



**A report on**  
**Quality Skills Alliance at Cardiff and Vale College**  
**Colcot Road**  
**Barry**  
**CF62 8YJ**

**Date of inspection: June 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:

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

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

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**Publication date: 01/10/2014**

## Context

Cardiff and Vale College Apprenticeships (CAVCA) is the consortium lead for the Cardiff and Vale College Consortium, which is branded as the Quality Skills Alliance. The consortium is a collaboration of a further education college and a number of work-based partners. These are:

### **Consortium members**

- Cardiff and Vale College
- BEST Limited
- Focus On
- Newport and District Group Training Association (NDGTA)
- Coleg-Y-Cymoedd

### **The sub-contractors:**

- Brothers Constantinou
- JTL
- JGR Training
- Welsh School of Pharmacy
- Kaplan Financial
- Bosch Automotive Services
- WBTA
- BEMA
- Care Credentials Wales
- Smart
- IETA
- Cyfle
- Skillnet
- More Training
- Safe and Secure
- S&B Automotive
- Remit Group
- Cardiff City Football Club
- Cunningham Lindsey

The consortium offers learners training programmes in Foundation Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Steps to Employment programmes. Learners can choose training from occupational sectors such as:

- Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care;
- Arts, Media and Publishing;
- Business Administration and Law;
- Construction, Planning and the Built Environment;
- Education and Training;
- Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies;
- Health, Public Services and Care;
- Information and Communication Technology; and

- Retail and Commercial Enterprise.

At the time of inspection, the consortium has 2,000 learners following training programmes. The consortium delivers training programmes across the region, with many apprentices clustered around the Capital and the Vale of Glamorgan region. In these areas, approximately 65% of the population are employed in full or part time work. Nine per cent of working age people do not have any qualifications and 15% of the population speak Welsh.

## Summary

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>The provider's current performance</b>       | <b>Adequate</b> |
| <b>The provider's prospects for improvement</b> | <b>Good</b>     |

### Current performance

Overall, the rates at which learners attain their qualifications and achieve the targets set out in their individual learning plans have improved and are adequate. In the period 2011 to 2013, the consortium has improved learner outcomes.

Leadership and management have significantly improved. The consortium has made good progress in setting and establishing a clear strategic direction for the delivery of its work-based learning contract. The consortium's strategic direction has a sharper focus on improving learner outcomes and is well supported by clear values and aims. Quality assurance procedures and processes and the collection and use of performance data have improved. The consortium has significantly strengthened its partnership arrangements with its sub-contractors. The consortium and its sub-contractors give adequate value for money.

### Prospects for improvement

- Senior managers have set a clear strategic direction for the consortium;
- data management and collection systems have significantly improved;
- there is a clear focus on improving learners' attainment rates;
- the consortium is using standardised processes and procedures more consistently across the consortium;
- communication between consortium partners and sub-contractors has significantly improved;
- the consortium is using improved quality assurance processes and procedures; and
- the consortium partners are working together effectively.

## Recommendations

- R1 Further improve the rates that learners attain their training frameworks
- R2 Continue to improve the consistency of teaching and assessment
- R3 Make sure that quality systems fully impact on the drive for raising standards for all learners
- R4 Make sure that all sections of the self-evaluation report clearly identify any shortcomings and the actions required for improvement
- R5 Do more to embed literacy and numeracy into training programmes
- R6 Further integrate the culture of Wales and ESDGC into training programmes

### **What happens next?**

Three inspectors will visit the provider in 12 to 18 months' time to undertake follow-up activity, which will review the progress the consortium has made against the recommendations left at the time of the re-inspection.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

#### Standards: Adequate

Since the last inspection of the consortium in 2012, the standards that learners achieve across the consortium have improved. Overall, in the period 2011 to 2013, the rate that learners successfully achieve their frameworks is showing an upward trend. In 2012 to 2013, the overall success rate for learners was around the national comparator for work-based learning.

In 2012 to 2013, learners on Apprenticeships and Foundation Apprenticeship programmes achieved their frameworks at rates very slightly below the national comparators. In this period the number of learners who completed their training programme later than their expected end date was too high. While the overall success rate was around the national comparator, learners in a number of learning areas achieved their qualifications at rates below the national comparators.

In 2012 to 2013, success rates on Traineeship, Work-focused and Flexible learning programmes varied from significantly above to significantly below the national comparators. However, the majority of these programmes were not offered in 2013 to 2014.

Learners successfully achieve their Essential Skills Wales qualifications at rates comparable to the national averages and at levels appropriate to their training programmes. A few learners, particularly on Foundation Apprenticeship programmes, achieve Essential Skills Wales qualifications above the levels expected for their frameworks. The consortium's unpublished data for the current year, 2013 to 2014, indicates a further improvement on overall success rates from 2012-2013.

Most learners make good progress on their current programmes and demonstrate good levels of practical competence and theory knowledge. Most learners understand the requirements of their individual programmes and take responsibility for their learning. They benefit from regular reviews and work productively towards the assessment targets they are set. A minority of learners benefit from agreeing targets that help them to focus on short-term learning goals as well as their longer term assessment targets.

Learners' work is generally well presented and accurate with correct spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriate to their level of training. Most learners are developing their literacy skills through their programmes and many receive feedback on their written work to help them improve. However, a minority do not benefit from consistent assessment on how to improve their literacy skills, either through specific short-term targets or through feedback on written work. A minority of learners use numeracy skills well as an integrated part of their training programme.

Almost all learners demonstrate speaking and listening skills appropriate to their level of training. They engage well in discussion with their trainers. Generally, learners are confident and able to express their opinions and views well.

The consortium has very few learners who choose to undertake their training or have their assessments through the medium of Welsh. A few non-Welsh speaking learners make significant progress in improving their Welsh language skills whilst on their training programme, for example through bilingual learning in a nursery environment. A minority of learners regularly consider the Welsh language or the culture of Wales through their workplace reviews or other learning.

### **Wellbeing: Good**

Nearly all learners feel safe in their workplace and when undertaking off-the-job training. Learners demonstrate a good knowledge of health and safety on and off-the-job. Nearly all learners are happy on their programmes and feel more confident as a result of their training. Most regularly discuss and review their own welfare and health and safety with their assessors and trainers. Many develop their understanding of healthy eating and lifestyles and in a few cases make changes with their employer to improve their working environment, for example through changes to working patterns or canteen facilities.

Nearly all learners participate well and engage fully with their training. Most learners develop good relationships with their employers, peers and trainers. Nearly all feel well supported on their training programmes. Learners are positive about their training and its impact on the quality of their work and their future prospects. Most learners are keen to progress to higher levels of training.

Nearly all learners have good opportunities to feedback any concerns or comments about their training programmes. This is undertaken through their trainers, the consortium's web-based comments box or, in a very few cases, through learner representatives.

A few learners actively participate in community and charity events through their training programmes. For example, a trainee hairdresser works with her salon to prepare the models for a charity fashion event. Engineering learners produce parts for sailing boats used by a disability charity. Learners from the consortium are strongly encouraged to take part in local and national skills competitions and have been very successful in several categories of the Wales and UK Skills competitions.

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| <b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b> |
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|-----------------|
| <b>Adequate</b> |
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### **Learning experiences: Good**

The consortium delivers a wide range of programmes, which meet the needs of employers and learners well. Programmes are available in all learning areas, at different levels and often with a choice of location. Employers give learners good levels of support in the workplace. Most employers are kept well informed regarding the progress their learners are making. Learners' career development opportunities

are enhanced in some learning areas through the provision of membership of professional bodies such as the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) and by completing a wide range of additional qualifications. Many employers value the work of the consortium in helping them to train new staff. The consortium is responsive to employer needs and as a result has developed new courses in specialist areas, such as child minding and air conditioning repair and servicing.

Initial assessment results are recorded in learners' Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). The consortium has developed and is implementing a standard approach to marking learners' written work. However, a minority of assessors do not agree challenging short or long term targets with learners for the improvement of their literacy and numeracy skills.

In many cases, assessors agree appropriate targets with learners for the collection of portfolio evidence or the completion of assessments. However, in a few cases targets are not specific or challenging enough. The consortium has developed a partnership wide approach to the marking of learners' written work. However, the consortium's marking guide is not consistently used by all assessors, who miss opportunities to contextualise literacy and numeracy into learners' work.

The consortium routinely collects data relating to the level of learners' essential skills and the individual learning support needs when they start their training. In most cases this information is used well and helps assessors to give appropriate and timely support to learners.

The consortium and its sub-contractors work well together to provide individual support for learners. For example, one sub-contractor was able to quickly access good quality support materials for a learner with Asperger's Syndrome from another consortium member.

Across the consortium, bilingual champions collaborate well to share good practice and promote the language and culture of Wales. However, a minority of trainers and assessors miss opportunities to develop learners' Welsh language skills during training and assessment activities. Currently, across the consortium, there are not enough opportunities for Welsh speaking learners to complete course work assessments and essential skills in Welsh.

The Consortium has introduced a detailed topic booklet for training staff and assessors to use as an ESDGC aide-memoire during employer visits. Assessors and trainers across the consortium use the booklet well to develop learners' understanding of ESDGC. Across the consortium, ESDGC is not consistently integrated into learners' work and trainers and assessors do not embed ESDGC into training activities consistently across the consortium. A few assessors and trainers miss opportunities to broaden learner knowledge and experiences during workplace reviews and assessment visits.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

Since the last inspection, the consortium has implemented a number of strategies to improve teaching and assessment, such as setting up an assessment and monitoring

working group. These strategies are starting to have an impact on the learning experience and improve teaching and assessment across the consortium.

Almost all teaching and assessment staff plan a wide range of off-the-job and on-the-job learning experiences for learners. The consortium has implemented a standard scheme of work and lesson plan template for staff across the consortium to use. The lesson plans make reference to where essential skill opportunities can be delivered. Generally, teaching and assessment staff have clear objectives for taught sessions or assessment in the workplace. They use a range of teaching and training methods to engage learners and encourage them to work in groups or on individual activities.

Resources for training and teaching are generally of a good quality. Many of these resources are well presented, colourful and easy to read.

Tutors and assessors check learners' work for accuracy and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, they do not always give learners constructive written feedback about how they can improve their work.

Almost all teaching, training and assessment staff have up-to-date knowledge and skills. Assessors use their industrial knowledge and expertise well to provide learners with high level skills appropriate to their job role. Assessors have a good rapport with their learners and employers.

Assessment of learning has improved. Assessors plan assessment activities well. NVQ portfolios are well presented and contain a wide range of evidence. Many assessors and training staff encourage learners to take responsibility for setting targets and completing their NVQ portfolio work; this has led to an improvement in the number of learners completing their qualifications on time. However, targets are focused on completing NVQ units and not learning specific skills. Often, targets are set for the end of the training programme. Assessors do not always set targets for literacy and numeracy. Almost all assessors give learners formal written feedback to help them improve and make progress. However, this is not consistent across the consortium partners and sub-contractors.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The consortium promotes health and wellbeing well. It uses appropriately the Learner Voice survey of April 2004 to analyse learners' views of work based learning through the consortium. A total of 1,483 learners participated in this survey, which is 10% above the Welsh Government target for participation. Responses from learners show that the support they receive has improved upon the previous year.

Extensive information and advice for all learners is contained in the detailed booklet 'QSA Monthly Key Themes' that is used across the consortium. This guide gives learners a wide range of information that is relevant to their training programme. It includes clear explanations of important issues such as global citizenship, safeguarding, equality and diversity, Welsh culture and financial matters. The information is divided clearly into monthly key themes and gives trainers and assessors good resources to plan and deliver their sessions more effectively.

Learners access good opportunities to discuss these themes in the regular reviews of their learning.

A common induction programme is available for all learners as an e-induction on the new Cardiff and Vale College web site. It contains useful information for learners and is easily accessible through the internet and through the Cardiff and Vale College Moodle web site. This process is relatively new, and the success of the approach has not yet been measured.

Learners have a wide range of specialist services available to them to support their learning, including those with dyspraxia or dyslexia needs. However, in a very few cases, learners' support needs have not been met appropriately.

The consortium has established improved systems and structures to monitor and ensure that all partners, including sub-contractors, offer appropriate specialist provision, information and advice to learners. Quality officers review all partners regularly to make sure that there is an appropriate and consistent range of information and guidance for all learners, as part of their new quality monitoring system.

The Director of Quality and Learner Journey leads a team of Quality Officers to make sure that all learners receive consistent and appropriate levels of service, wherever they are undertaking their training across the consortium.

Since the last inspection, the consortium has focused well on improving safeguarding arrangements for learners. The consortium has an established overarching safeguarding policy, supported well with the safeguarding policies of all individual partners. The consortium has a designated safeguarding officer, and each partner has a nominated safeguarding officer.

The quality team monitor safeguarding issues through their regular visits to partners, and safeguarding incident reports are appropriately recorded centrally by the lead provider by the Head of Quality. Incident data is recorded appropriately in the safeguarding database, and also reported to the CAVCA executive team and the Quality Standards Board. The consortium's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Learning environment: Good**

Since the last inspection, the consortium has developed an overarching equality and diversity policy that is used by all partners. The consortium effectively promotes a clear ethos of equality and diversity, for example through employer factsheets and material celebrating diversity on the consortium's website.

The consortium uses a good range of methods to make information about equality and diversity available to staff and learners. For example, an online training event for assessors has taken place, a quiz on equality and diversity for learners with a prize, and a booklet containing key equality and diversity terms.

The consortium has made progress in developing systems to monitor the recruitment and achievement of learners from minority groups and has engaged a Community Development manager to work with black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The data that is collected is reviewed and analysed during regular meetings between quality officers and consortium members.

Most learner workplaces are of a good standard and provide learners with good opportunities to develop their practical skills and theory knowledge. Learners have good opportunities on-the-job to undertake assessments and collect a wide range of portfolio evidence.

Partners across the consortium have a good range of resources for learners and trainers to access. Off-the-job training is generally in good quality classrooms and workshops, with access to good quality information and communication technology and other specialist equipment.

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| <b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b> | <b>Good</b> |
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### **Leadership: Good**

Since the consortium revised its consortium and sub-contractor partnership in 2012, it has made good progress in setting and establishing a clear strategic direction for the delivery of their work-based learning contract. The consortium's strategic direction has a sharper focus on improving learner outcomes and is well supported by clear values and aims. Consortium and sub-contractor partners are working well together, further developing an ethos of trust and support. The consortium's Strategic Board has been effective in making sure that there is equality between partners, with the result that partners share a common ethos of continual improvement.

The consortium's management structure is clear, with a senior manager having overall responsibility for the consortium's work. Management roles, responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined across the consortium. The consortium Strategic Board contains senior management representation from each consortium partner. The board has a sharper focus on collaborative working and learner standards. It is well supported by the Operational Board, which has clear aims and targets relating to key aspects of the consortium's work.

The consortium demonstrates a strong commitment to improving learner standards and performance. There has been an improvement in procedures and practices across the consortium and this has resulted in an improving trend in the rates that learners achieve their frameworks and other qualifications. However, the consortium is still working to ensure consistency across all aspects of its work.

The consortium has strengthened its focus regarding the importance of accurate and timely data relating to learners' performance. It now collects and analyses data regularly and knows how well each consortium and sub-contractor partner is performing. This information is readily accessible to consortium member staff.

However, not all the information relating to learner performance is available to sub-contractors.

Communication across consortium partners and its sub-contractors has significantly improved. A comprehensive range of regular meetings is effective in sharing information across partners. Staff at all levels across the consortium and its sub-contractors demonstrate an improved awareness and understanding of partnership and the benefits it has to offer. For example, the consortium has undertaken consortium-wide staff training and identified and shared best practice across partners.

The consortium has responded well to local and national priorities for education and training in Wales. It contributes to a wide range of Welsh Government initiatives at local and national level. Managers across the consortium are involved in local and national bodies that include the local 14-19 network and the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW).

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

Following the last inspection there have been significant changes in the composition of the consortium and its sub-contractors. This consortium has taken the opportunity to develop and improve its arrangements for quality monitoring and improvement.

The consortium has undertaken improvement at almost every level of its quality assurance procedures. All consortium partners have been effectively involved in improving documentation and practices. For example, they have identified and shared good practice and refocused quality teams to undertake monthly visits to partners and undertake small scale mock inspections.

There is more robust use of data across the consortium. It has developed and uses innovative reporting charts to show performance trends. The charts are part of a comprehensive reporting process used at monthly quality and performance meetings. Throughout the consortium, there is an improved culture that strives for continual improvement with a firm focus on learner performance. However, quality improvement has yet to impact significantly in all areas of the consortium's work. For example, the peer observation process has yet to be fully developed and strategies for the delivery of ESDGC and the language and culture of Wales have yet to be fully embedded in all training programmes.

