

Inspection of West Berkshire Training Consortium

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

West Berkshire Training Consortium (WBTC) is a not-for-profit training provider and a registered charity, which has been operational since 1983. Since 2018, WBTC has been part of the Basingstoke College of Technology (BCoT) Group. Currently, there are just under 250 apprentices on programme, with around two thirds of apprentices aged over 19. Leaders offer apprenticeships in 27 different standards, with the main subjects being team leader/supervisor, teaching assistant, business administration and early years. Apprentices learn through a blended approach of face-to-face lessons and online learning. Leaders also provide education for 36 study programme learners, of whom nine have high needs. These learners follow programmes based around English, mathematics, personal development and work experience. Leaders currently work with six subcontractors, the two main subcontractors being Tigers Training Centre, based in Thatcham, and BCoT.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices and study programme learners, including those with high needs, enjoy their learning. They welcome the friendly, helpful and safe atmosphere that leaders and staff create at the centre. Apprentices build their confidence and resilience well as a result of the supportive teaching and help they receive from training consultants. Most apprentices quickly learn the skills that they need to be effective in work. For example, apprentices studying on the level 5 operations or departmental managers standard improve their confidence when coaching new employees. They learn how to deal effectively with difficult situations and understand how and when to apply different conflict models successfully when working with stakeholders. Apprentices studying level 3 business administration learn how to consider different leadership styles when leading on a project. Apprentices studying level 2 early years practitioner standard in subcontracted provision at Tigers Training Centre learn how to plan and deliver play activities for children in their care. Training consultants prepare apprentices admirably for their final assessments and as a result high proportions gain distinction grades. Most carry on with their employer after completing their apprenticeships, with a substantial proportion achieving promotion, increased pay and increased responsibility as a result of their learning.

Study programme learners and those with high needs, all of whom started their courses by being not in education, employment or training (NEET), develop a newly found focus on education as a result of the very high levels of support and care from staff at the centre. They learn in small classes where staff quickly make them feel welcome and at home, building their confidence substantially. Tutors help them change and improve their attitudes to learning and enable them to improve their life chances substantially. A high proportion of learners on these programmes move on to employment, apprenticeships and further learning as a result of their success at the centre.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a sensible, ambitious and well-planned strategy for their apprenticeships, study programmes and high-needs courses. They work closely with employers to identify apprenticeship programmes that meet employers' needs. Leaders work effectively with employers to plan apprentices' learning, using specialist subcontractors for their apprenticeship programmes if required. Leaders ensure that learners with high needs and vulnerable young people who are far from employment study courses that help them re-engage with education and greatly improve their life chances.

Leaders and staff have developed strong links with organisations such as local skills panels, the county council, the local enterprise partnership, local schools and colleges and employers, which they use to inform the curriculum. They use the information that they gather from these links effectively to engage study programme learners. For example, leaders work closely with the council careers and

participation officer and local schools to identify Year 11 learners at risk of becoming NEET. These learners then attend WBTC summer programmes to help them develop positive routines, improve their confidence and re-engage with learning before they move on to study programmes at WBTC.

Leaders check the quality of subcontracted provision thoroughly. Where they identify weaknesses, they act swiftly with subcontractors to strengthen the quality of provision. Leaders ensure that employers receive useful reports that enable them to understand the progress that their apprentices are making. Most employers rightly value the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices acquire during their learning, which makes them more effective employees.

Senior leaders support staff admirably. Almost all staff enjoy their work and are proud to work at WBTC. Although teaching staff improve their knowledge of their subjects through frequent training, leaders do not identify clearly enough specific weaknesses in teaching and learning or plan effectively enough to ensure that all staff continue to improve their classroom skills quickly.

Trustees, most of whom are relatively new in post, are suitably skilled and qualified. They receive appropriate training to help them understand their roles. They understand the aims and objectives of WBTC fully and contribute effectively to shaping the curriculum. Trustees understand their statutory duties well and hold leaders to account effectively to make sure that they meet their responsibilities. Trustees challenge leaders successfully to ensure that they quickly improve and strengthen the quality of their provision. Trustees know the strengths and most of the weaknesses of the provider.

Leaders and managers have designed a well-planned curriculum for their apprenticeships and study programmes which builds the knowledge and skills of most learners logically. For example, courses for learners with high needs include employability, personal development, safeguarding, English and mathematics, which gives them the skills and knowledge they need for their next steps. Team leader apprentices learn about self-awareness and resilience at the beginning of their apprenticeships before building on this knowledge to better understand others and develop effective communication and management strategies. Leaders have recognised that a few early years educator apprentices who start their studies in the summer term learn in a less logical manner, starting by learning about more complex elements of the course before understanding the value of play or how to undertake basic observations and assessment. This slows the progress that they make at the start of their course.

