

Superdrug Stores PLC

Employer

Inspection dates		26–29 November 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have improved rapidly since the previous inspection and are now good.
- Success rates for the large majority of apprentices are good and above national averages.
- Apprentices develop good vocational, employability, personal and social skills.
- Store and area managers are closely involved in apprenticeship programmes.
- Assessors are highly experienced and use their knowledge well to make learning meaningful.
- High expectations and good care and support inspire and motivate learners to make good progress in their apprenticeships and in the workplace.
- The promotion of equality and diversity through teaching, learning and assessment is excellent.
- Apprentices' progress is closely monitored to identify slow progress and implement appropriate support.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Although much improved, the overall success rate for those apprentices aged 16 to 18 remains slightly below the national average.
- Insufficient use is made of technology within teaching, learning and assessment.
- The good verbal assessment feedback is not supported by equally detailed written feedback to aid learners' progress.
- The process of observing and evaluating teaching and learning is not a key driver in quality improvement.
- Learner surveys are not an effective part of the learner feedback process.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure appropriate access to, and use of, technology to further improve teaching, learning and assessment and reduce the reliance on written assessment evidence.
- Provide detailed and constructive written feedback following assessment to support the good verbal feedback and contribute to learners making good progress.
- Ensure that the observation of teaching and learning becomes a key driver in quality improvement by providing rigorous judgements in observations and clear and specific action plans for improvement.
- Re-design learner survey questions so that they provide a sharper focus on identifying aspects requiring improvement and use the findings to inform quality improvement activity.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since the previous inspection Superdrug has taken effective action to improve outcomes for apprentices. Success rates and the proportion of those that achieve within their planned timescales have risen significantly and, in 2012/13, provider data show that the large majority of apprentices were successful. In-year data for 2013/14 indicate continued improvement. ▪ The success rates for retailing apprentices show a three-year improving trend, to well above national averages for similar providers in 2012/13. Customer service apprenticeship success rates have also improved significantly, although Superdrug is currently redeveloping this programme to address areas for improvement raised at the previous inspection. Success rates for functional skills are good, with the very large majority of apprentices successfully achieving them on the first or second attempt. ▪ The significant variations in the performance of different groups of learners found at the previous inspection have been reduced or removed. Both male and female performance has improved and both gender groups now achieve at similar levels. The large majority of apprentices in each age category now successfully achieve their apprenticeships, although the proportion of apprentices aged 16 to 18 who are successful remains slightly below the national average. ▪ Apprentices make good progress during their apprenticeships and develop good vocational and employability skills, leading to improved business performance. The provider's performance management system shows a 44% improvement against measures such as individuals' performance, reduced absence, motivation and team feedback following completion of an apprenticeship. Staff turnover for employees who have completed an apprenticeship is significantly lower than the company average. ▪ Apprentices benefit from the good development of personal and social skills. For example, one apprentice said, 'I've never been bright and I've usually been badly behaved, but all that's changed now. I'm so much more mature and being on this apprenticeship has really changed my life!' ▪ Progression for apprentices is good. On the 16- to 18-year-old apprenticeship programme, most apprentices progress from the apprenticeship into permanent employment within Superdrug or Savers stores. In the last two years the large majority of team leader apprentices have progressed to assistant manager or store manager positions. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. As a result, the proportion of apprentices achieving the apprenticeship has improved significantly. Fewer apprentices now leave the programme early. Assessors set high standards and high expectations. Excellent relationships between apprentices, assessors, store managers and area managers inspire and motivate apprentices. There is a very good culture of care and support for apprentices.
- The planning of learning has improved since the previous inspection and now provides a more meaningful learning experience. Store and area managers are very supportive and closely involved throughout the apprenticeship. The apprenticeship programme is now better integrated with other company training, an area identified for improvement at the previous inspection. Apprentices make good progress as a result of challenging job-related targets covering the whole of the apprenticeship. Close tracking of apprentices' progress results in the early identification of slow progress and effective actions are put in place to support apprentices who need it.
- Apprentices benefit from assessors who have extensive experience of working in the retail sector. They have appropriate assessor qualifications and most have also been trained in coaching skills. Assessors use questioning very skilfully with store-specific examples to make the learning meaningful. Assessors' visits to apprentices are now frequent, an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. However, little use is made of technology to reduce the amount of written work for the apprentices.
- Independent learning is encouraged and expected of apprentices, with meaningful research topics such as identifying which hair dyes do not have ammonia. However, although the access to the online resources has improved since the previous inspection, not all stores yet have access to the internet.
- Assessments are carried out appropriately and meet awarding body requirements. Assessors use a good range of evidence, such as direct observation, written work and professional discussion, and workplace-specific evidence such as mystery shopping reports. Some store managers undertake observations using a standard form to record the evidence which is then used as a witness testimony. However, some apprentices would benefit from the use of technology, such as a digital recorder, in their assessment.
- Apprentices' mathematics and English are appropriately assessed during the induction process. Apprentices who are already at the level required by the apprenticeship are offered the opportunity to take functional skills at a higher level. The results of the initial assessment are recorded on the learning plan and challenging long-term targets are set. In most stores the manager is involved in planning learning and setting targets for apprentices.
- Assessors give accurate and clear verbal feedback to apprentices after an assessment, clearly identifying and praising what the apprentice has done well, but also making it clear where they can improve. However, written feedback is not always as detailed or helpful.
- Progress reviews are appropriately managed. They take place every four to six weeks and set effective individual targets, often store specific. Most line managers are involved in the review; they receive detailed feedback about the progress that the apprentice is making and comment on the impact that the apprenticeship is having on the apprentice's performance in the workplace.
- Functional skills are mostly taught well. Assessors have all taken functional skills at the appropriate level and most have had basic training to teach functional skills. The approach to teaching mathematics is particularly good, with an emphasis on apprentices' understanding of mathematical principles rather than just how to get the answer. Good use is made of real examples in the workplace, such as calculation of shrinkage to contextualise the mathematics teaching. Assessors mostly correct spelling and grammatical errors in apprentices' work, but not always.

