



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Babcock Training
3rd Floor
Cardiff International Arena
World Trade Centre
Mary Ann Street
Cardiff
CF10 2EQ**

Date of inspection: October 2014

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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Publication date: 04/02/2015

Context

Babcock Training is one of the largest work-based learning providers in the United Kingdom, holding a work-based learning contract in Wales for over 25 years. The provider delivers training programmes throughout Wales. Babcock's administrative office is in Cardiff, with most staff being home based.

In Wales, Babcock Training is currently working with 460 employers with approximately 1,047 learners on levels 2, 3 and 4 Apprenticeship programmes. Ninety-six learners are working towards Essential Skills in the Workplace (ESIW qualifications).

The provider does not sub-contract any provision to other providers.

The provider delivers the following work-based learning programmes across Wales:

- Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs);
- Apprenticeships (MAs); and
- Higher Apprenticeships.

It offers the following training routes:

- Hospitality;
- Active Leisure;
- Retail;
- Management;
- Customer Service; and
- Business Administration.

Summary

The provider's current performance	Good
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Overall, the rates at which learners attain their training frameworks are similar to those of other training providers. Unpublished data for the provider shows that rates are improving. Learners demonstrate good practical competence and theory knowledge.

Learners are motivated and enthusiastic about their training and many are keen to progress to the next level.

The quality of teaching, training and assessment is good. Assessors undertake regular effective learner progress reviews and assessment in their workplaces. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Learners benefit from good relationships with their assessors, who give them appropriate levels of support.

Learners benefit from good quality workplaces and on-line learning resources.

The provider's managers provide effective strategic direction. They set clear and robust targets for improvement and have good quality improvement systems and strategies in place to monitor current performance. The provider's systems and strategies are having a positive impact on the rates that learners achieve their training frameworks and other qualifications. These strategies are improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching, training and assessment.

Prospects for improvement

The provider's prospects for improvement are good because:

- learners' standards are improving;
- the provider has a clear vision for quality improvement, which is impacting on learners' standards;
- there is effective and clear communication across the provider and its key partners;
- there is a good degree of trust across staff and key partners;
- there is a high level of employer and learner satisfaction;
- learners demonstrate good practical competence and theory knowledge in their workplaces; and
- the provider has invested in good quality on-line learning and training resources.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the rates which learners achieve their training frameworks
- R2 Make sure that learners develop and improve their literacy and numeracy skills
- R3 Do more to promote and improve learners' understanding of the language and culture of Wales
- R4 Make sure that all assessors mark learners' work to a consistent high standard using the marking guide as a reference
- R5 Make sure that quality systems impact fully on raising the standards of learners' practical competence and theory knowledge

What happens next?

Given the adequate judgements, the link inspector will undertake a monitoring visit to assess the progress made by the provider with the issues identified by the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

In 2012-2013, learners attained their frameworks at rates close to the national average for work-based learning. Unpublished data for 2013- 2014 and the current year indicates that these standards are being maintained and improved despite the recession impacting negatively on a few learning areas, such as the retail sector.

Learners on Flexible programmes achieved their frameworks at rates above the national average. The number of learners completing their programmes late has been significantly reduced.

Learners attain their Essential Skills Wales (ESW) qualifications at rates comparable to the national average and at levels appropriate to their programme. Many benefit from the encouragement of the provider to complete their ESW qualification at a higher level than required for their framework. In 2012- 2013, over a quarter of learners completed their ESW qualifications at higher levels than those required by their frameworks.

Most current learners make good progress on their programmes. Most are able to demonstrate good theory knowledge and practical skills. Good initial assessment helps them to understand their basic skills levels and they are keen to improve their skills. They do this through a variety of literacy and numeracy activities during their training. Most learners understand the requirements of their individual learning plans (ILPs) and take responsibility for their own learning. Learners benefit from regular reviews and visits from their assessors. They work very well with their supervisors, employer and assessors to achieve the targets they have agreed.

Most learners' written work is well presented, contains a good range of tasks and portfolio evidence and provides evidence of improved literacy and numeracy skills for a majority of learners. However, learners' written work is not always marked effectively and learners do not always know what they need to do to improve their performance.

In spite of increased opportunities to use Welsh during their training, too few learners are maintaining and developing their Welsh language skills.

