

INSPECTION REPORT

Business Training Solutions Ltd

19 January 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Business Training Solutions Ltd (BTS) is a small independent training provider located in Newbury which delivers training in the Berkshire area. The company started providing training and assessment services in June 2003. The two company directors are the only staff. In January 2004, BTS received approval from Berkshire Learning and Skills Council to access funding through the Free2Learn Employer Training Pilot initiative and under this initiative started delivering national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in administration. Shortly afterwards, BTS gained approval to deliver a teaching assistant qualification at NVQ level 2. The company has also delivered vocational assessor and internal verifier awards commercially since August 2005.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for quality improvement. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The provision in education and training is good.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Self-assessment was conducted well using feedback from learners and employers and discussion with other stakeholders. The report is generally accurate and feeds into a useful development plan. However, some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are, in fact, no more than normal practice and one key weakness is not identified.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** BTS is a relatively young organisation and is small, but the systems and processes that it has in place are thorough and effective.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BUSINESS TRAINING SOLUTIONS LTD:

- maintain high retention and achievement rates
- maintain the quality of provision
- implement arrangements to identify and meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs
- improve the promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Education and training			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Teaching and lecturing</i>		2	
Employer training pilot	12	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. Two inspectors spent two days inspecting the provision at BTS. Teaching assistant training provision was inspected and graded. At the time of the inspection there were only six learners on business administration programmes so this area of learning was not graded. However, evidence was gathered to support key findings and all aspects of leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	4
Number of learners interviewed	8
Number of staff interviewed	2
Number of employers interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **Retention and achievement rates are high.** On the level 2 teaching assistant NVQ, the retention and achievement rates for the 2004-05 intake were 87 per cent. All of the learners starting in 2005-06 are still on programme. In business administration, of the 33 learners who started the level 2 NVQ in 2004-05, 70 per cent achieved the qualification. All of the starters for 2005-06 are still in learning.

7. Teaching assistants apply their skills well in the workplace. Since starting the programme they are better able to anticipate the needs of teachers and pupils. They prepare more materials in advance and conduct appropriate background research. Teachers now share lesson plans with assistants on a regular basis. The teaching assistants have benefited from the opportunity to review and enhance their skills. They now demonstrate higher levels of confidence and have a better understanding of their roles. They work more productively and are more aware of teaching strategies. Many have extended their roles to work with a wider range of pupils. They benefit greatly from the opportunity to evaluate their role in the learning process. In business administration, employers and learners recognise an increase in confidence and skill levels which they attribute to the programme.

8. All learners produce a high standard of work in their portfolios, which demonstrates well their performance at work. Learners produce detailed statements which explain well their evidence. Their answers to questions about background knowledge are detailed and demonstrate high levels of understanding.

The quality of provision

9. Assessment practice is particularly effective. Assessment is thorough, frequent and planned well. Assessors demonstrate a very good understanding of the NVQ standards. Learners receive good coaching from assessors in portfolio design and the selection of a good range of evidence. Assessors ensure that learners have completed targets agreed in previous action plans and set challenging targets to ensure good progress. The observation of learners' performance is particularly good, being carried out unobtrusively. Assessors identify well the full range of competence that learners demonstrate. Feedback is clear and detailed and indicates well areas for further development.

10. Individual learning programmes are well designed. BTS analyses the skills of its learners well at the start of the NVQ and identifies individual learning programmes which build on and enhance their current level of skills. The company ensures that learners choose optional units that challenge and extend their knowledge. Most teaching assistants have chosen optional units that enable them to prepare for national priorities such as the development of literacy and numeracy and the use of information and communications technology in schools. In business administration, individual programmes reflect learners' work roles well. Although the programme is not designed to include formal training sessions, assessors provide effective individual coaching sessions where required.

11. Arrangements to identify and meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs are inadequate. BTS does not assess the literacy and numeracy skills of its learners. It has no arrangements in place with other providers to support the literacy and numeracy needs of its learners. Some learners find written assessments difficult and receive extra support. BTS acknowledges this weakness in its self-assessment report. It has recently identified tests to assess learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. It plans to use these at the next induction of new learners.

Leadership and management

12. Management of the organisation and programmes is good. BTS communicates well internally and with learners and their employers. Documents are well designed and

comprehensive. Meetings are regular and documented well with standard agendas. BTS manages time effectively and staff are flexible to the needs of individuals and companies. The organisation is held in high regard by learners and employers.

13. BTS manages its resources very effectively. Staff are very well qualified and experienced. Individual assessors allocate time to learners generously and hold regular and frequent meetings with them. Individual support for learners is good. Staff receive very effective, frequent and appropriate training which contributes towards good professional development. BTS operates its programmes to make effective use of employers' resources. Its management of information systems is also effective.

14. **Strong celebration of learners' success is a feature of this organisation.** BTS ensures good publicity for learners who achieve their NVQ. Well-publicised presentation evenings give public recognition to successful learners. Staff give particularly good encouragement and support to individuals during frequent visits. BTS ensures learners work in a healthy and safe environment. All learners enjoy the programme and feel they gain significant benefit from it.

15. **BTS has good procedures to ensure quality improvement.** Standardisation meetings take place regularly and are well minuted. Internal verification is good, with detailed feedback provided to the assessor. Assessment practice is particularly effective. Documents are well controlled to ensure they are consistent and up to date, and are completed accurately. BTS uses evaluation from employers and learners well to improve the programmes. It follows learners' progress carefully and provides additional support to learners when required.

16. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues is generally satisfactory. Understanding of equality and diversity issues and how these affect learners in their place of work now forms part of the NVQ. BTS has a suitable appeals policy. **However, the company does not sufficiently promote equality of opportunity.** It does not have complete and up-to-date policies and procedures. Equality of opportunity is not formally reinforced during the progress reviews and assessment visits or covered at the induction. Staff are not sufficiently aware of their responsibilities in promoting equality of opportunity.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good management of organisation and programmes
- very effective management of resources
- strong celebration of success
- good procedures to ensure quality improvement

Weaknesses

- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity

Education and training

Teaching and lecturing

Grade 2

Strengths

- high retention and achievement rates
- good application of skills in the workplace
- particularly effective assessment practice
- well-designed individual learning programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements to identify and meet learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs