

Ethnic Minority Business Services

Inspection date

3 April 2009

Inspection number

333248

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider	4
Summary of grades awarded	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
What learners like.....	12
What learners think could improve	12

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:

- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. Ethnic Minority Business Services (EMBS) is a private training provider, established in 1988 to provide counselling and employment training for members of minority ethnic groups in Oxfordshire. The main offices and training rooms are in Oxford. EMBS also has a smaller training and administrative facility in Banbury. Both offices are centrally situated and are easily accessible by public transport. All training takes place in these premises.
2. The chief executive officer heads a management team of four who are responsible for 10 tutors and five administrative staff. A board of directors oversee the activities of EMBS. Two contracts are held by EMBS with Thames Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for Train to Gain and for Further Education. EMBS is also the sub contractor for First Steps provision for Oxfordshire County Council Adult Learning and is a learndirect centre. The learndirect provision and the sub contracted First Steps provision were not inspected. The provision directly funded by the LSC is about 40% of the total provision.
3. At the time of inspection, EMBS had 140 learners on the Train to Gain and Further Education programmes. Of these learners, 53 were working towards qualifications in literacy and numeracy, 65 were working towards qualifications in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), 13 were on an ICT course and nine were on a sewing course. EMBS also offers other courses such as business start up, cookery, and driving which were not running at the time of inspection.
4. At the 2001 census, Oxford had a minority ethnic population of 12.9% compared with 8.7% in England and Wales. The unemployment rate in Oxford was 1.6% in 2002 against the national average of 3.1%. Unemployment in Oxford among people from minority ethnic groups is almost double that of white people.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. Achievements and standards, the quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity are all outstanding. Training in preparation for life and work is also outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

6. EMBS has demonstrated an outstanding capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection it has made significant changes to the provision in line with local needs, LSC policy and market forces. In addition, it has significantly improved the quality of the provision. The number of learners directly funded by the LSC has increased significantly year on year from 39 at the previous inspection to 140 at this inspection. It has also increased the number of courses available to offer a broader range at different levels. Resources to support learning are managed extremely well. EMBS works hard to develop and maintain excellent partnerships which support all learners, but especially those from minority ethnic groups, progressing into employment. EMBS has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and has developed thorough quality improvement procedures which are well established. These procedures are very effective in monitoring learner progress and in setting targets to improve the provision. The grades awarded by inspectors at this inspection are a very significant improvement from the grades awarded at the previous inspection.
7. The self-assessment process is inclusive and takes account of feedback from staff, learners and partners. The self-assessment report is comprehensive, judgemental and well written. Only one grade in the self-assessment report did not match the grades awarded by the inspectors.

Key strengths

- Outstanding success rates.
- Very good development of learners' personal, language and work skills.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Outstanding range of provision.
- Excellent support and guidance for learners.
- Outstanding leadership and management.
- Excellent partnership working.
- Excellent promotion of equality and diversity.

Key areas for improvement

- None identified.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade: 1

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

8. Achievement and standards are outstanding as judged in the self-assessment report. Learners develop very good personal, language and work skills. ESOL learners demonstrate very good development of the target language in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Learners build upon their existing skills and knowledge very effectively and produce a very high standard of work. The development of skills has improved learners' confidence to apply them to their personal lives and at work. For example, in an ESOL lesson learners used their new language skills very effectively to discuss health issues. Many learners very effectively use literacy, numeracy and language skills in communicating with work colleagues and in helping their children with homework. Attendance and punctuality are good.
9. Retention rates are outstanding at 97% for 2007/08 and 92% for 2008/09 to date, consistent across the whole provision. Success rates in achieving qualifications on the preparation for life and work programmes in 2007/08 are outstanding at 89% for those aged 16–18 and 84% for those aged 19+. The 19+ learners constitute about 85% of the total provision. The success rates for 2008/09 to date are also outstanding at 86%. Success rates across different groups of learners including age, ethnicity and gender are essentially the same. The Train to Gain learners are receiving the same learning experience as the adult and community learners but as the contract is new, there have been few completions to date.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

10. The quality of provision is outstanding and matches the grade awarded in the self-assessment report.
11. Teaching and learning are very good. Tutors use a very wide range of teaching and assessment strategies and good resources to encourage learner involvement during lessons. Teachers are very supportive and learners are active participants, motivated and enthusiastic to learn. For example, in a literacy lesson, learners enjoyed exploring sentence structure using a board game and at the same time developed their language skills. The activities encourage learners to improve all aspects of language, literacy and numeracy.

-
12. Planning is insufficiently well documented to enable staff to fully meet the individual needs of learners. Most schemes of work and lesson plans do not contain sufficient information on the assessment, differentiation or teaching strategies. Targets in learning plans are not sufficiently specific. The focus is too much on completion of the task in hand to meet the assessment requirements of the qualification, rather than the personal skill or behaviour that individuals need to develop or practise.
13. The range of provision is outstanding and successfully meets the needs of learners. An extensive, wide range of new custom made courses have been created or planned in response to community needs. EMBS has designed these courses to widen participation and attract marginalised or hard to reach learners. EMBS has had outstanding success in encouraging potential learners onto these courses. Several of the non accredited courses are delivered bilingually and progress onto other courses that are accredited. Examples include a sewing course for female ESOL learners who learn to sew and develop the confidence to progress onto accredited ESOL classes. Accommodating every potential learner is part of the ethos of EMBS. For many learners this is the first educational experience they have encountered and many have low self-esteem, mental health problems or language needs. The extensive range of outstanding provision enables tutors to actively encourage learners to progress from one course to another and to different levels within the subject areas or into employment or higher education. Progression for most learners is outstanding and most gain employment or move on to other courses within EMBS or into further or higher education. Of the current staff, 45% employed by EMBS began as learners.
14. Support and guidance for learners is excellent. Information, advice and guidance for learners are exceptionally thorough and detailed. Discussions with existing and potential learners include the level of courses; content; skills development; citizenship; crèche facilities; benefits; support for disabilities; work status; past skills; qualifications and long term goals. EMBS provides clear signposting to alternative provision if they cannot provide a course. Initial assessment outcomes accurately identify the starting point for potential learners and they are appropriately placed. EMBS offers outstanding support for existing learners which includes curriculum vitae writing, letter writing, job applications, considerable pastoral care, extensive support for learners with mental health issues, small group sizes and crèche facilities. EMBS supports learners with personal issues. For example, one learner had been subjected to physical violence and with the support of the tutor was placed in a women's refuge. Potential learners benefit from outstanding support with form completion, in-depth discussions before deciding on which course to attend, meetings with EMBS and partner agencies to identify how to develop self-esteem, confidence, social and work skills.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

15. Leadership and management are outstanding. The board of directors takes a keen interest in EMBS and provides particularly strong support and guidance. Some staff issues led to the recommendation by the board to provide coaching for staff and this has been very successful in improving team working. The chief executive provides a clear direction based on sound research on local needs and market forces. She communicates this very effectively to managers and all staff through meetings, newsletters and reports. The newsletters are excellent and contain information on learner success rates and other data, progress on bids for funding, learners' views and success stories. Communication within EMBS and with partners and the general community is excellent. Staff have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the organisation, the targets which need to be met and current performance. All staff show a passion and commitment to the company and in meeting the needs of learners. Strategic and operational management are excellent. The chief executive takes every opportunity to secure more funding and to identify new needs in the community which EMBS can meet.
16. Partnership working is excellent. EMBS has established excellent relationships with various local organisations. For example, EMBS are sub contractors for the First Steps provision for Oxfordshire Adult Learning and also have a practice to mutual referring of learners as well as working collaboratively to secure funding for redundancy training. Plans to collaborate on joint observations of teaching and learning are well developed. EMBS work with Restore, a charity which works with people with mental health issues, both to accept referrals for training and to refer learners who need professional support. EMBS has many other links with minority ethnic groups, refugee groups and groups in deprived areas.
17. The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Equality of opportunity is fundamental to every aspect of the provision. Even though the primary focus is to enable people from minority ethnic groups gain employment, EMBS has a policy that no learner who approaches EMBS will be turned away and currently 25% of learners are not from minority ethnic groups. EMBS monitors the ethnic background of learners to ensure that their services are reaching all groups in Oxfordshire. It provides specialist courses to meet specific needs such as driving theory for Asian women and business start-up skills for Bangladeshi women. EMBS has made special arrangements for learners with disabilities such as home visits for a learner who is paraplegic. All staff and learners have a very good understanding of equality of opportunity and equality and diversity issues are deeply established in the teaching and culture of the organisation. Staff and learners understand the complaints, grievances and appeals procedures and EMBS has dealt proficiently with the few complaints received. EMBS's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

EMBS has a designated safeguarding officer and all staff have been appropriately vetted.

18. The self-assessment report process is inclusive, taking into account the views of staff, learners and partners. The self-assessment report is accurate and the judgements it contains are similar to those made by inspectors. Only one grade in the self-assessment report differed from that awarded by inspectors. The quality improvement plan is comprehensive, detailed and managers use it effectively to monitor and improve the provision. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. The use of management information is very good.

What learners like:

- "I can communicate now with English family that I live with".
- "I can use what I am learning to get a job".
- "I can now use the telephone and talk to people in English".
- "I work in a restaurant and can now understand what the customers say to me".
- "I can now write to my friends at work and they understand what I have written".
- "I now feel confident with my work and home life".
- "I can now use fractions and know what 20% off means in the sales".
- "I can see how much my baby weighs and know if she is putting on weight".

What learners think could improve:

- "Car parking is a problem".
- "Stairs are a problem".