

Dimensions Training Solutions

Reinspection report

Reinspection date

25 February 2009

Reinspection number

330576

Contents

Background information	3
Reinspection judgements	3
Scope of the reinspection.....	3
Description of the provider	4
Summary of grades awarded at previous inspection	5
Summary of grades awarded at reinspection.....	5
Overall judgement	6
Effectiveness of provision.....	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	6
Key areas for improvement	7
Main findings.....	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision	8
Leadership and management	10
Equality of opportunity	10
Learners' achievements	12

Background information

Reinspection 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 reinspection grades

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

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

Scope of the reinspection

In deciding the scope of the reinspection, inspectors consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorate's reinspection monitoring visits, and data and learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection. Inspectors also 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.

This reinspection reports on apprenticeship provision through sampling the following specialist provision in:

- Hairdressing and beauty therapy

Description of the provider

1. Dimensions Training Solutions (DTS) is a private training company with five training centres in Barnsley, Sheffield, Wakefield, Leeds and York. DTS has contracts with South and West Yorkshire LSCs with West Yorkshire taking the lead LSC role. DTS provides training for 226 learners of which 181 are apprentices and 45 are advanced apprentices. The company also provides hairdressing level 1 qualifications to approximately 500 Key Stage 4 learners from six purpose built salons located within school premises in Barnsley, Wakefield, West Leeds and Northallerton.
2. DTS works with approximately 160 employer salons, 16 of which have work-based assessors. Learners attend off-the-job training one half day each week with most practical assessments completed in their salons. Male learners account for 10% of all learners and 4% of learners are from minority ethnic groups. Currently 55% of learners match the LSC's criteria as requiring additional learning support.
3. The number of young people leaving school with GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in Barnsley, Wakefield and Leeds are 29%, 43% and 39% respectively against a national average of 42%. 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 at previous inspection

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

Sector subject areas

Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
---------------------------------	-----------------------

Summary of grades awarded at reinspection

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Success rates for advanced apprentices and timely success for all learners have improved. Learners develop good occupational skills, gain confidence and make good progress towards their qualifications. The quality of provision is satisfactory, as are teaching and learning. The monitoring of learners' progress towards their occupational qualifications is good. However, progress reviews are overly repetitive and aspects of the process lack clarity. The approach to educational and social inclusion is good. The open entry recruitment policy provides training opportunities to a wide range of learners. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. DTS' capacity to improve is good. Its self-assessment is an inclusive and well established process, and identified strengths and areas for improvement are largely accurate. DTS uses a range of good evidence to support its judgements, although it does not always express these sufficiently accurately. Since the previous inspection DTS has taken very effective steps to improve performance. It has maintained its strengths and has successfully resolved most of the key areas for improvement identified at that time. Success rates have risen significantly and are now satisfactory. Management information has improved significantly. DTS uses a range of management reports effectively to help improve performance. It monitors learner progression well. Many strategies to increase performance are now successfully in place and are having a significant impact. Staff support each other well and sharing of good practice is significantly improved. New resources, including good quality information learning technology, are in place and are starting to be used well. Some quality improvement measures, though often quite comprehensive in design, are not yet sufficiently effective in improving provision.

Key strengths

- Good development of learner skills
- Good monitoring of learners' occupational progress
- Good partnership working
- Good strategies to improve performance

Key areas for improvement

- Low retention rates
- Insufficiently cohesive learner review process
- Some insufficiently established quality improvement processes
- Insufficiently developed Skills for Life strategy

