

Whitbread Group PLC

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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.

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), 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:

- Hospitality and catering
- Literacy and numeracy

Description of the provider

1. Whitbread Group PLC (Whitbread) is a major hospitality and catering company which operates across the country and abroad. Whitbread brands include Premier Inn, Beefeater, TableTable, Brewers Fayre, Taybarns and Costa. The company's head office is in Dunstable. Around 55% of Whitbread's training is work-based learning and Train to Gain provision.
2. The company's head of learning and skills and the apprenticeship and skills manager are responsible for work-based learning and Train to Gain provision. The quality manager for the apprentice programmes supports their work. Workplace managers and dedicated training staff in the company's hotels, kitchens, bars and restaurants provide learning and assessment in the workplace for work based hospitality and catering. A subcontractor, ThirdForce, provides these services for Train to Gain, Skills for Life, and literacy and numeracy provision. Edexcel provides internal verification and supports Whitbread with their national vocational qualification (NVQ) training. A team of three administrators assists those providing training. Up to the beginning of 2008/09, the company used a subcontractor to provide work-based learning. From that point, Whitbread took over the provision and provided the training for its work-based learners. It no longer uses the subcontractor for work-based learning.
3. Whitbread's contract with the National Employer Service of the LSC is to provide work-based learning NVQ at level 2 for apprentices and Train to Gain Skills for Life learners. The provider has 354 learners of which 110 are hospitality and catering apprentices, 137 are on literacy programmes and 107 are on numeracy programmes.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering	Outstanding: Grade 1
Literacy and numeracy	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness is good. Achievement and standards are good. The quality of provision including teaching, training and learning, the responsiveness to the needs of learners and the employer, guidance and support are also good. Provision in hospitality and catering is outstanding and in literacy and numeracy it is good. Leadership and management, including equality of opportunity, are good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. The capacity to improve is good. Particularly effective quality improvement arrangements raise the quality of provision, especially in hospitality and catering. Training and workplace managers have been successful in resolving problems with low success rates and securing for learners very high overall success rates and high timely success rates. However, Whitbread has no systemic arrangements to observe teaching, training and learning.
6. The thorough self-assessment process takes effective note of the views of learners, training staff and workplace managers on standards of provision. Good use of data on learners' performance is an integral part of self-assessment. The broadly accurate self-assessment report is informative and uses evidence to support judgements and grades effectively. The report is occasionally too descriptive and does not record a few areas for improvements. The regularly monitored quality improvement plans are clear and updated regularly by managers.

Key strengths

- Very high overall success rates
- Outstanding provision in hospitality and catering
- Very good support for learners from the employer
- Very relevant strategic goals for training and learning
- Particularly effective arrangements to improve the quality of training learners receive

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently vocationally-related learning in literacy and numeracy in Train to Gain
- No systematic arrangements to observe the quality of learning

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates were very high for work-based learning and Train to Gain for most of 2008/09. The timely success rate for this period was very high for work-based learning and high for Train to Gain. The overall success rate and the timely success rate for work-based learning between 2006/07 and for most of 2008/09 increased very substantially for both the framework and NVQ, particularly so for the timely rate. Success rates do not vary significantly between different groups. Whitbread only started offering Train to Gain provision in 2008/09.
8. Work-based learners have very good hospitality and catering skills. Train to Gain learners increase their self-esteem and confidence to very high levels. Both work-based and Train to Gain learners develop particularly high standards of customer service skills. Work-based learners demonstrate a very good understanding of theory and health and safety. Progress in relation to prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy for most Train to Gain learners is good but a minority are already at level 2 and do not find learning sufficiently challenging. This concern is not recorded in the self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

9. The quality of provision is good. Teaching, training and learning are good overall and outstanding in work-based learning. This matches the self-assessment report. In work-based learning, planning is meticulous and workplace coaching is extremely good. Learning resources are of a particularly high standard. Teaching, training and learning for Skills for Life are satisfactory. Effective coaching and strong use of information learning technology improves most learners' literacy and numeracy skills and helps them to achieve their qualifications. However, literacy and numeracy learning is not sufficiently vocationally related. Assessment is accurate and fair. Monitoring of learners' progress overall is good and staff take effective action when progress is slow.
10. The response is good to the needs of learners, the employer's requirement for its workforce and the skills needs of the hospitality and catering industry. The very pertinent range of training includes programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications. However, no accredited training is available at level 3 and for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Arrangements to provide training are very flexible including the very good use of information learning technology. Whitbread and ThirdForce staff are very responsive to providing learning and support at times suitable to learners and workplace managers.
11. Support, information and guidance for learners are good overall and outstanding in work-based learning. Good information and guidance are available to potential

learners on the most appropriate programme to meet their needs, particularly for work-based learning. Highly effective induction settles learners into training. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the support for learners from the employer is highly effective. Workplace mentors provide very good support for learners. Career progression is particularly good. Those completing training receive increased salaries and have good prospects for promotion. Most Whitbread managers and supervisors have successfully completed company training programmes before moving to promoted posts.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

12. Leadership and management are good. This matches the self-assessment report. Directors and human resource and training managers, supported particularly well by workplace managers and staff, have clear and very relevant strategic goals for training at Whitbread. The goals are to advance staff expertise to very high levels to improve the performance of the company and the service it provides to customers, and to raise the levels of job skills in the UK workforce, particularly the hospitality and catering sector, which traditionally has low levels of skills. Thorough operational and business planning supports the achievement of strategic goals and takes into account very effectively staff and learners' training needs and the requirements of customers. Regular and comprehensive reviews and updating of planning to achieve strategic goals takes place.
13. Managers have particularly effective arrangements to improve the quality of provision and ensure success rates are very high. The quality improvement strategy is thorough. Managers have taken very substantial action to improve previous poor performing provision by ensuring clear and systematic arrangements for the provision of learning, based on Whitbread's operational needs and the learning requirements of staff. Very useful meetings take place between managers and staff responsible for training to ensure a high standard of learning. Quality improvement plans thoroughly address areas for improvement. The clear focus on performance management and staff development ensures that those providing learning have their training skills maintained and updated. Managers make good use of data to check learners' progress and achievements. However, they do not use data to set success rate targets for staff looking after training. Whitbread does not have systematic arrangements to observe the quality of its training.
14. Internal verification is thorough, including clear and effective arrangements for standardisation of the outcomes from assessment, sampling, checking the standard of assessors and verifiers' work and providing training and updating knowledge of this area.
15. The self-assessment process is thorough and takes account of the views of learners, training staff and workplace managers. The process makes good use of data to make judgements on learners' performance. The self-assessment report is

broadly accurate, informative and makes effective use of evidence to support judgements and grades. However, parts of the report are too descriptive and a few areas for improvement are not recorded. Quality improvement action plans are clear, regularly monitored and updated.

16. Managers ensure learners have very good resources. Staff and learners use high standard paper-based and electronic learning materials. Most learners train in up-to-date, very good, modern facilities. However, managers have not ensured that the literacy and numeracy resources are vocationally relevant. Managers have in place thorough arrangements to assess learners' additional literacy, numeracy and language needs and provide good support for this area.
17. Equality of opportunity is good. Whitbread has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination. A thorough and regularly reviewed and updated single policy and strategy is in place for equality and diversity covering race, colour, gender, disability, age, faith, creed and sexual orientation. Staff and learners receive comprehensive equality of opportunity training. Managers regularly collect and thoroughly analyse data on the recruitment and achievement of learners from different groups. The company has a strong and very effective policy of providing training for those who have been unemployed for over six months and with low levels of prior educational attainment. Promotional materials for training at Whitbread regularly feature people from different groups. Equality and diversity impact assessment measures are in place to help ensure the effectiveness of the company's equality and diversity arrangements. Policies and arrangements are thorough for the elimination of oppressive behaviour including harassment, discrimination and bullying. Whitbread has effective procedures for complaints.
18. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements including criminal record checks on those that provide training. Health and safety policies are in place to cover the activities of learners. Staff providing vocational training pay particular attention to health and safety.

What learners like:

- 'Taybarns is like learning and working in seven kitchens in one'
- 'Really like being able to study and achieve a qualification while I am working'
- 'It is good to know that my mathematics is not as bad as I thought'
- 'I have learnt so much about my job and how to do it well'
- 'I like the pace of learning'
- 'Everybody's really helpful'
- 'I enjoy using the laptop'
- 'Managers and work colleagues are very encouraging and provide lots of help'

What learners think could improve:

- 'I wish study was more challenging'
- 'Plan start times to avoid the Christmas season'
- 'I need more hands-on practice and not working on the screen'

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

19. Of the 110 work-based learning apprentices working towards NVQs in hospitality and catering at level 2, 20 are food and drink apprentices; 50 are front of house operations apprentices; 26 are food processing and cooking apprentices and 14 are housekeeping apprentices. Training takes place at the learners' workplaces by trainers and staff. Workplace managers provide assessment. Planned training is scheduled over a six month period.

