

S&B Automotive Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 54235

Name of lead inspector: Maria Barker

Last day of inspection: 27 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. S&B Automotive Academy Limited (S&BAA) was renamed from S&B Training Limited in 2007. The company has operated as a work-based learning provider based in Bristol for 35 years. S&BAA delivers motor vehicle programmes funded by West of England Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It is a not-for-profit organisation. Surplus funds are invested in improving facilities and services. About 70% of the provision is government funded. The rest of S&BAA's provision is full cost recovery courses for the industry.
2. S&BAA operates apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes and has four learners on Train to Gain provision. This provision was not included in the inspection. Currently, 261 learners are apprentices and 132 are advanced apprentices. Very few are female or of minority ethnic heritage. About half of the learners on apprenticeships are from the South West, the rest are recruited nationally from major companies in the industry. Training at S&BAA's centre takes place in blocks of one or two weeks. Currently 268 learners are accommodated in 'homestay' families during the blocks. S&BAA offers courses in motor cycle and light vehicle maintenance to 14 to 16 year old school pupils.
3. S&BAA employs 50 staff, 10 of whom are assessors and 20 are teaching staff. In 2008 S&BAA appointed a quality manager for the first time. A board of directors oversees the financial management of the company. S&BAA aims to be the best national work-based learning provider of vocational learning in the United Kingdom.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to16	72 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	7 learners 535 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Area	
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of S&BAA's provision is good. S&BAA provides a good quality service to its learners, employers and other organisations. The leadership of S&BAA is excellent, with clear plans to improve provision further. However, leadership and management are good overall. The self-assessment process is good, as is the monitoring of the quality of provision.
- Resources at the training centre are excellent. The workshops and laboratories are very well equipped with industry-standard facilities. S&BAA offers a wide range of courses in motor vehicle training with very good progression opportunities after completion of apprenticeship training. Courses for 14 to 16 year olds are good. S&BAA provides good quality training by well-experienced and enthusiastic teachers. However, they sometimes pay insufficient attention to individual learning when planning lessons. Support from employers for work-based activities is good. S&BAA staff work well with employers to provide good training in the workplace. However, target setting in planning and reviewing learners' progress are inconsistent.
- Learners enjoy their courses and do well; advanced apprentices do very well. S&BAA has continued to improve the success of learners in achieving qualifications in the agreed time.

7. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory and are under review to ensure further improvement. Learners feel safe. They have a good understanding of health and safety in the workplace. S&BAA focuses well on meeting the welfare needs of learners. Equality and diversity are promoted appropriately at induction, although regular reinforcement during learner reviews and in training sessions is underdeveloped.

Main findings

- S&BAA has outstanding partnerships with employers, schools and other organisations to meet the needs of learners. Managers work well with employers to create and maintain good work placements. Courses for 14 to 16 year old learners include work experience placements.
- S&BAA has excellent resources at its training centre. Workshops and laboratories provide a high-quality learning environment with good levels of industry-standard equipment. Extensive computer-based learning and assessment materials are under further development but are not yet fully available to learners.
- Strategic management is excellent. S&BAA has clear ambitions to improve provision further. The Board of Directors carefully monitors financial expenditure to ensure that these plans are realistic and affordable. Leadership and management are good overall. Day-to-day management of the quality of provision is good and focuses on improving the outcomes for learners.
- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of advanced apprentices achieving their qualifications is very good and achievement by apprentices is good and improving. Achievement of key skills qualifications is very good. However, too few vehicle parts apprentices achieve their qualification.
- The range of learning opportunities and progression routes is good. S&BAA works very closely with employers to set up programmes that meet the needs of both learners and employers. Employers are flexible in arranging the jobs learners undertake to ensure they acquire the skills they need.
- The development of practical skills is good. Many third year learners work in the workplace by themselves or with minimal supervision. Block release programmes and 'homestay' arrangements develop personal and social skills effectively.
- Support for learners is good. S&BAA provides informal individual support for any learners needing additional help or guidance. Learners with identified additional learning needs receive good well-structured support. Many employers provide mentors to help and encourage learners at work. Learners are generally well supported by 'homestay' families.
- S&BAA has good procedures for evaluating the quality of provision. The self-assessment process is thorough and identifies the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision accurately. S&BAA has recently introduced comprehensive mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the provision.

- Teaching and learning are good. Learners develop good levels of practical skills in the workplace. Teachers use their substantial industrial experience effectively to enhance learning. However, lesson plans often do not state clear learning objectives for learners to achieve in the session. The planning of a variety of learning activities to inspire and challenge all learners is underdeveloped.
- Assessment and progress reviews are satisfactory. Assessment activity is appropriate. However, electronic portfolios for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are completed by assessors and are not used by learners sufficiently. Progress reviews in the workplace take place regularly with adequate employer involvement. The recording of information from reviews is insufficiently detailed and target setting is inconsistent.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Learners feel safe. Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are completed for all staff and 'homestay' families. Staff training in safeguarding is recent and it is too early to identify whether staff have an appropriate level of understanding. S&BAA is reviewing its safeguarding arrangements, particularly for 'homestay'.
- S&BAA has satisfactory arrangements to promote equality and diversity. All groups of learners are given equal opportunities to achieve their potential. The reinforcement of equality and diversity among learners is insufficient. Training on equality and diversity awareness during induction is appropriate. However, staff do not reinforce learners' awareness during sessions at S&BAA's training centre or in progress reviews.

What does name of provider/college need to do to improve further?

- Improve arrangements to reinforce learners' awareness of equality and diversity by including appropriate content in the block sessions and introducing more extensive checking of learners' understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews.
- Continue to review safeguarding arrangements and ensure that all staff have a good understanding of their role in promoting safeguarding.
- Improve progress reviews to ensure that specific, measurable and time-bound targets are recorded.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning through a stronger focus on learning in order to inspire and challenge all learners.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- working at their own pace
- the interesting programme
- developing good skills
- the good training at the centre

- good team-building activities
- good support from assessors and staff at the centre
- the excellent facilities at the centre
- being treated as adults.

What learners would like to see improved:

- better links between the workplace and S&BAA
- making the block content more relevant to work
- theory teaching, which can be boring
- the cost of food available at S&BAA's restaurant
- some 'homestays' are less good than others.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the whole package, including the facilities, 'homestay' arrangements and adaptable programme
- the comprehensive programme covering skills and knowledge
- learners gaining in confidence and competence
- the very good relationships with assessors
- the excellent relationship with S&BAA
- the presentation evenings to celebrate achievement
- S&BAA's really good help with recruitment.

What employers would like to see improved:

- communications relating to lateness and absence of learners

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. S&BAA has good capacity to improve its provision. Since the appointment of a quality manager, S&BAA has introduced improved arrangements for monitoring and evaluating its provision. For example, observations of teaching and learning are programmed for each teacher at least once a year. S&BAA aims to ensure that all teaching is good or better and provides appropriate support for teachers who do not reach the required standard. Observations of key processes, including induction and progress reviews, have been introduced recently to identify further improvements to provision.
9. The self-assessment process is thorough and identifies strengths and areas for improvement accurately. The resulting quality improvement plan is monitored rigorously on a monthly basis to check on progress against actions to be taken. Managers make good use of data to monitor progress and performance.
10. At the previous inspection, achievement rates were satisfactory. Both overall and timely achievements of apprenticeships have continued to improve and are now at least good. S&BAA identified the low achievement rate in vehicle parts operation apprenticeships through self-assessment and is taking appropriate action to improve outcomes.
11. S&BAA has a strong commitment to improving provision. Managers and staff are highly motivated and are actively working towards establishing an outstanding quality of provision.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Success rates are good and have continued to improve since 2006. To date in 2008/09, success rates for advanced apprentices are outstanding at 91% overall framework completion and 77% timely framework completion. Success rates for apprentices are good and improving. Achievement of key skills has improved considerably and is now very good. The success rate for vehicle parts operation apprentices is low at 46% in 2008/09; this group of apprentices represents about 10% of the total.
13. Progression of apprentices to advanced apprenticeships is good. A very high proportion of apprentices progress to advanced apprenticeships. On completion of the advanced apprenticeship, S&BAA offers training in specialist qualifications or management courses.
14. Good development of practical skills in the workplace is supported well by practical and theory training at S&BAA's training centre. Many advanced apprentices work by themselves in the workplace with minimal supervision. Learners improve their personal and social skills by working as part of a team in

the workplace and during their block periods at S&BAA, especially if they are in 'homestay' accommodation.

15. Learners feel safe in their workplaces, at S&BAA and at 'homestay' accommodation. Adherence to health and safety is very good in workplaces and at S&BAA's training centre.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