Most learners demonstrate good communication and interpersonal skills. They engage well in discussions with their assessors and employers and demonstrate a good understanding of their job role. Many learners have developed their confidence and are prepared to express their views and opinions well, even when being asked challenging questions by their assessors and employers.

Wellbeing: Good

Learners feel safe in their workplaces and are well supported by their supervisors, employers and assessors. They are aware of the support and guidance that is available to them and of whom to contact if they have a problem.

Learners participate in a thorough and comprehensive induction to their training programme. They demonstrate a good understanding of health, safety and wellbeing within their workplace. Learners are aware of the importance and benefits of having a healthy lifestyle, eating healthily and improving their fitness.

Most learners enjoy their training programme, are highly motivated and display good levels of enthusiasm towards their training. Learners demonstrate good behaviour, and work well with their employers, who are very supportive of them. Most learners have developed good relationships with both their assessor and their employers.

Most learners are involved in the setting and agreeing of assessment targets, which assessors track and monitor closely. Learners demonstrate good verbal communication skills during discussions with assessors, employers and customers. A minority of learners complete additional qualifications, such as food hygiene, to gain a wider range of skills. These additional work-related qualifications and knowledge help learners in their current and future work role.

A majority of learners are actively involved in community and charity events organised by their employers. These include fund raising for a Christmas party for local pensioners.

Many learners improve their communication skills and self-confidence, and develop good social skills. They develop good team-working skills by taking on extra responsibilities within their workplace.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The provider delivers a good range of training programmes that meet the needs of learners, employers and the community across Wales. They offer good progression opportunities from level 2 to level 3 programmes and have recently introduced the Higher and shared Apprenticeship programmes in hospitality. The provider works effectively with multinational companies to deliver training programmes that provide learners with good opportunities for career development during their training. The provider uses labour market information (LMI) effectively to develop programmes in response to industry needs.

Assessors and tutors use the results of learner initial assessment outcomes well to plan training and identify additional support needs of individual learners.

The provider has a clear literacy and numeracy development programme for the improvement of the skills of learners. It uses a wide range of good quality electronic learning resources through the 'knowledge' system that learners and staff access.

However, trainers and assessors do not always make effective use of naturally occurring opportunities to develop learners' skills, for example when reviewing written work and checking grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Trainers and assessors integrate Essential Skills into the main programme of study well and many learners make good progress in achieving these qualifications. Learners on level 2 programmes undertake ESW qualifications at a higher level than their framework requirement as appropriate to meet their ability. However, learners on the level 3 programmes do not have enough opportunities to extend their skills to a higher level.

The provider is making appropriate progress in developing the learners' knowledge of the language and culture of Wales. The introduction of the Welsh language booklet and 'phrase of the month' are useful learning resources. However, not all tutors and assessors make effective use of these valuable resources. Only a few trainers and assessors provide learners with opportunities to fully develop and improve their Welsh language skills.

The provider promotes Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) well. Learners complete work on ESDGC during their induction period and in their vocational and skills sessions. The 'topic of the month' discussion paper is an effective way of challenging and extending the learners' understanding of important current issues, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) conference and the Scottish referendum election.

Teaching: Good

Assessors and trainers have good subject knowledge and industry experience. They use this well to plan their training sessions and give learners good levels of personal support. In most cases, assessors use the results of initial assessment well to inform the planning of training activities. Essential skills trainers effectively support learners identified at initial assessment as requiring additional support with literacy skills.

Almost all assessors are developing learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Assessors give learners good verbal feedback on the quality of their written work and what they need to do to improve. However, the written feedback given by assessors is too variable and the provider's marking guide is not consistently used by all assessors.

Most assessors use a good range of training methods and resources effectively. A comprehensive range of learning resources is available to assessors and learners on the provider's website. Assessors support these resources well with their own training materials in order to complement the learning styles of their learners. In the majority of sessions, the level of pace and challenge is good. However, in a very few sessions, the pace does not allow enough time for learners to reflect on their learning or for the assessor to test learners' understanding of the topic.

Assessors and trainers regularly discuss ESDGC with learners to develop and test their knowledge. In most cases, ESDGC is integrated well into training and learner progress review sessions.

Assessors support learners well so that they can improve their knowledge and understanding and achieve their qualifications. They have high expectations of their learners, and motivate and encourage them to succeed. Assessors encourage learners to improve their performance and agree their targets for improvement.

Most assessors use an appropriate range of questioning techniques in order to test and check the knowledge of their learners. However, in a very few cases they do not use questioning effectively to test learners' understanding and knowledge.

Assessors carry out regular reviews in order to check learners' progress and to set realistic and challenging targets for improvement. Assessors plan assessments well and make sure that learners benefit from the good assessment opportunities in their workplaces. Assessors keep detailed tracking documents that are effective in recording the progress made by individual and groups of learners. The relationship between assessors, learners, and employers is very good. Employers are routinely involved in the planning of training and give learners good support in the workplace.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provider puts in place good arrangements to promote the health and wellbeing of its learners. In the 2014 Learner Voice Wales (LV) survey, 70% of learners rated this aspect of their training as very good.

There is a comprehensive induction programme that provides essential information on a broad range of work and life topics. The programme is supported well by clear policies and procedures such as those on bullying and harassment and safe use of social media. Learners have easy access to helpful on-line resources including those on debt, stress, and healthy eating. Most use these resources regularly to develop their understanding and knowledge and give them a better understanding of what to do if they have an issue.

The provider works effectively with employers to promote attendance and punctuality, which are generally good.

Learners receive a good standard of impartial information, advice and guidance throughout their programme. The provider has helpfully designated assessors as advice and guidance champions. They signpost learners well to other organisations for further specialist support. On-line learning resources offer useful additional information on careers guidance and any relevant legislation to ensure that learners understand their rights.

The provider successfully promotes a culture of safety, and learners feel safe at work. The provider has effective procedures in place to identify vulnerable learners at an early stage. It signposts these learners quickly to specialist advice and support so that they get the help they need. The provider deals robustly with the very few incidents of bullying.

There are clear safeguarding policies and procedures in place. Staff understand these well. There is a well-trained designated safeguarding officer and all assessors receive mandatory safeguarding training as part of their induction.

The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The provider pays good attention to supporting learners with additional learning needs. For example, it has trained all its assessors in 'Learning Coaching'. They work very well with learners and employers to remove any barriers to learning.

There are effective arrangements to screen learners' essential skills needs. Learners who need it receive good additional support from essential skills tutors and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners receive satisfactory support. As a result, a majority of learners who have essential skills needs on entry to the programme go on to achieve their qualification.

Learning environment: Good

The provider has effective equality, diversity and inclusion policies, procedures and training in place through a number of on-line resources, which have been recognised with the award of the Investors in Diversity Standard. Responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff access regular opportunities to refresh their knowledge through mandatory training, which is rigorously monitored. All new staff undertake comprehensive training as part of a well-structured induction programme.

A strategic Diversity Group, supported by comprehensive on-line resources, share the latest information and resolve issues. The provider effectively collects, analyses and evaluates data on equality to monitor how well learners from vulnerable or minority groups progress in their learning. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of the complaints and appeals procedures.

The provider uses a good range of questionnaires and surveys to gain feedback from learners and its partners. It uses this feedback well to improve the quality of training and the learner experience.

While there is a bespoke module in the learner induction workbook on equality, diversity and inclusion learner understanding in a minority of cases is limited.

Most learners work in good quality workplaces. These working environments provide good opportunities for learners to develop their practical skills and theory knowledge. They benefit from good workplace supervisor and employer support. Workplaces give learners good opportunities to undertake a wide range of assessments and to complete industry related tasks. However, in a few cases, progress reviews and discussions between learners and their assessors are undertaken in open access public areas, for example hotel bar areas and fitness gym reception and refreshment areas where background disruption can present a barrier to effective communication at busy times.

Assessors are equipped with a comprehensive variety of resources, enabling them to give learners good levels of support. These resources include computers, specialist computer software and digital recording media.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?
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Good

Leadership: Good

The provider's regional manager is responsible for the management of the work-based learning contract in Wales. He is supported well by a range of managers who give effective support and challenge regarding the Wales region's performance. These senior managers give clear direction and guidance to their staff. The provider has established a staff structure that clearly identifies responsibilities, with clear lines of accountability. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. The provider uses a set of well-established values, aims and strategic goals to support the delivery of its work-based learning contract.

