

# Baltic Training Services Ltd

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Retail and commercial enterprise
- Preparation for life and work

## Description of the provider

1. Baltic Training Services Ltd (BTS) was established in 2008 to deliver work-based learning programmes in retail and commercial enterprise, and engineering and manufacturing technologies. BTS's head office is in Newton Aycliffe near Durham. In August 2008, the North East Learning and Skills Council (LSC) awarded BTS a Train to Gain contract followed by the North West LSC in September. BTS also delivers Train to Gain and skills for life provision with four partners: New College Durham, West Nottinghamshire College, Redcar and Cleveland College, and A4e.
2. Courses include national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in carry and deliver goods, and distribution, warehousing and storage at level 2, and skills for life programmes at levels 1 and 2. Currently 93 learners are on programmes, of whom 46% are male and 3% are from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds.
3. BTS is run by a managing director supported by a skills for life manager, a contract manager, an operations manager, a sales manager and an accountant, one tutor and seven assessors. Due to reductions in sub-contracted provision, the company has recently made 14 staff redundant.
4. County Durham is mainly rural with 12 main towns and 240 other small towns and villages, many of which are former colliery villages. The working age population is under-qualified and under-skilled compared with other parts of the country. Just 21% of County Durham's working age population has qualifications at level 4 and above, compared with 27% nationally. Unemployment rates across County Durham are above the national rates and include 46 disadvantaged wards. In 2006/07, 60.2% of school leavers achieved five or more GCSE grades A\*-C, which is below the national average of 62%.
5. Inspection concentrated on preparation for life and work, and retail and commercial enterprises as these represented the two main areas of activity.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject areas

Retail and commercial enterprise	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievements and standards are outstanding. The quality of provision is good. Leadership and management are good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity and safeguarding are satisfactory.

### Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. BTS has good capacity to improve. Success rates across all programmes are consistently high. Significantly reduced LSC contracts in 2009 resulted in a very difficult period for the company with 14 staff made redundant. BTS managed this well. Operational management is good and concentrates on fulfilling current contracts with outstanding outcomes for learners. BTS recognised a lack of rigour in their first self-assessment. Appropriate actions to remedy and improve future quality and evaluation processes are in place.
8. BTS has purchased a range of software tools and is working closely with the developers to ensure these tools meet BTS's needs as effectively as possible. BTS has made significant improvements to equality of opportunity arrangements, including training for all staff and better promotion to learners. The quality of assessment has been revised and improved. Staff responded well to internal and external feedback on the skills for life delivery model and completely revised it. Some quality improvement arrangements, however, are not yet fully established.
9. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report used for this inspection was BTS's first. Staff were involved in compiling the report, but it is not sufficiently inclusive of learner, employer and sub-contractor views. The report is comprehensive, but not sufficiently evaluative. Strengths and areas for improvement were highlighted, but were not always commented upon in the text or supported with evidence. Individual sector subject areas were not reviewed in the report. Inspectors' grades were higher than most of the report's.

## Key strengths

- Outstanding success rates
- Improved learner confidence and self esteem
- Courses particularly well tailored to meet the needs of employers
- Good operational management

## Key areas for improvement

- Underdeveloped skills for life strategy
- Insufficiently established quality improvement arrangements

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

10. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Self-assessment did not identify this. Overall and timely success across all programmes for 2008/09 is 97%. The overall success rate for retail programmes is 96% and the timely success rate is 94%. On skills for life programmes success rates are outstanding at 100%. Programmes develop learners' confidence and improve their self-esteem.

### Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

11. The quality of provision is good. BTS did not identify this through self-assessment. The planning for teaching and learning is good. Assessment practice is good. A thorough initial assessment process systematically identifies additional learning needs; however, take up for additional support is very low. The use of witness testimonies in retail and commercial enterprise is inappropriate.
12. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners well, as self-assessment broadly recognises. Learner satisfaction is high. BTS is good at meeting the needs of employers and key partners who speak highly of the provision.
13. Arrangements for support are satisfactory. Visits to learners are regular and frequent. Information, advice and guidance are generally satisfactory across all programmes.

### Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment did not recognise this. The operational management during a difficult first year of delivery has been good. Senior managers handled difficult decisions following reductions in funding very effectively and sensitively, minimising disruption to the learners' experience. BTS completely revised the skills for life delivery model to respond to concerns raised. This is now good. Weekly senior management team meetings very effectively review all key aspects of the business. Minutes are detailed and actions allocated to staff members. However, no timescales are included and the follow up to actions is not always recorded. BTS manages partnerships with employers, other local training providers, awarding bodies and sector specific organisations well.



15. The governance procedures are highly effective. A board member regularly attends the senior manager group meetings and provides good support to senior managers. The board member meets with individual senior managers to discuss their areas of responsibility. Bi-monthly board meetings with the group financial controller, two directors and the managing director, provide good guidance and direction to the organisation.
16. BTS provides good support for staff development. Many of the staff currently access a wide range of personal training and development activities. BTS funds some of this and allows time for staff to attend or complete the training. Staff are well-qualified; some with industry specific expertise and appropriate teaching qualifications. BTS provides good training for staff to achieve assessor qualifications. Resources are generally satisfactory and fit for purpose. Skills for life learners have good resources. Learners have access to the resources they need to complete their programmes successfully.
17. The strategic management and business planning process is satisfactory. BTS maintains a clear focus on the training areas they intend to develop in the future to create a more diverse training offer. A concise business plan for 2009/10 is in place and is effective in identifying key areas to manage in the short term. Financial targets are reasonable and linked to the current and planned contracts with established partners.
18. An effective staff appraisal system is in the process of being completed. The documents used are comprehensive, allowing staff to record and identify their achievements and successes as well as training and development needs. Detailed job descriptions for all roles include reference to equality and diversity and safeguarding responsibilities.
19. BTS has insufficiently well established quality improvement arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of provision. Self-assessment does not recognise this area for improvement. A number of quality systems have recently been introduced and it is too soon to judge their impact on the quality of provision. Many of the actions identified in the quality improvement plan have not yet been achieved. A quality improvement strategy is yet to be developed. BTS has piloted a new on-line quality system but this is yet to be introduced across the company. The quality-monitoring group does not systematically monitor action points. The group has met infrequently during the last year. BTS seeks learner and employer feedback, but does not systematically analyse or report on any changes made as a result. BTS has a system for observing teaching and learning but reporting on this to improve the quality of teaching and learning is not systematic.
20. BTS's equal opportunity arrangements are satisfactory as self-assessment recognised. Learners are treated with dignity and respect. An appropriate range of policies and procedures are in place. Some equality and diversity impact measures have recently been set, which senior staff monitor regularly. All staff have completed equality and diversity training. Induction arrangements satisfactorily promote equality and diversity to learners. Learner progress reviews

now use questions to further promote and reinforce equality and diversity to learners. It is too soon to determine the impact of this on improving learner understanding.

21. BTS currently meets government requirements in relation to safeguarding its learners. Its policy on safeguarding vulnerable learners is comprehensive. BTS has no policy for younger learners. At present BTS has no learners under the age of 18 and does not deliver training designed specifically for vulnerable groups. This may change and BTS is aware they will need appropriate criminal records bureau checks in the future. All staff have undergone safeguarding training and roles and responsibilities are clearly identified within the procedures.

## What learners like:

- The whole programme
- Doing literacy and numeracy
- 'Good opportunity to develop my skills while at work'
- 'Will help me get promotion'
- Knowledgeable assessors
- 'Good to get a qualification to take with you'

## What learners think could improve:

- 'Would like to have passed my maths'
- The amount of paper work at the start of the course
- More notice for the literacy and numeracy initial tests
- 'Mostly the course looked at things we already know and do'

## Sector subject areas

### Retail and Commercial Enterprise

Good: Grade 2

#### Context

22. BTS has 91 learners on retail and commercial enterprise Train to Gain programmes. Of these 43 are following carry and deliver goods programmes, 38 are following warehousing and storage programmes, and 10 are on other programmes. Females make up 54% of current learners although only 10% of the learners who have completed this year are female. So far this year 580 learners have enrolled. BTS employs seven assessors in this area. Many learners have considerable experience in their field and require little practical skills training.