16. Learning resources at the centre are excellent. Workshops and laboratories provide a high-quality learning environment with good levels of resources and modern equipment to industry standards.
17. Teaching and learning are good. Learners acquire good levels of practical skills in the workplace. Teachers use their substantial industrial experience effectively to enhance learning. However, lesson plans often do not state clear learning objectives. The planning of a variety of learning activities to meet the needs of a range of learners' abilities is insufficient. A good range of computer-based learning and assessment materials is under further development but is not currently readily accessible to learners.
18. Assessment and review processes are satisfactory. Although assessments are appropriate, the electronic portfolios are completed by assessors and are not used sufficiently by learners. Reviews take place regularly with appropriate employer involvement. Information from reviews is not recorded sufficiently, for example target setting is inconsistent. Specific, measurable and time-bound targets are not always recorded.
19. The range of courses and progression routes is good. Many learners progress to further training on completing their apprenticeship. S&BAA works very closely with employers to arrange programmes that meet the needs of learners and employers. Employers are flexible in arranging jobs for learners to ensure they acquire the skills required of their NVQ.
20. Partnerships with employers, schools and other organisations are outstanding. Managers work extremely effectively with employers to ensure that learners are working towards qualifications relevant to employers' skills needs. Collaborative activities between S&BAA and national employers have resulted in the development of new, and particularly effective, learning programmes. Local employers are appreciative of S&BAA's recruitment activities. S&BAA has very effective working arrangements with local schools, offering provision for 14 to 16 year olds to 18 schools. These learners benefit from good progression onto apprenticeships and full-time education programmes. Excellent partnership arrangements have benefited learners, for example one national employer has contributed significant resources in vehicles and diagnostic testing equipment. Other organisations provide paint and tooling supplies. S&BAA has strong relationships with a local police force which provides motor cycles and vehicles for training activities. Police officers provide direct, innovative training activities for learners.

21. Support for learners is good. S&BAA's teachers and assessors provide informal support for learners needing additional help or guidance. Learners with identified additional learning support needs receive good support from a well-qualified teacher, both at the training centre and in the workplace. Most employers allocate learners to a mentor; these experienced technicians are keen to impart their high levels of knowledge and skills. Other employers designate individuals to help and encourage learners in the workplace. S&BAA celebrates the success of learners particular well through presentation evenings which formally recognise learners' success. S&BAA gives good support to learners during their training blocks at the centre by providing 'homestay' accommodation.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

22. Managers focus well on day-to-day management of the programmes and on improving the quality of provision overall. S&BAA has excellent strategic leadership with clear ambition to provide exceptional facilities and become an outstanding training provider. It has a detailed three-year plan to establish a pedestrianised training centre with excellent resources and facilities for learners, including a fitness centre. It has recently been successful in gaining capital funding from the learning and skills council to further this aim.
23. The board of directors maintains oversight of these plans and monitors financial expenditure carefully. S&BAA plans to increase the expertise of the board and to extend its activities so that it can monitor performance effectively.
24. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All staff and 'homestay' families have completed extended CRB checks. The designated manager has been trained to an appropriate level, as have other key staff. Training for the rest of the staff is recent. It is too early to identify whether staff understand their role in safeguarding learners effectively. S&BAA has appropriate policies and procedures to promote the safeguarding of learners. These are under review to assure S&BAA that it fully complies with requirements. 'Homestay' arrangements are monitored to ensure that arrangements to safeguard learners aged 16 and 17 are appropriate.
25. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. S&BAA uses data effectively to monitor recruitment and performance of different groups of learners. Currently, S&BAA has very low numbers of learners who are female or of a minority ethnic heritage. Efforts to recruit more learners from these groups have proved unsuccessful to date. S&BAA actively promotes recruitment from these groups through marketing activity. For example, it plans to use female learners in marketing activities to encourage more females to apply for training. S&BAA does not have any significant achievement gaps of different groups of learners. Learners identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities achieve as well as other groups. S&BAA has good arrangements to support these learners so that they can achieve their potential.

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26. S&BAA has a strong ethos of promoting equal opportunities to its learners and tackles any incidents of bullying and harassment immediately. However, it does not promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity sufficiently. Induction includes appropriate coverage of equality and diversity, but learners' understanding is not reinforced during training sessions or in progress reviews. Currently, learners are asked during progress reviews whether they have experienced bullying or harassment. However, learners' understanding of this and other aspects of equality and diversity are not explored.
 27. S&BAA has appropriate arrangements to engage with users of its services in supporting and promoting improvements to its provision. Regular learner and employer surveys are analysed and used to inform the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process is self-critical and promotes quality improvement effectively. S&BAA has introduced a learner forum to gain more detailed feedback. It is too early to identify the impact of this initiative.
 28. S&BAA uses its resources well and provides good value for money. Excellent resources are available at the training centre, partly as a result of contributions from employers. Staff and learners use a good range of learning resources, although learners do not yet have sufficient access to computer-based resources.

Information about the inspection

29. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from the range of programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

S&B Automotive Academy

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	393				393
Full-time learners		52			
Part-time learners					
Overall effectiveness	2	2			2
Capacity to improve	2				
Outcomes for learners	2	2			2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2				
How well do learners progress?	2				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a				
Quality of provision	2	2			2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
Leadership and management	2	2			2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	2				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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