- Apprentices receive a good range of information about the apprenticeship prior to starting. Assessors frequently discuss next steps and career progression opportunities during progress reviews. At the end of their apprenticeship the relatively small number of apprentices who are not offered permanent employment with the company receive an exit pack with various hints and tips on applying for jobs, such as curriculum vitae writing and interview techniques. However, they receive little advice on other sources of support for their next steps.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is excellent, a significant improvement from the previous inspection when it was judged to be weak. Apprentices all receive a well-designed booklet which has a very good emphasis on the underlying issues rather than on the legislation. During progress reviews, assessors very effectively discuss equality and diversity with apprentices. Learners have an excellent understanding of equality and diversity, helping them support, for example, customers of different ethnicities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Apprenticeships are well established as part of the strategic and human resources planning for the company. Superdrug showed a strong commitment to improving the provision following the previous inadequate inspection judgement and it has been effective in improving success rates significantly and reducing some achievement gaps between different groups of apprentices. Achievement within planned timescales was an issue at the previous inspection but has improved significantly. Teaching, learning and assessment, which required improvement at the previous inspection, are now good. Where problems remain, the provision has been removed or is being redeveloped and redesigned.
- These improvements have been partly as a result of the strong commitment from the retail board to support and frequently monitor improvement following the previous inspection. Actions to improve the commitment and involvement of area and store managers in apprenticeship programmes have been effective. Their understanding of, and involvement in, the apprenticeship programme was a weakness at the previous inspection but is now good.
- The performance management of staff is good, with monthly individual staff performance meetings focusing on a range of performance indicators and on each assessor's caseload of learners to identify any slow process and provide the necessary support. Management information reports are now produced monthly and provide senior managers with a good overview of learners' progress and outcomes, including an analysis of any discrepancies in performance between different groups or cohorts. The performance development review is a thorough process and leads to challenging, but realistic, targets for staff. Any under performance has been dealt with effectively.
- Staff have a very good range of expertise and are suitably vocationally qualified for their roles. Most staff have achieved coaching qualifications and functional skills at intermediate level. There has been a strong focus on improving assessors' capability to support learners' development of functional skills through training provided by a local college.
- The small staff team has worked tirelessly and effectively to improve outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, maintaining it as a key focus of the frequent informal and formal meetings. However, the observation of teaching and learning has not been a key driver in this improvement. The current system is too focused on a mechanistic approach against set criteria and consequently lacks clear judgements about areas requiring improvement, leading to insufficiently specific or detailed action plans.
- Self-assessment provides an accurate and self-critical view of the provision, with most areas for improvement from the previous inspection now resolved. Apprentices and area and store managers are involved well in the self-assessment process through listening groups and on-line surveys. The process for collecting additional apprentice feedback is also good through weekly telephone surveys with a sample of apprentices. However, the survey questions are not

