

BTAL (UK) Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50809

Name of lead inspector: Tim Hanson HMI

Last day of inspection: 27 August 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: BTAL House
Laisterdyke
Bradford
BD4 8AT

Telephone number: 01274 668149

Information about the provider

1. BTAL(UK) Ltd (BTAL) was established in 1967. Initially it operated as an extension of the client companies and the employers' training organisation to provide engineering apprentice training. The merger of the former Keighley & District Training Association Ltd (KADTAL) business into BTAL has resulted in increased and more diverse business activity. BTAL operates from two sites, Bradford as the head office and Keighley as a satellite.
2. Sixty-five of BTAL's 80 member companies currently employ learners on work-based learning programmes who are working towards advanced apprenticeship or apprenticeship frameworks. Three local colleges deliver additional specific components required to achieve the framework requirements. BTAL was last inspected in 2006.
3. Currently 136 learners study programmes in the engineering and manufacturing technologies subject areas, and six follow refrigeration programmes in the construction and the built environment subject areas. Approximately 40 learners follow Train to Gain programmes across other subject areas through a subcontracting arrangement. Four training advisors supported by the managing director oversee the apprenticeship programme. The inspection focused on the engineering and manufacturing apprenticeships with other programmes being sampled. Fifty per cent of the organisation's business comes from government funded programmes contracted through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
4. Bradford Metropolitan District is the fourth largest metropolitan district in the country. Unemployment in Bradford in December 2009 was 5.6% compared with 4.2% nationally. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more GCSE's at grade C and above, including mathematics and English was 39.6% in 2009, eight percentage points below the national average of 47.6%. Eighteen per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - Craven College
 - Bradford College
 - Wakefield College
6. The provider provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - West Yorkshire Learning Partnership

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	38 Learners 142 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	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject area	Grade
Manufacturing and engineering technologies	2

Overall effectiveness

7. The overall effectiveness of BTALs' provision is good. The organisation has a good capacity to improve and provides high quality training programmes with good outcomes for learners. The large majority of learners achieve their qualifications. The majority complete well within their planned time. Learners gain particularly high levels of skills and benefit from the training taking place in technologically challenging workplaces. The quality of teaching and learning is good and the provision of training in the engineering subject area is good. Learners feel particularly safe. Excellent levels of attention are paid to health and safety in the workplace, and the arrangements for the safeguarding of learners are good. Learners enjoy and value their training. Leadership and management are good with highly effective strategies in place to ensure continued financial support for employers involved in the apprenticeship programme. The promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory with all staff formally trained. However, learners' understanding of equality and diversity, and safeguarding, are not fully reinforced at learner progress reviews.

Main findings

- Learners achieve well. The overall success rates for all apprenticeships is higher than the national average. This includes an impressive success rate of 100% for motor vehicle engineering apprentices. However, some learners do not complete in their planned time.

- The development of learners' skills is good. Learners quickly develop practical skills under close supervision and within a safe environment. Employers have detailed in-house training plans and very good resources which learners use to improve their skills. Many learners progress to higher certificate and degree courses. Learners' confidence, social skills, and self esteem increase as they become more skilled.
- Learners' individual programmes are well planned. All learners have individual training plans that meet the requirements of their specialist qualifications and their employers. Learners receive induction programmes through individual employers. However, the content of the induction programme varies in quality across the different companies.
- BTAL has very successful long-standing relationships with many employers who value highly the guidance they receive from BTAL in developing training plans to meet NVQ evidence requirements. BTAL has successfully developed specific skills programmes to meet accreditation requirements. Companies value the good support they receive in the recruitment and selection of potential apprentices.
- Learner understanding of company safe working practices and health and safety standards are continually reinforced and developed during the learner progress review.
- Learners are highly successful in the completion of additional courses. Many engineering students undertake additional NVQ units in addition to the framework requirement. In key skills, trainees work towards either higher levels than their framework requirements or extended key skill qualifications.
- Senior managers and directors provide good leadership and management. Strategic planning is strong, and is aimed at ensuring continued financial support for employers who provide apprenticeship opportunities. High standards of learning and skills are well promoted.
- Management of health and safety arrangements is good. BTAL works closely with companies to fully understand the apprentices' working environment. Strong reinforcement of health and safety is carried out by employers in the workplace. Advisors support safe working through direct observations and progress reviews. All apprentices feel very safe in their work places. Good arrangements are in place to meet safeguarding requirements.
- Self assessment is good. Benchmarking activities to ensure judgements are sound are carried out with similar providers, and the self-assessment process is fully inclusive with good contributions from external partners, learners, employers and staff.
- Arrangements for quality assurance are good. BTAL gathers regular feedback from learners and employers. Feedback from learners has led to improvements in many areas. The quality improvement plan is monitored and updated regularly. However, the quality monitoring of the work of training advisers is not sufficiently thorough.
- The management of subcontractors is good and their work is monitored closely. Service level agreements are in place and monitoring visits work to formal

agendas. Training issues are identified through regular programme review meetings and any problems are swiftly resolved. However, not all subcontractors ensure that learners complete within their planned time.

- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity, and safeguarding, are not regularly reinforced in learner progress reviews. The active promotion of programmes to under-represented groups is not currently taking place. All staff have completed refresher training on safeguarding and have attended recent training on equality and diversity.

What does BTAL need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates for motor vehicle and engineering apprentices through more rigorous monitoring and better support for learners. Ensure meetings with subcontractors focus fully on the completion of apprenticeship frameworks within the planned duration.
- Increase learner awareness of equality and diversity by developing detailed questions for use in reviews, which promote discussion and enable learners to show their full understanding of the topic.
- Improve the consistency of the induction programme by delivering the whole induction programme at the training centre.
- Ensure effective marketing and promotion of the programme to widen participation by women and minority ethnic groups. Learn from the best practice of providers who have been particularly successful with initiatives in this area.
- Introduce more formal systems for the workplace observation of training advisers by internal verifiers, with particular attention to assessment and review practice.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- to learn and earn at the same time
- moving around to different work areas in the factory
- the good support from the advisors
- gaining practical skills
- opportunities to progress to higher education
- the good advice on gathering evidence for portfolios
- meeting other trainees
- the good hands-on training.

What learners would like to see improved:

- not being taught college topics that will not be used in the company

- more electrical work in the electrical NVQ
- less electrical work in the engineering NVQ.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the responsiveness to their training needs
- the long association with BTAL
- always using BTAL as a first point of call
- frequent company visits by assessors
- the improved self confidence of Train to Gain candidates.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the quality of feedback from colleges.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. BTAL demonstrates a good capacity to improve. It has continued to improve success rates which are now all significantly above the national average. A good standard of training is maintained. Most issues identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Managers regularly review and improve resources and ensure staff development takes place. Quality improvement is informed by regular learner and employer questionnaires. Training staff look for improvement and share good practice at regular team meetings. Feedback from learners has resulted in positive changes to the provision. Regular reviews take place with subcontractors and issues raised are used as part of the quality improvement process.
9. The self assessment report is largely accurate in identifying the areas for improvement. The self-assessment process is fully inclusive and uses the views of external sources such as employers and benchmarking partners. Proposed grades were over-generous in three areas. The company's quality improvement plan is monitored and updated regularly to reflect the current situation.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Learners enjoy their learning and achieve well. They develop particularly good skills in the workplace. Learners quickly develop complex practical skills under close supervision within safe environments. Companies have detailed in-house training plans and very good resources which learners use to develop their skills. The standard of learners' portfolios is satisfactory and contains a variety of evidence, including digital photographs, engineering drawings and NVQ support questions. More academic learners progress to higher certificates and foundation degree courses and some progress to full degree programmes. Learners' confidence, social skills and self-esteem increase as they become more skilled. This is particularly true of Train to Gain learners. Success rates of 79% are high for advanced apprentices and exceptionally high at 100% for motor vehicle apprentices. Currently there is no significant difference in the performance of different groups of learners. However, some apprentices fail to complete their qualification within their planned time. The timely success rate for engineering apprentices is below the national average.
11. Many engineering apprentices undertake additional NVQ units in addition to the framework requirement. Where relevant, some learners study for site safety certification cards. In key skills learners work towards either higher levels than their framework requirements or extended key skill qualifications. BTAL offers programmes on team leadership to Train to Gain learners. These programmes are well received and enable learners to better perform their duties and enhance their confidence.