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Achievement and standards are satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. The good skill development of learners was a significant strength at the previous inspection and remains strong. Learners are confident and discerning in their responses to questions and their involvement in activities. Advanced apprentices and those learners nearing the end of their level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) apprenticeships are developing their own client lists. All learners work professionally, provide good client consultations and have a good understanding of techniques and principles that will enhance client services.
7. The very low success rates of advanced apprentices were an area for improvement at the previous inspection. DTS has significantly improved success rates for advanced apprentices, which are now slightly above the national average. Apprentice success rates have improved slightly ahead of the improvement in national averages but remain 8% below the national rate. Many learners joining DTS have development needs in literacy and numeracy. However, no variation exists between success rates for the whole framework including key skills, and those for NVQ only.
8. The slow progress made by learners towards their framework completion was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. DTS has introduced a number of strategies that have been very effective in improving learners' rate of completion. Timely success has improved significantly and now reflects national rates. A high proportion of current learners are at or ahead of their individual learning plan targets. Only one learner remains on programme beyond the expected training period.
9. An ongoing area for improvement identified at the previous inspection and by DTS is the high number of learners who leave the programme early. This remains an area of concern. Of the 139 learners due to complete in 2008/09, 56 have already left the programme without achieving. DTS has completed an analysis of why learners leave, introduced a learner profile that colour codes those learners judged as at-risk of leaving early and now monitors attendance and progress more closely. Early indications suggest a slight year on year improvement in retention.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory as identified in DTS' lesson observation profile. Lesson plans cover the session aims sufficiently, but focus too heavily on teaching rather than learning. In better sessions, tutors plan effectively to make good use of a wide range of

differentiated commercial training materials. Tutors pose well phrased questions to challenge and probe learners' existing knowledge, making them draw on occupational experiences to introduce new principles and theories. DTS has made an extensive financial commitment to information learning technology. Tutors are starting to integrate this technology into their teaching, but most are still developing confidence and skill in extending its use beyond a simple presentation. Although key skills assignments are set in context, vocational tutors do not link or promote key skills within occupational teaching sessions sufficiently.

11. On entry, all learners complete a range of skills scans, preferred learning styles and a questionnaire to assess if they are vulnerable to leaving the programme early. Arrangements to identify and support learners' literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. All learners complete literacy and numeracy initial and diagnostic assessments. Effective and timely additional support forms part of learners' off-the-job training. In 2008/09, 20% of learners assessed as below literacy or numeracy level 1 improved by at least one level.
12. Strategies to monitor learners' occupational progress are particularly good. Assessors complete a detailed learner record at the end of each salon visit, with progress monitored effectively against pre-set targets and assessment plans from the previous visit. Tutors automatically transfer this record of activities and assessments to a central system using electronic pens. Learners are completely aware of their progress, logging and colour coding their progress effectively. Assessors evaluate learner progress as percentage completion against pre-determined milestones. Learners wishing to progress at a faster rate or those at risk of falling behind their planned targets attend additional off-the-job training and assessment sessions. As learners progress they are rewarded with incentives and badges.
13. The review of progress towards the occupational award is broadly good. However, learner reviews bring together a range of information, much of which is repetitive. Assessors ask learners and employers to write very similar information on different forms. Employers record their contributions to learners' training and development in the newly introduced and very detailed salon training record. Assessors do not use salon records effectively to discuss learners' skill levels or to plan their future training needs. Although literacy and numeracy tutors keep records of learners' progress, this information is not sufficiently available at reviews. Too often learners are the main source of information for linking activities to their individual learning plans and assignment outcomes.
14. DTS meets learners' needs effectively. Frequent salon visits by assessors provide good assessment opportunities. DTS values learners' opinions, taking effective action to alleviate their concerns. Centre training and salon visits take adequate account of learners' and employers' needs.
15. Learners receive satisfactory information, advice and careers guidance as they start and leave the programme. Induction is informative, provides learners with a clear understanding of the programme and their responsibility in achieving the

