

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



6 December 2017

Mr Tony Hobbs
Managing Director
Baltic Training Services
Baltic House
Hilton Road, Aycliffe Business Park
Newton Aycliffe
Durham
DL5 6EN

Dear Mr Hobbs

Short inspection of Baltic Training Services Ltd

Following the short inspection on 8 and 9 November 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in February 2015.

This provider continues to be good.

The vast majority of learners and apprentices receive a very good quality of training that enables them to achieve their qualification aims. You and your managers use a range of high-quality technological systems to deliver training remotely to learners located in many areas of the country. A high proportion of learners are successful, and a growing number achieve distinction grades in the new standards-based apprenticeships.

You and your managers are developing and implementing strategies to reduce the number of apprentices who leave early and do not complete their qualification. For example, managers monitor the progress of learners identified as being at risk of leaving early, and they provide extra contact and support for these learners to help them to complete their training programmes.

You have also developed a very useful partnership with Remploy to enable apprentices to access mental health support services. Learners can also access support through a 24-hour helpline from a National Health Service trust.

You and your managers have taken appropriate action to address many of the issues and recommendations from the last inspection. In particular, you have gone to great lengths to improve the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics, and the observation of teaching and learning process is now more rigorous and supports teachers to improve.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders and managers have developed further the effective safeguarding arrangements seen at their previous inspection to maintain a positive safeguarding culture. Recruitment checks are thorough and minimise the risks of employing inappropriate staff in roles that involve working directly with learners. Managers maintain detailed records of these checks.

Staff have regular training on safeguarding topics to enable them to educate learners on how to stay safe, especially when online. Training includes topics such as identifying signs of abuse and grooming in young people.

The 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan are up to date and cover the relevant sources of risk and control measures. However, the risk ratings in the document do not reflect sufficiently the control measures introduced for each risk identified. In one case, the 'controlled' risk has the same rating as the 'uncontrolled risk'; in other cases, it is not clear how managers arrived at the rating.

Staff carefully document concerns raised by learners and refer concerns to other appropriate agencies when necessary. Assessors and tutors reinforce safeguarding messages to learners in review sessions. They check learners' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism at the start and end of a session, and record their responses.

Inspection findings

- Overall, achievement is high. A very high proportion of apprentices on advanced-level and higher-level programmes complete their programmes successfully within the planned time. However, apprentices on intermediate-level programmes in business administration and customer service achieved less well than apprentices on information and communication technology (ICT) programmes.
- Leaders and managers have made excellent progress in improving the quality of provision for English and mathematics. A high proportion of learners pass their functional skills qualifications in these subjects, and in ICT, at their first attempt.
- In 2016/17, a high proportion of adult learners on pre-employment courses achieved a relevant short-course qualification, and nearly half of the registered learners gained sustained employment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are very effective for nearly all learners. Assessors and employers work very well together to ensure that both on- and off-the-job training for apprentices is very well organised, managed and coordinated. The significant changes made to the management and delivery of the functional skills element of the programmes has had a significant positive impact. A dedicated manager for the functional skills provision has revised successfully the curriculum to offer all apprentices, including those who are exempt from the requirement to take qualifications, a range of relevant and often challenging activities designed to enhance their functional skills.
- The strong rapport between trainers, assessors and apprentices, and the

individual care and support that apprentices receive, both within group sessions and in individual reviews, foster a positive learning environment. This enables apprentices to build confidence and ask questions to deepen their understanding and improve their knowledge and skills.

- Leaders and managers have now put in place very effective quality assurance procedures. These are wide-ranging and thorough, and they provide leaders and managers with accurate data about the quality of the provision. Managers use and analyse this data very well to evaluate the quality of the provision. This enables them to pinpoint areas for improvement with precision. Managers take sensible actions to remedy any weaker aspects of the provision. They monitor these actions and their impact to ensure that improvements happen rapidly. However, the final self-assessment document does not capture sufficiently the effectiveness of self-assessment at the departmental and operational level.
- Leaders and managers maintain a rigorous and robust system of observations to analyse the strengths and weakness of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers ensure that all staff have effective action plans following lesson observations. Rigorous follow-up of these plans helps to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision.
- Tutors and assessors introduce learners to the concepts of British values very effectively in a half-day induction session. For adult learners on pre-employment training, trainers develop learners' understanding of these concepts further in taught sessions and through project work. Assessors monitor apprentices' understanding through monthly quality checks of review records. However, a very small number of apprentices struggle to articulate British values and their relevance to their work.
- Apprentices benefit from robust and comprehensive independent information, advice and guidance at the beginning of and during their programmes. This ensures that apprentices are on the right programme. It also raises apprentices' awareness of career progression possibilities and prepares them well for successful progression at the end of their programme. A very large majority of apprentices progress into full-time employment at the end of their apprenticeships.
- The monitoring of targets and individual objectives following apprentice progress reviews is now systematic and rigorous. Assessors and trainers now have more frequent contact with apprentices, and reviews take place every eight weeks. All apprentices and employers contribute to the review process. Managers have developed the curriculum with the aim of enabling apprentices to achieve distinction grades in the new standards-based apprenticeship format. Targets and objectives are appropriately challenging to ensure that apprentices demonstrate the required standard of work at distinction level. Managers also enable apprentices to access up to three qualifications from major, well-known international companies, and this has a significant impact on apprentices' future employability.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the provision in business administration and customer services is improved further so that a high proportion of apprentices complete and achieve their qualification
- self-assessment evaluates accurately the effectiveness of the quality assurance measures that are now routinely in place at an operational level
- all learners can clearly describe the relevance of British values both to themselves and in their workplace
- the risk ratings on their 'Prevent' action plan are clear and appropriate to meet the needs of the action plan fully.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Gardner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Four inspectors and the director of support services, as nominee, carried out the inspection. During the inspection, inspectors met with managers, employers and observed teaching activities, and met and talked to staff and apprentices in meetings and classrooms. Inspectors also reviewed a number of documents, learner files and records.