and positive about the learning programmes and promote them enthusiastically through imaginatively displayed notice boards. Information, advice and guidance to learners joining programmes is satisfactory. Managers routinely offer learners information regarding career opportunities in their store and across the company.

## Leadership and management

### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Apprenticeships

Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory Grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

**Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic management is good. Support for accredited learning through apprenticeships and Train to Gain has a high priority in Bhs' overall strategic planning. Bhs' learning and development strategy forms an integral part of its human resources operating plan. It has researched the strategy thoroughly to ensure that it meets its needs and is realistic. Senior managers have a good understanding of the strategy and communicate it effectively to all store managers and staff. Bhs effectively introduced accredited learning as a pilot programme for the year 2007/08. It is using the outcomes of the pilot in developing the provision further across other occupational areas and into the rest of the UK. Plans to expand the provision are ambitious. The existing pilot involved a total of 400 learners and the projected target is 1000 next year. Bhs' staff have a high level of enthusiasm and a genuine commitment to training.
15. Bhs' promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. All recruitment materials include a clear statement concerning equality of opportunity and have appropriate images to promote diversity. Bhs reviews the policy annually or whenever legislation changes. It holds an equality and diversity workshop each year for managers who share the training to their staff. Bhs checks that the subcontractor reinforces equality and diversity during the regular meetings between assessors and learners. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities and how it affects them in the workplace. Guidance for complaints, grievances and appeals is clear. Staff understand the procedures adequately. Bhs provides specific training for relevant managers to ensure staff recruitment is fair. It collects data on gender and ethnicity for recruitment purposes but does not use it as yet to identify any differences in performance between different groups. Bhs has procedures in place to do this when there is sufficient data.
16. Bhs' arrangements for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All learners are Bhs employees. Bhs has a designated member of staff who acts as the company's safeguarding officer. Protocol Skills vets all assessors, and Bhs has appropriate monitoring arrangements in place.
17. Bhs has been slow to implement procedures to improve the quality of the provision. Its self-assessment process started in November 2007 but the report and accompanying quality improvement plan were only completed shortly before inspection. They are too recent for any contributions to improvements in the quality of the provision to be judged. Arrangements for staff to share good practice are incomplete. Improvements to the quality of provision have taken place but not been systematically implemented across the company. A recent renegotiation of the service level agreement with Protocol Skills contains appropriate action to remedy aspects of this. Communication is good at a senior level between Bhs and Protocol Skills but is poor between some store managers and assessors.

18. The self-assessment process is inclusive, involving learner focus groups and feedback questionnaires from staff. The SAR is well presented and sufficiently critical, although some of the strengths it lists are no more than normal practice. Not all staff are aware the SAR is completed. The accompanying quality improvement plan is comprehensive. Actions it specifies have appropriate deadlines for completion and are clearly aimed at improving the learners' experience.

## What learners like:

- Achieving a qualification at work
- 'It proves I know how to do my job properly'
- 'My manager is really supportive'
- 'I like the workbooks'
- 'It's not like being at school'
- 'Makes you realise what skills you have'
- 'This will look tremendous on my curriculum vitae'
- 'The work left for us to do is really clear'
- 'I never thought I would say this but I actually love mathematics now'
- 'Learning more about my job at Bhs'

## What learners think could improve:

- Opportunity to go on to other qualifications
- 'More visits from my assessor'
- 'Longer visits from my assessor'
- 'More time off the shop floor'
- 'A better understanding of programmes by my departmental manager'
- 'More support from my manager'
- A pay rise after completing qualification
- 'Too many technical words I do not understand'
- Paperwork very complicated
- 'Would like to have my own work rather than use an assessor's laptop'
- 'Each assessor works differently and tell us different things'
- Better communications
- Access to protocol website
- 'The course is a bit slow'

**Annex**

# Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ** programmes managed by the provider 2007 to 2008.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain	2007/08	overall	70	86%
		timely	70	86%

\* 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

\*\* NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection