

# Bridge Training Limited

Independent learning provider

## Inspection dates

15–18 May 2017

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders and all staff very successfully transform the lives of young people who have previously had poor experiences at school or other major barriers to achieving their potential in the workplace or in further education.
- Senior leaders and managers have significantly improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by setting high standards for staff and providing them with a good range of staff development and support.
- The highly flexible and personalised curriculum ensures that learners develop at their own pace and make good progress, often from a very low starting point.
- Learners are motivated and optimistic about their futures as a result of their positive and practical learning experiences.
- Outstanding mentoring and a very good tutorial programme help learners take responsibility for their own actions and enable them to make informed decisions about their futures.
- Learners develop good work-related skills, achieve high standards in the workplace and are keen to develop new skills.
- Tutors provide good verbal feedback to learners but written feedback in a minority of vocational areas is too general to make it clear to the learner what they need to do to improve.
- Learners' attendance is improving. All staff work hard to reinforce the importance of punctuality and regular attendance. A small minority of learners continue to struggle to attend at the levels needed to be employable.
- The majority of learners make good progress in English and in their ability to use mathematics in different situations.
- Where learners are less confident, teaching staff do not sufficiently reinforce the links between the English and mathematics skills they develop in the classroom and everyday life or work.
- The setting of learning targets in the workplace is inconsistent and a minority of learners are unclear about the progress they make and what they have achieved.
- Observations of teaching and learning do not comment sufficiently on the progress learners make or the new skills they acquire.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Bridge Training Limited (Bridge Training) is an independent learning provider based in Gloucester. It was founded as a charity in 1989 and became a limited company in 2004. Bridge Training offers study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 in order to prepare them for further study, apprenticeships or employment. Most learners are on study programmes at level 1 or below with the remainder on level 2 programmes. The main areas of study offered include hairdressing and beauty therapy, motor vehicle, information and communication technology (ICT), health and social care and construction crafts.
- Bridge Training has around 115 learners aged 16 or above, of whom eight receive high-needs funding and six are over 19. Learners travel from across Gloucestershire and a very high proportion are from disadvantaged backgrounds, have very poor records of attendance, high levels of anxiety, have been subject to bullying or educated at home for long periods. Bridge Training also works with the local authority and schools to run courses for young people under 16 but this was not in scope for this inspection.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Tutors and support staff should maintain their focus on improving the attendance and punctuality of all learners and devise additional strategies to help those with the poorest attendance improve.
- Staff responsible for work experience should improve the setting and writing of learning targets so that learners and employers understand the targets set and that all learners know what progress they are making and what they have achieved in the workplace.
- Leaders and managers should further improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning by focusing their observations on the progress learners make over time, the standards they reach and the skills they develop. Developmental actions for staff should be clear and linked to the impact on learners.
- Tutors in vocational areas should improve the effectiveness of their recorded feedback so that all learners are clear about what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve further.
- All teaching staff should reinforce the links between English and mathematics skills and employment and everyday life, particularly for learners who lack confidence in using these skills.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders have worked relentlessly to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Leaders and managers are ambitious for their learners and set and receive high standards of work from them. Teaching and support staff have high expectations for all learners and they provide a good level of challenge; as a result, learners improve their confidence and develop resilience. Learners and staff respect and value each other. The calm and professional environment contributes to the significant improvements in learners' motivation and determination to succeed.
- The re-organisation of the provision and restructuring of the staff team and accommodation, along with prudent financial management, resulted in a provision that gives learners the highly supportive, personalised experience they need. The new members of the senior management team have increased their capacity to respond to the funding and educational challenges they face. Leaders make very good use of the skills and experience of established staff and recent appointments bring additional expertise and new ways of working to the teaching and support team.
- The performance management of staff is strong. Teaching staff have clear targets and understand their role in improving the provision for learners. Learning observations now have a stronger emphasis on the experience of the learner but still do not focus sufficiently on the progress that individuals make, their new skills and standards of work. Improvement actions for staff lack clarity and/or do not link sufficiently to learners' progress.
- The links and partnership working with employers, the local authority and voluntary and statutory agencies are very good. Bridge Training staff work very effectively with local authority officers to ensure that referred learners benefit from an appropriately personalised learning programme. For example, Bridge Training now works with elective home-educated learners in Years 10 and 11, resulting in these learners being better prepared and less anxious about returning to formal learning at age 16.
- The current self-assessment report provides a very thorough and accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Senior leaders use the views of staff, learners and other partners well to inform their self-assessment. Self-assessment judgements are now strongly focused on the impact of actions on the experience and achievements of learners.
- Leaders and managers make good use of data to monitor the overall quality of the provision and identify areas for improvement. Managers now analyse trends, and compare performance with previous years and the performance of different groups of learners. They use this information well to support the quality improvement plan and set ambitious targets.
- Learning programmes meet the needs of learners very effectively. The admissions team design individual programmes that help learners integrate back into education and overcome the high levels of stress and anxiety they have experienced. For example, many of the learners from the local Traveller community experienced bullying and intimidation during secondary school. As a result of sensitive and skilful tutoring and a well-managed learning experience the vast majority of these learners make good progress and develop

a positive attitude to education and training.

- The strategy to improve the management of behaviour across the company is very successful. The head of student services uses her excellent understanding of the needs of learners to devise effective approaches to help learners manage their own emotions and give them the confidence to seek help when needed.
- Mutual respect, tolerance and the valuing of all staff and learners are central to the work of Bridge Training. Learners come from a very wide range of backgrounds and educational experiences and respond very positively to staff expectations of them. Learners who previously felt discriminated against or suffered harassment flourish in the culture of support and high expectations that is fundamental to the work of Bridge Training.

### **The governance of the provider**

- Since the previous inspection the directors have established an advisory board. The board provides good scrutiny of the management and effectiveness of the study programmes. The board now holds senior leaders to account effectively and, as a result, management reports accurately reflect the work of Bridge Training and have a greater emphasis on the learners' progress.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have a very good understanding of the varied and complex needs of the learners. A significant proportion of learners have been subject to child sexual exploitation or domestic abuse; others have a history of poor mental health, self-harming or high levels of anxiety. Staff are very skilled at identifying any changes in behaviour that may indicate a learner is not safe; they know when to refer their concerns to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and they work successfully with other professionals to ensure that the most vulnerable learners are protected and supported.
- The current designated safeguarding lead deals very effectively with complex and sensitive safeguarding cases. She provides excellent support and guidance to colleagues, ensuring that decisions made are in the best interests of the learner.
- All staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. Learners know how to keep themselves safe online and protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have successfully supported staff to make considerable improvements in teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection and across the majority of the study programmes. Tutors demonstrate a firm commitment to ensuring that all learners make the most of their learning opportunities and develop good skills. They prepare them well for progression into employment or on to further study.
- Tutors in most subjects plan and implement learning well, taking into account learners' starting points. They use a wide range of strategies to make lessons interesting and

maintain learners' focus on the topics. Tutors develop positive relationships with learners; they know when they are experiencing high levels of stress or anxiety and set appropriate targets to develop high-level vocational skills levels and build confidence. For example, in level 1 beauty therapy learners delivered a detailed presentation on melanin linked to skin analysis and then skilfully related the learning to the client consultation procedure. Learners develop very good hairdressing skills such as colour and blow drying.

- The assessment of learning is good. Tutors have improved the way in which they assess learners and now use a range of assessment strategies according to when learners start, their learning barriers and their rate of progress.
- Written feedback and target setting for medium- and long-term targets and assessment are positive and have increased learners' involvement in learning. Verbal feedback is thoughtful and explains in detail how learners can improve. Staff set learners further work that builds on previous learning. Tutors' written assessment feedback in a minority of areas requires improvement. For example, comments on spelling and grammar within learners' folders do not help learners to know what they need to do to improve.
- The quality of English and mathematics teaching and learning is good. Leaders and managers work well with staff to improve their confidence in integrating functional skills and IGCSE qualifications into vocational elements of the study programme. For example, level 1 construction learners successfully demonstrated their ability to calculate the safe use of equipment through the division of time from minutes into hours. Tutors assess learners carefully, ensuring that those who are capable have access to qualifications such as English IGCSE. Tutors in the majority of lessons ensure that learners understand how the skills they learn in these subjects apply to their main qualification aim.
- Formal and informal learning support is very good, and in the best examples is exceptional. Leaders, managers and tutors quickly get to know their learners and work hard to provide a stable environment that rapidly breaks down barriers to learning. As learners feel safe, secure and less anxious they enjoy learning, develop new skills more quickly and take advantage of the learning and development opportunities provided.
- Learners are involved well in setting their own personal and social goals and quickly start to take responsibility for actions that will enable them to achieve them. Tutors and managers build strong and productive relationships with parents and carers; as a result, difficulties related to learning, attendance or relationships are quickly dealt with, reducing their negative impact on progress or achievement.
- Learners understand the importance of equality of opportunity and what it means to live in a diverse community. Tutors use local and national events to develop learners' understanding and relate this knowledge to employment where possible. For example, in beauty therapy learners explore how to develop their speaking and listening skills during the consultation process with a range of diverse clients.
- In the classrooms and workshops learners are actively involved in reviewing their progress and action planning, enabling them to see the progress they are making. However, the setting of learning targets while on work placements is inconsistent, and as a consequence not all learners can readily express what they have achieved and what progress they are making in an employment setting.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

- Senior leaders and teaching staff have made considerable progress in improving how learners behave, their consideration of others and their responsibility for decision-making. The atmosphere at both learning centres is calm and purposeful with learners keen to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. Learners respond well to being treated as an adult and are quick to reinforce this approach with new learners. Learners devised the conduct rules for classrooms and workshops; they react very positively to the trust placed in them.
- The outstanding mentoring and tutorial support makes a very strong contribution to how well learners develop employability, personal and social skills. The mentoring programme is highly effective in developing learners' ability to reflect on their own behaviour and the impact that inappropriate actions can have on other people. Learners show great insight into how they have matured and grown more confident. They feel they have a future as a result of their experience at Bridge Training.
- Learners are actively involved in developing strategies to manage their behaviour and feelings with a greater sense of control and purpose. The recently introduced points-based reward scheme motivates learners to achieve well, develop good and appropriate behaviour and play an active part in the life of Bridge Training. For example, learners have attended additional functional skills classes, helped keep the learning centres clean and tidy and improved attendance to gain points that they can spend on a wide range of leisure items or activities.
- Teaching staff help learners manage high levels of anxiety or improve levels of concentration very well. Highly anxious learners or those at risk of self-harming benefit from using a smartphone app that distracts them if they have urges to self-harm, helps them express feelings in a more positive way, suggests safe alternatives to self-injury and develops strategies for self-control. Other learners squeeze stress balls, listen to music or use gadgets to help them concentrate.
- The arrangements to ensure learners and their parents receive high-quality information, advice and guidance are good. All teaching staff have completed training in information, advice and guidance and use it well to encourage learners to think about their next steps.
- Learners develop very positive attitudes towards employment as a result of the excellent links with employers. A good range of employers visit Bridge Training to provide information, challenge learners' attitudes towards work, take part in mock interviews and attend the careers events. A good proportion of learners progress to employment because of links with these supportive employers.
- The good enrolment and induction arrangements give learners a clear understanding of what staff expect of them and the support available to help them work towards achieving their ambitions. Highly effective evaluation and planning identify clear starting points and individual learner support needs. The use of assessments to identify strengths and areas for development in English and mathematics ensures that learners work at the appropriate level and know what they need to do to achieve their functional skills qualifications.
- Attendance in functional skills sessions is improving and for many learners is good. Learners who start their programme midway through the year or have experienced disrupted education take longer to develop a high level of attendance compared with learners who attended Bridge Training in Years 10 or 11 or those who had a good record

of attendance at school. When learners miss their timetabled functional skills sessions or are reluctant to attend they receive additional one-to-one support and impromptu sessions during their vocational lessons to help them maintain their rate of progress.

- Many learners have experienced physical, emotional and cyber bullying or unwarranted attention during their time at school. At Bridge Training, they feel very safe, secure, respected and well supported by tutors, managers and in the workplace. Learners know how to keep themselves safe online and protect themselves from abuse, grooming, radicalisation and extremism. The regular reinforcement and practical approach to e-safety results in learners being more confident about how to manage their social media interactions and what to do if they have concerns about themselves or peers.
- The health and well-being of learners are a very high priority for staff. Tutors encourage learners to develop healthier lifestyles and provide practical support such as vouchers that they can exchange for healthy lunches in local cafés and bakeries. Where necessary staff offer practical support to enable learners to buy appropriate clothes for interviews or work experience.
- The majority of learners have a good understanding of, and apply, functional English and mathematics skills in work and everyday situations. A small number of learners, however, do not recognise fully how they can apply these skills to everyday life and the workplace.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- As a result of good pastoral support, highly personalised learning activities and the strong focus on preparation for employment, further learning or training, a high proportion of learners complete their study programme and achieve their main learning aim.
- The rate of achievement of vocational qualifications is good and improving, with nearly three quarters of learners achieving a vocational qualification. Learners value the opportunity to gain practical vocational skills and respond well to challenges. For a large number of learners this is their first significant achievement of a recognised qualification.
- Learners progress well from their programmes of study. The most recent destination data indicates that nearly three quarters of leavers progressed to further education or training, apprenticeships or employment. A large majority of this group gained sustained employment, many with employers who had provided work experience. However, those with a history of disrupted, erratic or non-attendance at school and those from Traveller families did not progress as well.
- Learners who complete their 12-week induction programme generally complete their study programmes. The good advice and guidance offered to those who left during the 12-week period ensured that over half of this group remained within education. Those who left early required therapy or a much higher level of support before they were ready to commit to education or training.
- Managers monitor the achievement of different groups of learners very effectively. Learners who have been out of formal education for long periods take the longest to adjust to working in groups and follow a formal educational programme and do not achieve as well as their peers. When home-educated learners start at Bridge Training in Years 10 or 11 their achievement is at least as good as other learners. The small number of learners with education, health and care (EHC) plans have very good levels of

achievement.

- Learners produce a good standard of work in many practical areas and especially in hair and beauty and in motor vehicle maintenance. In a motor vehicle servicing session, learners could clearly explain the process of changing oil in a vehicle and could follow servicing sheets and calculate capacities of oil required to complete the task. Employers speak highly of the vocational skills learners gain at Bridge Training, as well as the support that learners receive to enable them to progress towards employment.
- Learners make very good progress in developing personal, social and employability skills; however, the attendance of a minority of learners is still haphazard and does not meet the expectations of a working environment. Teaching and support staff work hard to devise strategies to improve the attendance of learners, particularly for those with unstructured lifestyles, medical conditions or poor mental health.
- Learners take pride in their work. They learn to respect each other and understand that inappropriate behaviour or a lack of commitment can severely restrict their chances of progressing into work or gaining further qualifications.
- Learners make significant improvements in their self-confidence and develop good speaking and listening skills, especially when dealing with customers and members of the public. The recent introduction of GCSE English and mathematics qualifications provides learners with the opportunity to gain qualifications that will help them become more employable or progress to a higher qualification.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	50827
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	210
Principal/CEO	Mr Mark Harrod
Telephone number	01452 411112
Website	<a href="http://www.bridgetrainingltd.co.uk/">www.bridgetrainingltd.co.uk/</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	58	10	39	9	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	8							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	none							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

### Inspection team

Nigel Evans, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Josephine John	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Paterson	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector

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