Strengths

- Very high success rates in 2008/09
- Very good hospitality and catering skills and understanding of theory by learners
- Extremely well planned training
- Particularly effective coaching
- Very good learning resources
- Very good support for learners
- Good career progression opportunities
- Strong and very effective focus on improving provision for learners

Areas for improvement

- No accredited training at level 3

Achievement and standards

20. Achievement and standards are outstanding. This is better than the judgement recorded in the self-assessment report. Since Whitbread took over providing hospitality and catering work-based learning for its employees from a subcontractor in October 2008, overall and timely framework and NVQ success rates have increased very substantially from a low to a very high level and are now very significantly above the national average. Current learners are making very good progress towards achieving their qualifications.

21. Learners develop very good hospitality and catering skills, particularly in customer service and care, team working and selling skills. During training, learners advance strongly, often from very low levels of confidence and self-esteem. This is demonstrated especially in their communication skills. Whitbread's customers particularly appreciate learners' social skills when meeting, greeting and providing services. Learners demonstrate a very good knowledge of the theory which underpins their hospitality and catering skills. For example, learners understand why customers appreciate good social skills and how good numeracy skills help improve the performance of Whitbread. The understanding of health and safety by learners is very good.

Quality of provision

22. The quality of the provision, including teaching, training and learning, is outstanding. This agrees with the self-assessment report. Training managers, and staff from the subcontractor, with strong support from the sector skills council for hospitality and catering, have very successfully planned learning by meticulously matching NVQ units to Whitbread's own training materials and programmes. This provides learners with training which meets particularly well the skills needs of the hospitality and catering industry and those required by Whitbread. Coaching sessions are particularly effective at developing learners' knowledge and skills to a very high standard. Well-organised sessions, delivered in short stages, keep learners' interest engaged at all times. Regular demonstrations throughout the hospitality and catering skills sessions are particularly good. Training staff regularly check learners' understanding through good use of questioning. They have produced easy-to-use written and electronic learning materials and workbooks of an extremely high standard. These provide excellent support for learners to acquire background knowledge. Teaching and learning materials for key skills make particularly good use of hospitality and catering topics. Workplace managers and training staff monitor learners' progress particularly well, take very effective action when it slows and provide good feedback on how learners can improve their performance. Workplace managers provide accurate and fair assessment.
23. The response to the needs of learners and the employer's requirement for its workforce is good. Whitbread offers its staff a wide range of government and non-funded level 2 training in hospitality and catering including programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications. However, although a wide range of training is available at level 3 for supervisors and managers to advance their careers, this provision is not accredited with nationally recognised qualifications. The self-assessment report records this concern.
24. Support, information and guidance for learners are outstanding. Information and guidance to potential learners on programmes of training are of a very high standard. Induction is highly effective at settling learners into training. Support from managers and staff at Whitbread for learners is very good. Each learner has a mentor who provides a very high standard of support during training. A confidential counselling service is available to learners to provide support with personal issues. Career progression opportunities in Whitbread are particularly good. Those completing training programmes receive increased salaries and have very good opportunities to progress to supervisory and management roles. Almost all managers and supervisors in Whitbread have successfully completed company training programmes before moving to promoted posts.

Leadership and management

25. Leadership and management are outstanding. Before 2008/09, directors and managers were faced with provision which did not always meet the company's training needs and had less than satisfactory success rates. They took decisive and very effective action to resolve these problems; a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. They stopped working with their then subcontractor and

took over the provision of government-funded training. A particularly thorough review and mapping took place of Whitbread training to NVQ units. Training managers ensured that training programmes better met the needs of the company and learners. The views of workplace managers substantially influenced what training needed to take place. Workplace managers are particularly effective at ensuring that training meets operational needs. Training managers make very effective use of data to monitor learners' performance to ensure success rates increased substantially to a very high level. Inspectors found managers and learners to be extremely enthusiastic about training.

26. Self-assessment is inclusive and accurate. Workplace managers and staff, and learners, contribute to self-assessment. Training evaluations are completed, analysed and used to identify issues and provide action plans of a high standard. Communications are good. Staff development is comprehensive and very effective. Regular checking of the effectiveness of the workplace learning takes place by the company's auditors but this is mainly of processes rather than quality of provision and no observations of learning take place.
27. Equality of opportunity is good. Learners attend a particularly useful equality and diversity workshop at induction and during training complete compulsory electronic learning equality and diversity training packages which are of a high standard.

Literacy and numeracy

Good: Grade 2

Context

28. Whitbread has 244 Skills for Life Train to Gain literacy and numeracy learners. Literacy learners include 20 at level 1 and 117 at level 2; and numeracy learners include 33 at level 1 and 74 at level 2. Whitbread employs all literacy and numeracy learners in a range of jobs at its operations across the country. ThirdForce looks after literacy and numeracy provision for Whitbread through information learning technology, and 13 learning support managers who provide individual coaching and support for learners in the workplace.