Managers demonstrate a comprehensive and clear understanding of the provider's performance and what they need to do to secure improvement. They have developed appropriate strategies and clear targets for the continual improvement of the learner experience.

Communication across the provider is good. Most staff are home based and receive a wide range of information relating to all aspects of the provider's activities. Managers use regular one-to-one meetings with assessors and trainers to monitor the performance of learners and assessors robustly against targets.

The provider uses management information and data well to measure and challenge all aspects of performance against an appropriate set of key performance indicators. Managers collect and analyse performance data regularly and know how well they are performing in comparison to their targets and other training providers.

The provider uses robust staff performance management procedures to review the performance of its trainers and assessors. Training staff receive good levels of support from managers to help them improve their performance. Performance reviews are linked appropriately to continual professional development activities.

The provider effectively uses a wide range of information technology for the delivery of training and for the collection, analysis and review of management information. Managers and assessors use this technology well to collect comprehensive and robust data relating to setting and monitoring of learners' progress.

The provider has responded well to local and national priorities for education and training. It contributes well to a wide range of local and national initiatives. Managers and staff are involved in local and national activities, including the Sector Priority Funding shared apprenticeship scheme and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW).

Improving quality: Good

Overall, the provider has effective quality systems that support the process of monitoring performance and bringing about improvement. Most systems and procedures are detailed and robust, and they support learners well through their training programme.

The provider has focused on key areas that include improving achievement rates in Hospitality and Catering, learners achieving essential skills at higher levels, and increasing timely completion rates. All these areas have shown significant improvements. However, overall performance has remained at an adequate level for the last three years.

The provider has developed an effective approach to self-assessment. The self-assessment process involves all staff and uses a wide range of evidence and views in making accurate judgements.

The self-assessment report (SAR) is comprehensive, addresses the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework and identifies targets for improvement well. The SAR is sufficiently evaluative in many sections. However, there is an overuse of the word 'excellent' when making judgements, which does not accurately reflect the performance of the provider. The SAR links well to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which addresses areas for improvement. Action plans have clear, ambitious and realistic targets. The provider monitors the QIP appropriately.

A number of well-structured systematic processes support the review and evaluation of staff performance. The provider analyses the results from these processes well to provide good development support and appropriate training for staff. However, the provider does not have an effective system in place to monitor the impact this process has on improving the quality of teaching and assessment.

The provider's system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning contributes well to improving the quality of teaching and learning, sharing good practice and identifying areas for improvement. However, records of a few observations do not contain clear actions for improvement.

The provider uses a range of methods to gather information from learners including the Learner Voice (LV) questionnaire and more detailed internal questionnaires. Overall, the provider makes effective use of LV results. It performs higher than the work-based learning benchmark on almost all aspects of the survey. However, not all learners are aware of any improvements or actions taken as a result of the LV survey.

The provider uses a wide range of meetings well to review, evaluate and improve the quality of provision systematically. Meetings include national board meetings, regional management team meetings, quality team meetings, staff meetings, staff development sessions, internal verification meetings and standardisation meetings. Overall, the range and structure of meetings are appropriate for the organisation and they provide effective lines of communication within the organisation.

Partnership working: Good

The provider has developed strong and effective partnerships at a strategic and operational level with a wide range of partners. These partnerships include regional and national employers ranging from large multi-national organisations to small medium enterprises.

The provider works well to develop high levels of trust with all partner organisations and works closely with employers to widen opportunities for learners. They have successfully established a number of dual branded training programmes that meet the needs of learners, employers and local industries well. These programmes effectively embed the ethos and values of the training provider and the employer.

In partnership with employers from the hospitality and retail industries, the provider has successfully developed a number of training academies. The Academies have a positive impact on learners' experience and nearly all learners on these programmes develop high levels of technical skills. The Academies meet the needs of employers well, addressing skill gaps, improving retention and providing very good opportunities for learners to progress.

The provider has strong representation at professional network events and sits on a number of steering groups. These work well with other training providers in sharing best practice, and providers have improved their working practices as a result of these collaborations. They are currently working with the Welsh Government and National Training Federation Wales on a number of initiatives including 'lean improvement', the reducing paperwork project and the development of the work-based learning wellbeing hub.

The provider has worked on a number of projects to deliver and develop training in relation to national priorities and key strategic drivers, including an employability programme working alongside the Prince's Trust.

Partnerships with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are very effective and well developed. As a result, the training provider is currently delivering two new apprenticeship programmes as part of the Sector Priority Fund Pilots. These apprenticeships respond well to industry skill shortages and improve opportunities for employment in the leisure and hospitality industries.

The provider works effectively with Careers Wales, further education colleges, schools and other training organisations to promote and raise awareness of vocational work-based learning routes, available to 14 to 19-year-old learners.

The provider's operating procedure and quality assurance framework illustrate a comprehensive and consistent approach to partnership working and delivery of qualifications. The provider works effectively with employers to agree the most suitable frameworks for delivering and reviewing these at regular intervals.

Resource management: Adequate

The provider has a clearly defined operational structure in Wales, well supported by national specialist functions, which enhance the quality and effectiveness of all training programmes.

The provider uses key performance indicator (KPI) data well, analysing performance in detail and monitoring this against the performance of other providers. These include monthly financial performance, completion rates by learning area, staff to learner ratios and staff key performance levels against targets. These reports are

effectively used to review the focus and allocation of resources, processes and procedures, to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of learners and assessors fully.

The provider has a clear and structured human resources (HR) staff recruitment and development policy, which ensures that shortlisted applicants are tested for standards of literacy and numeracy. Any shortcoming in this area may not prevent them from gaining an interview or employment should their skills match be positive, but it will signpost an immediate training need. The provider operates an effective mentoring scheme for new staff. Line managers frequently accompany new staff on assessments and reviews.

The provider uses a robust and comprehensive induction programme for all new staff. This includes a number of e-modules covering mandatory topics that new staff need to complete before they become active in their new job role. Within the induction programme, health and safety training is delivered in the context of lone working. The induction programme is tailored to suit individual assessor needs. The provider has a comprehensive range of high quality online learning resource materials. The 'Big Learn', which covers all the mandatory induction modules, including health and safety, welfare and safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion, is a particularly comprehensive resource. Currently, the provider does not make all of its documentation and promotional material available bilingually.

Nearly all assessing staff have completed training for embedding Welsh into their delivery. Most have completed preparation to teach in the lifelong learning sector (PTLLS) qualification and around half have completed the level 3 Essential Skills Practitioners award, with a similar number having completed the level 4 Certificate in Education in Training. A significant number of trainers and assessors are currently being trained as learning coaches. Staff have good access to a wide range of continual professional development opportunities.

The adequate outcomes for learners mean that the provider gives adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner satisfaction

We use the outcomes of the Welsh Government Learner Voice survey to inform all of our inspections of post 16 education and training. Learner Voice is a learner satisfaction survey conducted by the Welsh Government between January and February 2014.

The survey asks learners a range of questions about the following key themes:

- the information, advice and support provided to them;
- provider responsiveness, learning environment and student wellbeing;
- the quality of teaching and training; and
- overall satisfaction.

Each theme contains a range of questions requiring learners to rate their providers performance. There are 28 questions overall.

Four hundred and ten learners completed the survey.

Seventy-five per cent of respondents rated the provider as very good overall. This is 13 percentage points higher than the sector average of 62%. A further 23% rated the provider as good overall. Fifty-one per cent of respondents thought that their course was better than they expected. This is above the sector average.

The provider achieved higher scores than the sector average for very good ratings in all five themes of the survey. In relation to the theme of health and wellbeing learners rated the provider to be 14 percentage points above the sector average of 45%.

The provider achieves scores for 'very good' that are above the sector average across most of the 28 questions in the survey. Overall 99% of respondents considered teaching and training to be 'very good' or 'good'.

The survey also analyses learners' responses by demographic information, gender, age, ethnicity and disability. In general the provider achieves higher 'very good' scores than the sector average across all but one key demographics for each question.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Mark Evans	Reporting Inspector
Stephen Davies	Team Inspector
Bernard Hayward	Team Inspector
Rachael Bubalo	Team Inspector
Vanessa Morgan	Team Inspector
David Gordon-Cranmer	Peer Inspector
Jennie Hire	Peer Inspector
Paul Robinson	Peer Inspector
Alma Noelle Williams	Peer Inspector
Sharon James	Peer Inspector
Mike Kent	Nominee