framework. The promotion of equality and diversity, and practices to keep learners healthy and safe are good. Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity, exhibiting respect for each other, assessors and clients.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategies to improve performance are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. Staff have a clear focus on timely achievement. They all have targets for achievement against learner starts, retention and success rates, which are linked to performance related bonuses. The culture of the organisation is open and welcoming with good opportunities to share good practice. Overall success rates have improved significantly and are now satisfactory. DTS focuses on eliminating out-of-funding learners and only one now remains on programme. It monitors learners' progress well and makes good use of a commercial software package to monitor and record individual progress. Staff give individual support for learners in a timely way through drop-in sessions and increased salon visits. DTS makes good use of 'finishing schools' where learners can fill gaps in knowledge or increase assessment opportunities. New teaching and learning resources are now in place including information learning technologies. DTS collects timely information on assessment and progress through an innovative electronic pen which downloads information to a central system minutes after a salon visit.
17. As identified in self-assessment, partnership working is good. DTS continues to work well with the standards body for hairdressing as well as other work-based learning providers. Partnerships with a range of work-based learning groups give staff many opportunities to update skills and benefit from joint training. DTS is part of a peer review group to assess the quality of each other's provision. Sharing of good practice through this mechanism is good. DTS is now also a partner in five consortia bids for diploma development, and is a lead on one. Partnerships with schools and local authorities are good. The provider has an active schools programme with around 500 learners on programme. It manages resources well to support this programme. Learners gain confidence and self-esteem as well as practical skills. Progression onto DTS' mainstream programmes is around 17%. As well as growing the schools provision, DTS now also has a subcontract to deliver Entry to Employment provision.
18. Staff development, strategic direction, financial planning including resource management and use of management information are satisfactory.
19. DTS' approach to equality of opportunity is good. Partnerships, particularly with schools, successfully reach learners from communities in areas of deprivation. DTS' open access policy on recruitment ensures that learners with a range of barriers to learning are successful in gaining places in provision. *An Every Child*

Matters champion is highly active in completing relevant training and in sharing this information with all staff. DTS is improving the curriculum to ensure that *Every Child Matters* themes are represented well in teaching and learning, though this is yet to become standard practice. Staff complete regular training sessions throughout the year to reinforce their understanding. DTS recently revised induction processes to include the more specific reinforcement of equality of opportunity on entry. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is very good and reinforced effectively during learners' progress reviews. A specific section on the observation of teaching and learning forms requires observers to assess how well tutors develop equality of opportunity themes within sessions. This is a recent development and it is too soon to assess its affect. DTS monitors data on ethnicity, gender and additional learning needs. However, it does not use this information sufficiently to measure relative progress by these groups. Policies and procedures are adequate, and comply with the provisions made within the Race Relations Act (2000) and the Disability Discrimination Act (2005). The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. DTS completes Criminal Records Bureau checks in a timely way. Appropriate safeguarding procedures and guidelines are in place.

20. Some quality improvement measures are insufficiently established. Self-assessment partially identifies this. Although feedback is sought from learners and employers, response rates from employers are low. The observation of teaching and learning is broadly satisfactory. However, action plans arising from the observations are insufficiently effective or specific in improving individual staff performance. DTS has a new retention strategy. However, this is not yet having a sufficient affect. Appraisal processes are broadly adequate but individual targets and development plans link insufficiently to overall strategies or business plans.
21. The arrangements for Skills for Life support are developed insufficiently. DTS has no Skills for Life strategy. Although DTS has completed a number of actions to develop literacy and numeracy support for learners, much work is yet to be done. Initial assessment arrangements are adequate. However, support tutors record the progress made by learners against their diagnostic outcomes insufficiently. DTS has three specialist support tutors with appropriate qualifications and experience. While support tutors work with hairdressing specialists in joint sessions, joint planning or delivery of sessions is insufficient.

Learners' achievements

Success rate on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider 2005 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate **	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate **
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	26	8%	45%	8%	36%
		timely	22	5%	26%	5%	19%
	06/07	overall	28	46%	63%	46%	56%
		timely	28	18%	43%	18%	38%
	07/08	Overall	18	68%	68%	68%	63%
		timely	16	37%	48%	43%	44%
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	208	47%	55%	46%	52%
		timely	221	17%	38%	17%	36%
	06/07	overall	184	51%	64%	51%	60%
		timely	167	32%	47%	32%	44%
	07/08	overall	151	56%	67%	56%	64%
		timely	143	51%	52%	51%	50%

* 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'