Strengths

- Very high overall success rates
- Good development of motivation, confidence and skills by learners
- Very flexible arrangements to access learning
- Highly effective support

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently vocationally-related learning
- Insufficiently qualified or experienced subcontractor staff

Achievement and standards

29. Achievement and standards are good. This agrees with the self-assessment report. Overall success rates were very high in 2008/09 for both literacy and numeracy. However, timely success rates, although at a good level, were not as high. Data from the provider indicates that timely success rates for those learners completing recently are now at the same level as the overall success rate. Most learners achieve their qualification at the first attempt. However, a small minority working towards level 1 literacy need several attempts before they succeed.

30. Learners develop high levels of motivation to learn as well as confidence in their own abilities. The programmes improve most learners' literacy and numeracy skills. This helps them contribute more successfully to providing services to customers. Learners make very good use of information learning technology both at work and at home. Learners completing literacy and numeracy programmes who then move to work-based learning do so with much greater confidence and success in carrying out key skills projects. Most learners make good progress in relation to their prior levels of attainment.

Quality of provision

31. Quality of provision is good. Teaching, training and learning are satisfactory. Learning support managers ensure that most learners make effective use of information learning technology and they provide adequate coaching and support for learners to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and achieve their qualifications. However, coaching and electronic learning packages do not relate sufficiently to learners from hospitality and catering workplaces. Coaching from learning support managers to accomplish a particular learning task is not always sufficient or appropriate. For example, they did not provide enough guidance on ways to practise spelling new words or on the different methods of carrying out multiplication tasks. In a few instances, the guidance was incorrect. Initial and diagnostic assessments are used effectively to assess learners' levels of literacy and numeracy. Progress reviews and assessments are used adequately to monitor and check learners' performance. Feedback helps learners to improve the standard of their work.
32. The response to the needs of learners and the employer's requirement for its workforce is good. Arrangements to provide learning programmes are very flexible and are available at the workplace or the learners' homes. Workplace managers make very effective arrangements to adjust shift patterns and provide local facilities to enable learners to learn, use information learning technology, and complete diagnostic assessments and exams. Learning support managers are particularly responsive to the need to provide coaching and individual support at times convenient to the learners and their workplace manager. Whitbread provides a useful range of provision to support Train to Gain learners whose levels of literacy and numeracy are low and adversely affecting their progress with their careers. However, although the company has well developed plans for ESOL, no accredited provision is accessible for this area, and, as the self-assessment report recognises, no entry-level provision for literacy and numeracy is available.
33. Support, information and guidance for learners are good. Good information and guidance are available to potential learners on the most appropriate literacy and numeracy programme to meet their needs. Induction settles learners into study particularly effectively. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the support for learners from the employer is highly effective. Workplace managers are very encouraging and take any necessary actions to help support learners with their programme. All learners have a workplace mentor who provides very good support to help them complete their programmes successfully. Learning support managers reinforce this by regular visits to the workplace. Mentors and learning support managers are easy to contact in the workplace, by email, phone or text when learners have queries or problems. Learners completing their literacy and numeracy programmes have good opportunities to gain promotions and increased salaries.

Leadership and management

34. Leadership and management are good. Directors and managers are very committed to, and successful at, increasing learners' levels of literacy and numeracy, not only for the benefit of the company but also to advance the learners' careers. Managers monitor success rates closely and take particularly effective action to ensure the maintenance of overall success rates at a very high level and that timely success rates are increasing. In most instances, managers have good arrangements to improve the quality of provision to ensure learners receive high standards of support and effective coaching to successfully complete their learning. However, although learners achieve very high success rate, managers have not addressed the weak use of hospitality and catering topics in electronic learning packages and coaching, or that some subcontractor staff are insufficiently qualified and experienced in providing literacy and numeracy provision. The self-assessment report provides a largely accurate picture of literacy and numeracy provision but it did not identify all of the areas for improvement.
35. Equality of opportunity is good. Whitbread provides the opportunity for employees at all levels, regardless of their previous educational or occupational background, to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and to gain a qualification. The promotion of equal opportunities to learners is thorough. However, reinforcement at reviews is sometimes superficial. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to ensure learners do not face discrimination, bullying or harassment.

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by Whitbread 2006 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Apprenticeships	06/07	overall	159	41%	64%	36%	60%
		timely	157	24%	47%	23%	45%
	07/08	overall	147	45%	67%	44%	64%
		timely	137	28%	53%	38%	50%
	08/09# First nine months	overall	52	94%	***	94%	68%
		timely	49	84%	***	86%	45%

* 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

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

*** Not available

When available and validated by the LSC.

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain Skills for Life programmes managed by Whitbread 2007/08 to 2008/09

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	college/provider NVQ rate**
	2008/09	overall	203	93%
		timely	164	76%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first ten months or greater of the LSC contract year

* 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 college/provider before inspection