12. All companies providing apprenticeships are very safety conscious and most have in-house health and safety programmes. Close attention is paid to health and safety and all interviewed learners stated that they felt safe in the workplace. Learners' understanding of company safe working practices and standards are continually improved during the review process. The standard of internal house-keeping in companies is very high.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. Teaching and learning are good and the quality of subcontracted training is well monitored. Through highly effective target setting at reviews learners make good progress in developing their portfolios and collecting suitable evidence. Assessment practice is well planned, flexibly arranged to suit learners' needs and includes the setting of monthly targets. Train to Gain programmes are well structured and monitored by BTAL training advisors. Feedback from learners and employers is very positive. Team management courses contribute towards better team leadership and a more productive working environment. Induction to all programmes is completed on employers' premises but the content of the induction programme varies across different employer sites. Learner understanding of equality and diversity is not sufficiently reinforced in learner progress reviews.
14. Courses fully meet the needs and interests of learners and employers. In apprenticeship training, learners move around different sections in the workplace periodically to improve their skills and knowledge. In most cases different NVQ units are selected to meet individual and employer needs. Additionally, companies run in-house training for health and safety and specific training on using bespoke equipment. Employers identify that Train to Gain learners have increased confidence and greater safety awareness.
15. Partnership arrangements with local companies are good. BTAL has very strong and successful long-term relationships with its member companies. Many have used BTAL for their apprenticeship training for more than 20 years. The organisation helps companies develop apprentice training plans and competency statements to meet NVQ evidence requirements. They have successfully developed specific skills programmes for member companies. Examples include sign association NVQs units and various safety certification courses, enabling learners to work on various sites. Employers value highly BTAL's support in the recruitment and selection of potential learners for their apprentice programmes.
16. Support for learners is satisfactory. Assessors visit learners monthly in the workplace. Detailed targets are set and used as the basis for an assessment plan for the next visit. Recently BTAL has found new positions for learners who have been made redundant. Employers allow learners time for their portfolio work and also have appointed apprentices who have completed their studies as mentors for existing learners.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

17. BTAL has clearly-written and well-managed strategies. Finance generated from commercial activity is reinvested into the provision of the apprenticeship programmes to support employers' training costs. BTAL invests heavily in ensuring a skilled workforce is developed for the engineering sector. The organisation pays particular attention to succession planning for the future. Managers and directors develop and successfully apply very clear strategies. They use resources well to secure good value for money. Staff views and ideas are communicated to senior managers through regular team and management meetings.
18. The arrangements to monitor and review regularly the work of subcontractors are well managed. BTAL influences strongly the quality of training programmes through regular visits and formal review meetings. Comprehensive agreements provide good opportunities to monitor the quality of training. Many improvements made to benefit the learners' experience were in evidence and were highly valued by learners. For example, changes were made to the standard of teaching in one centre following concerns expressed by learners.
19. Safeguarding arrangements are good. BTAL places a high priority on the safety and well-being of its learners. Legislative requirements regarding safeguarding are met. Comprehensive safeguarding and bullying and harassment policies underpin safeguarding arrangements and a central register is in place. All relevant staff recently received an updated Criminal Records Bureau check. All staff have received formal on-line training in safeguarding with the designated person being qualified to level 2 equivalent. Arrangements ensure training staff have access to the local safeguarding agency both in and out-of-hours. The management of health and safety is good. All training staff have received formal training in health and safety. They work closely with employers to secure a safe working environment for learners. Comprehensive risk-assessments are carried out, and monitoring of health and safety is thorough and forms part of frequent learner progress reviews. Learners feel very safe. However, the wider aspects of safeguarding are not routinely covered in learner progress reviews.
20. Equality and diversity within BTAL are satisfactory. The strong culture of equality and diversity throughout the organisation is shown in the good awareness of staff who have all recently received formal training. Learners are aware of their responsibilities to others and the need to respect and value diversity. Policies for the key aspects of equality and diversity are hyper-linked on the company intranet to both the safeguarding, and bullying and harassment policies. Good use is made of data to monitor recruitment statistics and to measure the performance of different groups. Minority ethnic representation is low compared to the local population and no initiatives are currently in place to improve this. Although covered at induction, opportunities are missed at the regular learner progress reviews to reinforce equality and diversity.

21. Quality improvement arrangements are good. A wide range of feedback is gathered regularly and used to make improvements to the training programmes. BTAL has a very effective self-assessment process which is used as a foundation for quality improvement. The process for producing the self-assessment report provides good opportunities for staff, learners, employers and external benchmarking organisations to participate. A comprehensive and very well monitored quality improvement plan is produced as a result of self-assessment. Staff are aware of their areas of responsibility and all managers review progress on a regular basis. Managers use data to inform the self-assessment and quality improvement plan, ensuring that learner progress is a key focus of all reporting and planning. Internal verification practice is satisfactory and is enhancing learner progress well. However, there is insufficient monitoring of training advisors' practice in the workplace.

Information about the inspection

22. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Skills Funding Agency, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
BTAL (UK) Ltd

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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	180	180
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	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	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	n/a	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	n/a	
Quality of provision	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?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
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

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010