sufficiently focused on identifying areas for improvement to provide a really strong contribution to quality improvement and self-assessment.

- The provision has been developed well to meet the needs of Superdrug and Savers stores. Following the previous inspection, a greater focus has been placed on developing the 16- to 18-year-old retailing apprenticeship. Good links between Savers stores and local Jobcentres are used well to provide a work placement programme for persons not in employment, education or training, often leading directly to an apprenticeship programme.
- The involvement of area and store managers is good in ensuring stores providing apprenticeships are fully committed. A series of quality indicators is well used to ensure a store is eligible to have an apprenticeship. Store and area managers have good involvement in the apprenticeship recruitment process. Area managers check on the progress of learners in their stores.
- Superdrug has comprehensive equalities policies and procedures showing strong commitment to providing a safe and respectful environment within the company. Much work has been done to improve the promotion of equality and diversity within apprenticeship programmes. Good workbooks for equality and diversity, updated to cover all the protected characteristics of the 2010 Equality Act, enable apprentices to develop an excellent understanding of equality and diversity within a retailing context.
- A cohort's performance is now closely monitored each month and the gap between the performance of male and female apprentices has been closed over the last three years. The discrepancies in the performance of different age groups has been reduced, with significant improvement in the performance of all age groups, although the 16 to 18 age group still has success rates slightly below the national average.
- Superdrug continues to meet its statutory requirements to safeguard apprentices. They receive very good induction materials to raise their awareness of safeguarding, with good attention given to safety aspects, such as the safe use of social media and cyber bullying. Apprentices receive appropriate training for health and safety.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Superdrug Stores PLC

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Retailing and wholesaling	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Employer					
Age range of learners	16+					
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 513					
	Part-time: 0					
Principal/CEO	Ms Joey Watt					
Date of previous inspection	October 2012					
Website address	www.superdrug.com					
Provider information at the time of the inspection						
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	96	48	0	22	0	0
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)					
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A					

Contextual information

Superdrug Stores PLC is a major high street retailer of beauty and health products, with over 1150 Superdrug and Savers stores across the United Kingdom. Superdrug holds a Skills Funding Agency contract to deliver apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships across retail, management, business administration and warehousing and storage. The programme is entirely delivered by the provider. At the time of inspection nearly all learners were on retailing apprenticeships. Management, administration and customer service apprenticeships were in the process of being redesigned, with only a very few apprentices on programme and who were close to completing their studies.

Superdrug Stores PLC has its head office in Croydon, although the training programmes are managed from a central training department based in West Yorkshire. The team comprises an apprenticeship programme manager, an apprenticeship operations manager, two quality managers, five assessors and three apprenticeship coordinators. The apprenticeship team is part of the learning and development function, with the apprenticeship programme manager reporting to the head of resourcing and learning.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Mike White HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the apprenticeship programme manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013