#### Strengths

- Outstanding success rates
- Good planning for teaching and learning
- Good inclusion of additional learning opportunities
- Courses particularly well tailored to meet the needs of employers
- Very effective management of programmes

#### Areas for improvement

- Inappropriate use of witness testimony

#### Achievement and standards

23. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are outstanding. The overall success rate for retail programmes is 96% and the timely success rate is 94%. The lowest performing course, warehousing and storage, has a very high success rate of 93%. BTS also awards learners in-house certificates for specific additions to the programme such as taco graph operation. Learners previously not interested in widening their knowledge and skills develop an awareness of the value of training. All learners have a good understanding of health and safety.

#### Quality of provision

24. The quality of provision is good as are teaching and learning. Staff plan lessons well using an appropriate standard format. Good use is made of electronic presentations and slides are clear and follow house style. Worksheets and handbooks are clear and attractive. One room used for classroom-based activities is small for the numbers on some sessions and lacks natural light and ventilation.

25. Assessors succeed in gaining commitment from learners many of whom are initially resistant to enrolling on the training programmes. Assessors on carry and deliver goods programmes make effective use of learners' work, for example, deliveries, which sometimes last several hours, to make holistic NVQ observations, assess learners' knowledge, and provide assessment and instruction in related subjects not required for the NVQ.
26. Witness testimonies in learners' portfolios are not appropriate NVQ evidence. Many portfolios contain a similarly worded statement from each learner's employer stating that the learner is competent in the job, but this testimony does not identify specific occasions when the employer has observed particular tasks. Assessors complete learners' portfolios with insufficient learner involvement.
27. Comprehensive discussions with prospective employers result in well-customised learning programmes that meet each employer's needs. Effective scheduling of the programme fits employers' business patterns. Employers value the professional attitude of BTS staff.
28. Good use is made of additional learning opportunities to enhance the learners' experience. BTS has prepared a full range of courses leading to the new driver certificate of professional competence. Elements from these courses, such as tacho operation and safe and fuel-efficient driving, are included in the drivers' instruction even though the employer is not ready to include the whole course in the learners' programme.
29. BTS assesses learners' vocational skills and knowledge and uses the assessment to ensure the appropriate delivery of programmes to individuals. However, the result of this assessment and its planned effect on the learning programme are not recorded in individual learning plans. Classroom based activities are used to deliver significant parts of some courses. BTS has not devised alternative methods of delivery to facilitate learning when group sizes are small.
30. BTS informs learners about the proposed qualification and of their eligibility for the programme. However, there is little systematic advice to learners on alternative qualifications. Staff provide advice on progression when requested. BTS conducts an initial assessment of all learners' life skills. Learners receive the results of these assessments. Learners with additional needs in skills for life are encouraged to obtain additional support from appropriate specialist staff. Few learners take advantage of this offer. This support is available during the work hours of most learners and few employers are prepared to allow learners additional time away from their work.

#### Leadership and management

31. Leadership and management are good. The management of warehousing and distribution programmes is very effective. Following substantial reduction in staff, BTS deploys staff well to provide effective coverage of existing programmes and

prepare for planned growth. BTS involves all staff in decision-making and their views are valued. Following staff suggestions, BTS has introduced improvements, for example, in assessment strategies.

32. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Equality and diversity are included at induction. Questioning at learning reviews check learners' awareness of these issues.
33. The self-assessment process did not systematically analyse the views of learners or employers, and did not report on the area of learning in sufficient depth. Inspectors awarded a higher grade to this area than the self-assessment report.

## Preparation for Life and Work

Good: Grade 2

### Context

BTS offers literacy and numeracy for all learners enrolled on programmes. Due to the funding and timing of contracts, only two learners were enrolled on literacy and numeracy courses at the time of the inspection. In 2008/09, 314 learners achieved qualifications. The LSC has significantly increased the contract for 2008/09.