Training consultants coordinate on- and off-the-job elements of apprenticeships effectively to ensure that apprentices can apply their learning in the workplace quickly. Training consultants and tutors know their apprentices and learners very well. They adapt their support effectively to meet apprentices' and learners' personal and learning support needs. Most apprentices and learners with additional learning needs achieve in line with their peers.

Tutors and training consultants create a very calm and orderly classroom environment which enables learners and apprentices, including those with high needs, to learn effectively. Staff model professional behaviours and courtesy extremely effectively. They have very high expectations of what learners and apprentices can achieve and swiftly and successfully challenge any negative behaviours. As a result, learners and apprentices, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) apply themselves well to their classroom studies, engage productively in small-group work and discussion, listen to each other respectfully and take turns in conversation politely.

Most tutors and training consultants teach carefully planned sessions which engage learners and apprentices, including those with SEND, fully. Staff use their vocational expertise effectively to enthuse and interest learners. For example, in a mathematics lesson, tutors use practical tasks involving rulers, tape measures and a selection of boxes to help learners understand the practical applications of measuring volume. Training consultants improve teaching assistant apprentices' understanding of tolerance and human rights and help them understand how these apply to the rights of children through carefully set assignments.

Tutors and training consultants question learners carefully and assess them diligently to check what they understand. Staff correct any errors quickly. Training consultants give helpful feedback which enables apprentices to understand how to improve their work and inspires them to enhance their work further. Training consultants do not identify in enough detail spelling errors and common grammatical mistakes and consequently a small number of apprentices consistently repeat basic errors. Tutors patiently encourage reluctant study programme learners and those with high needs to contribute successfully to lessons and share their experiences. As a result, these learners improve their confidence quickly and become motivated to learn.

Learners and apprentices produce work of an appropriate standard. Pass rates for apprentices are high and, in subjects such as early years educator, customer service practitioner and bespoke furniture maker, very high proportions of apprentices gain distinction grades. Although a high proportion of study programme learners and those with high needs achieve their English qualifications, in the previous year too few achieved their mathematics or personal development qualifications.

Apprentices attend well. Leaders and managers recognise that many study programme learners and those with high needs arrived at WBTC without a good history of attendance in previous education. Staff ensure that these learners understand the benefits of high attendance. They encourage them to attend well and support those that struggle admirably and effectively. During their time at WBTC, almost all study programme learners and those with high needs improve their attendance substantially.

Tutors help study programme learners and those with high needs understand about topics such as healthy relationships, mental health and British values. For example, tutors discuss democracy in action to help learners understand about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Leaders and managers plan and run useful 'added value'

workshops for apprentices, employers and employees covering topics such as mental health training, time management, managing change, project management and first aid. Apprentices who take part in these sessions value their extra learning but too few apprentices attend these sessions. Although most apprentices can gain useful extra qualifications as part of their apprenticeships, study programme learners and those with high needs have too few opportunities to develop their interests and talents outside the vocational and academic curriculum.

Study programme learners and those with high needs benefit from supportive careers advice before they start at WBTC. They discuss potential career paths during their studies with well-trained tutors, which helps them make informed choices about their work experience and their next steps. Apprentices receive useful careers information from suitably qualified training consultants to help them understand about their options after completing their apprenticeships.

Leaders have not ensured that study programme learners and those with high needs benefit from visits and talks from employers to help prepare them for employment, develop their confidence and improve their knowledge of the world of work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that safeguarding staff are appropriately trained. All WBTC staff and trustees receive appropriate safeguarding training and update this training frequently. Staff record the small number of safeguarding concerns diligently and follow these up where needed. Leaders report frequently to trustees about safeguarding concerns.

Leaders recruit staff safely. During induction, staff teach learners about staying safe. Leaders ensure that appropriate filters are in place to stop learners at the centre accessing inappropriate material when online. Learners are safe both when in the WBTC centre and, for apprentices, when working with their employers, and know how to report concerns.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that study programme learners and those with high needs have more opportunities to improve their knowledge of the world of work and develop their interests outside the academic curriculum.
- Leaders should ensure that greater proportions of study programme learners and those with high needs achieve their mathematics and personal development qualifications to help them with their next steps.
- Leaders should ensure that more apprentices have opportunities to improve their personal development and to learn about topics which will help them thrive in modern Britain.

- Leaders should ensure that they check the quality of classroom teaching in greater detail, identifying any weaknesses carefully and rectifying these weaknesses quickly.

Provider details

Unique reference number	55308
Address	Consortium House 7 Cheap Street, Newbury RG14 5DD
Contact number	01635 35975
Website	www.wbtc-uk.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Liam Faughnan
Provider type	Not-for-profit training provider
Date of previous inspection	April 2017
Main subcontractors	Tigers Training Centre Basingstoke College of Technology Activate Learning Basingstoke ITEC First Intuition Reading Thatcham Research

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of training as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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