

# Buzz Learning Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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## FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

### Context and focus of visit

Buzz Learning Limited (Buzz) is an independent training provider based in Ashington, Northumberland. Buzz contracts with the North East Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme. Buzz also has a sub-contract for Department of Work and Pensions programmes, which was not inspected during this visit. Currently 17 learners are enrolled on the E2E programme. Ninety-nine per cent of Buzz’s work is government funded. Since the last inspection Buzz has moved premises twice and now operates from one centre.

Buzz was last inspected in August 2008. Effectiveness of provision, capacity to improve, achievement and standards, quality of provision, leadership and management, equality of opportunity and the subject area preparation for life and work were all satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit, which include the two mandatory themes of outcomes for learners and self-assessment and improvement planning.

### Themes

#### Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effectively are self-assessment and improvement planning used to bring about improvements?	Insufficient progress
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At the time of the last inspection, the self-assessment process was good. It was informed by staff, learner and employer views and was critical and evaluative. Inspection findings matched most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified in the report. Following the last inspection, a post-inspection quality improvement plan was created. It has been used well to identify appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement identified. Progress against the plan is monitored but the monitoring is not scheduled or systematic. In some key areas insufficient progress has been made. A self-assessment report and quality improvement plan was produced in June 2009. An updated report was produced prior to this monitoring visit. The report contains some good analysis of the variations in outcomes for different groups of learners. However, the report is largely descriptive, insufficiently evaluative and critical and some key areas for improvement are not identified. Some judgements are insufficiently supported by evidence.

#### Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in improving outcomes for learners?	Reasonable progress
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Buzz has made reasonable progress in improving outcomes for learners. At the previous inspection outcomes for learners were satisfactory overall. In 2007/08 only 28% of learners achieved all the agreed objectives in their individual learning plan. In 2008/09 this improved to 48% and during this year achievement of objectives has

improved by 13 percentage points to 61%. The quality of the objectives and targets set for learners has improved, they are realistic and achievable. In the current year to date, the progression rate has improved and is satisfactory at 59%, a five percentage point increase from 2008/09. Success rates for Skills for Life qualifications were low at the time of the last inspection and at 41% remain low. As they progress through the programme, learners develop self-confidence, motivation and good vocational and personal skills. Most learners achieve short, work-related qualifications such as first aid and health and safety which help them progress. Buzz has started to carefully monitor the success of different types of learners and to devise strategies to address poor performance by some groups; however, it is too soon to judge the impact of this work.

Quality of provision

What progress has the provider made in improving the quality of teaching and learning? Insufficient progress

Tutors provide a supportive learning environment and generally make good use of praise to encourage learners who demonstrate a positive approach and attitude in lessons. Teaching sessions are carefully planned but they do not always meet the needs of all learners; insufficient attention is given to developing learners' previous knowledge and experiences when planning learning. In the weaker lessons there is insufficient variety in activities; learners spend too much time listening to the tutor, the pace is too slow and learners are too passive. Tutors do not always use directed questioning techniques effectively to check on learners' understanding. Learners become distracted and are not engaged in the activity, which leads to some disruptive behaviour. Learners enjoy participating in practical activities although on occasions the reason for the tasks is not made clear to them. Learners who complete tasks early are not always given extra work to challenge and develop their understanding and tutors rely too much on word searches to fill in the time.

What progress has been made in developing and improving the provision of Skills for Life training and qualifications? Insufficient progress

All learners complete initial and diagnostic assessments that identify the level at which they are working and specific areas for improvement. All learners who are assessed at working below intermediate level complete appropriate Skills for Life qualifications. Achievement of these qualifications remains low, with 41% of learners having achieved a qualification since September 2009. In February 2010 the pilot functional skills scheme in mathematics, English and information and communication technology was introduced. Outcomes from functional skills diagnostic assessments are used by the Skills for Life tutors to plan work for each learner. However, documents do not help learners to understand what it is they need to do and they do not find it easy to monitor their own progress. Learners benefit from an individual review every four weeks when they discuss progress against both their personal and course objectives and agree new targets. However, learners are not clear about how

the targets will help them to achieve their qualifications and pass their tests by the planned dates. New systems have been put in place to monitor learners' attendance in Skills for Life sessions and to deal more promptly with any specific issues. It is too soon to judge the impact of functional skills on learners' outcomes.

### Leadership and management

What progress has been made in improving quality processes to ensure that they drive continuous improvement? Insufficient progress

At the time of the last inspection, quality improvement processes were incomplete. New processes had been introduced but it was too soon to measure their impact. Learner feedback was collected but not used well to inform improvements. There was a quality calendar but no quality policy or quality strategy. Some quality improvement processes are now established and used well to inform quality improvements; for example, file audits and learner and employer feedback. However, the analysis of feedback is insufficiently systematic. The process for observing teaching and learning is established although staff carrying out the observations have not benefited from recent training. All tutors and trainers are observed at least every six months and the observations system includes initial assessments, training sessions and reviews. Internal lesson observation records do not clearly explain why a particular grade has been awarded. The documentation focuses the observer in recording the activities and there is insufficient focus on what learning has taken place. Aspects for improvement are not always identified to ensure that tutors develop their techniques to effectively encourage learning. Tutors feel well supported by managers and all have or are currently completing teaching qualifications.

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