### Strength

- Excellent achievement
- Improved learner confidence and self-esteem
- Good assessment process
- Good monitoring and recording of learning
- Good management

### Areas for improvement

- Under-developed skills for life strategy

### Achievement and standards

34. Achievement and standards are outstanding. In 2008/09, achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications was excellent at 100% and all learners achieved within the required time. Learners gain improved confidence and self-esteem. They use their new skills to sustain employment and in some cases gain promotion. Employers identify that learners who complete courses develop their report writing and use numeracy to calculate distances, to a higher degree. Learners use their skills at work, home and in the community. Progression between levels is good. Standards of learners' work are high.

### Quality of provision

35. The quality of provision is good. Self-assessment did not identify this. Teaching and learning are good. Learners benefit from a range of activities including group, individual and paired activities to stimulate and promote learning. Literacy and numeracy courses have a strong focus on employability and on employers' and learners' aspirations. Tutors develop lessons to ensure they meet both the course criteria and the individual needs of learners. Support material is available for learners who complete tasks early to challenge their learning. Tutors give extra one-to-one support to learners who require it.

36. The assessment process is good. Learners have a detailed interview that looks at previous education and work history, followed by an initial assessment. A

comprehensive diagnostic assessment forms the basis for the development of the individual learning plan. Targets are constructed using terminology that learners understand, and that focus on learners' needs and aspirations. The individual learning plan is a working document where learners routinely record their learning and achieved targets.

37. The monitoring and recording of learning are good. Reviews of learning take place at the end of each learning session. As learners achieve their targets tutors sign these off and new targets are set. Learners receive detailed and accurate feedback on their progress towards their learning goals. Learners are able to identify where they need to address skills and targets. Learners' work is assessed and constructive feedback given in every session. Tutors routinely assess and mark homework, which is an integral part of the course. Tutors keep evidence to support achievement of targets with the individual learning plan.
38. Learners benefit from satisfactory individual support, including information about skills for work and pastoral support. BTS provides satisfactory advice and guidance to learners when they join a programme and throughout the programme. At induction, the interview identifies support needs and allocates support where appropriate. Teaching staff offer good individual support in classes. At the end of the course, all learners undergo an exit interview. BTS promotes the opportunity to develop literacy and numeracy. However, take up of additional literacy and numeracy support is low.

### Leadership and management

39. Leadership and management are good. Self-assessment did not recognise this. Curriculum management is good. Staff are highly qualified and experienced specialists, committed to developing the learner journey. Staff morale is high. Staff feel supported and are focused. Capacity to improve is strong. Staff development is good. The annual appraisal process identifies additional staff training needs. All staff can access national and local staff development opportunities. The team is enthusiastic and works closely together to take the provision forward. Communication is good using a range of methods. Sharing of good practice is routinely an agenda item at staff meetings. Good use is made of the analysis of data at company and individual tutor level.
40. BTS has developed strong and supportive partnerships. The opportunity for business support is good. Employer engagement and partnerships are good. BTS has worked with colleges, recruitment agencies and logistic companies to deliver skills for life. Employers facilitate the release of staff to follow their programme.
41. The skills for life strategy is insufficiently developed. Self-assessment did not recognise this area for improvement. The strategy shows the government agenda for skills for life. However, it does not sufficiently identify how BTS's strategy will encompass all areas of learning and all learners. An action plan is included in the



business plan. However, there is no independent action plan to show a whole organisation approach to skills for life.

42. BTS has engaged external support to develop the integration of literacy and numeracy across the provision. However, it is too soon to measure the impact. Quality arrangements are satisfactory and the observation of teaching and learning focuses sufficiently on learning with action points to develop practice. Internal verification of coursework is routinely planned. Course evaluations and learner feedback are beginning to inform programme planning. The self-assessment process is inclusive with learners and tutors; however, there is little employer involvement. BTS satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity and gives learners good opportunities to develop their potential.

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rate on work-based learning Train to Gain programmes managed by the provider 2008 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2007/08	overall	0	0%
		timely	0	0%
	2008/09	overall	487	94.7%
		timely	487	94.7%

NB there is only one year of data so analysis of trends is not possible

- \* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned
- \*\* Provider qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'
- \*\*\* Includes 'Train to Gain long course NVQ provision, but not 'Skills for Life'