The consortium has improved its processes for self-evaluation and action planning and has focused well on the recommendations from the last inspection. However, the SAR is too descriptive and lacks evaluative comment regarding the impact of development activities.

The consortium has improved its processes for listening to learners and employers. It has made good use of the Learner Voice (LV), where there has been good improvement in learner responses from the previous year. However, the consortium remains below the national average in relation to most learner responses. The consortium has further developed a very wide range of other arrangements to listen to learners, for example online questionnaires and suggestion boxes, focus groups,

eight weekly reviews and discussion between learners and assessors or training co-ordinators. The consortium uses an appropriate range of other questionnaires for securing the views of learners and employers. The consortium makes good use of the 'you said we did' process to report back to learners by using poster displays.

The sub-contractors and consortium partners have addressed the majority of the recommendations from the last inspection.

### **Partnership working: Good**

Since the last inspection the consortium has undergone significant change to its structure and organisation. A number of partners have left, a few existing partners are now sub-contractors and new sub-contractors have joined the consortium. With 24 providers now in the consortium the re-organisation has been undertaken effectively. The consortium has made good progress and has put in place good partnership management and working procedures that are clearly understood by all partners. All partners across the consortium demonstrate a greater understanding of the benefits of partnership working. They share a clear ethos of partnership working and work in an open and transparent way.

Relationships with partners across the consortium have significantly improved. All partners work well together under a clear strategic direction. Across the consortium, communication has significantly improved and is good. Managers and staff share a wide range of information relating to the performance of the consortium and the sharing of documentation and best practice. Although the partnership is developing well, there are inconsistencies in areas of its work, for example inconsistencies in the quality of training and assessment across the consortium.

The restructuring and strengthening of the consortium's management team and its more focused approach to promoting the benefits of vocational training have improved external relationships. The consortium has developed improved working relationships with other organisations and improved its working with employers. For example, the number of employers that the consortium is now working with has risen by nearly 300 over the past 18 months.

The consortium works well with other training providers. For example, the consortium has developed especially good links with another training provider to make sure that their traineeship learners access good progression opportunities into work-based learning or further education with the consortium. It also works well with employers in meeting their training needs. For example, it undertakes work with the financial services sector, where it is leading in the delivery of apprenticeship training in this growth sector.

### **Resource management: Adequate**

Since the last inspection, the consortium management have improved financial planning and contract arrangements across all members. The plans clearly link funding to provider performance. Funding for staff training has been effective in raising learner outcomes across many of the training programmes. Managers across

the consortium use internal and external benchmarking data appropriately when redirecting resources to improve underperformance.

The consortium's quality team has taken appropriate steps to identify the training needs for all members of staff across the consortium. It has delivered a series of professional development training events for sharing assessment best practice and promoting the Welsh culture. Managers have improvement targets for each event that are linked to the quality development plan. All members of the consortium are encouraged to attend these training sessions and attendance has been reasonable. Managers have been careful when financing training events to make sure that effective use is made of the skills available across the consortium, and the events are a clear development priority for the consortium.

The consortium employs an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff to deliver the range of training programmes it delivers.

Managers across the consortium identify the cost of different training programmes well and use this information effectively to deliver programmes more efficiently where resource costs are high. Members of the consortium have creatively designed alternative delivery models in engineering and construction to make effective use of the funding provided.

Overall, the standards and rates at which learners attain their qualifications have improved across the consortium and are adequate. As a result of this improvement, the consortium offers adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### **Learner satisfaction**

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

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 provider's performance

## Appendix 2

### The inspection team

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Mark Evans       | Reporting Inspector |
| Sandra Barnard   | Team Inspector      |
| Bernard O'Reilly | Team Inspector      |
| Bernard Hayward  | Team Inspector      |
| Steve Bell       | Team Inspector      |
| Jane Taylor      | Team Inspector      |
| Derek Trickett   | Team Inspector      |
| Bridget Moseley  | Peer Inspector      |
| Rachel Ryland    | Peer Inspector      |
| Kay Martin       | Provider Nominee    |