

SSP (Select Service Partner)

Employer

Inspection dates		22–25 June 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-4
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
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:

- apprentices grow in confidence throughout their training and develop good customer services skills and business acumen in a wide variety of food and beverage outlets
- prompt and effective actions by leaders and managers following the previous inspection have resulted in a significant increase in the number of apprentices successfully completing
- staff use a thorough selection process for apprentices, and provide good initial advice and guidance; new apprentices understand the commitment needed to achieve their qualifications
- assessors and unit managers work closely together to plan training and support apprentices, who make good progress towards achievement of their qualifications and development of work-related skills
- online training materials and particularly well-structured workshops provide apprentices with good opportunities to learn independently and in groups
- the progressive structure of apprenticeship programmes provides SSP employees with good training and development, enabling them to gain promotion from team member roles through to management positions
- managers energetically develop apprenticeship programmes and high quality learning materials to meet the growing and changing needs of employees and a large nationwide business
- senior managers' effective encouragement throughout SSP ensures operational managers in their many different locations are enthusiastic about the apprenticeship programme and appreciate the tangible benefits that it brings to their business.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- although an increasing number of apprentices successfully complete their qualifications, too many take longer than planned to do so, and first-time pass rates are low in ICT and English
- assessors' written feedback and the targets set for apprentices are often not specific enough
- staff do not yet implement quality improvement arrangements well enough to ensure that standards are consistently good or better across the regions and types of businesses.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of apprentices who complete within planned timescales by maintaining the current focus on apprentices' progress and improving pass rates for functional skills.
- Ensure written feedback and targets set for apprentices focus on the specific aspects learners need to improve or develop, and that assessors, unit managers and apprentices work together to achieve these targets.
- Raise the standard of all apprentices' English and mathematical skills by ensuring assessors support and challenge apprentices more effectively, and that specialist support is available when required.
- Ensure that managers further develop the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that they accurately identify areas for improvement in the self-assessment report and achieve consistently high standards.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SSP offers apprenticeship programmes in hospitality and business management to its employees. Around three quarters of current apprentices are eligible for government funding. Half of the funded apprentices are employees, known as team members, working towards qualifications in hospitality and catering; a quarter are on a team-leading programme at level 2; and, most of the rest are on a management programme at level 3 called Discovery. ▪ In 2013/14, the proportion of apprentices successfully completing their programmes was inadequate and very few achieved within planned timescales. In the current year, significant improvements have resulted in a much higher proportion of apprentices successfully completing. More apprentices are achieving within the timescales expected, although this rate remains low. SSP's data indicate that success rates overall are now in line with industry averages. ▪ The majority of apprentices are making good, or expected, progress towards completion of their qualifications. The number of apprentices making slow progress has reduced substantially to a very small minority. The vast majority of apprentices, who started in the last nine months after undergoing the improved selection, training and assessment processes, are still in training and making good progress. ▪ Recent analysis demonstrates that a much higher proportion of apprentices now complete their programmes; staff turnover of team members is significantly lower for those who are apprentices compared to those who are not. ▪ Apprentices value the opportunity to improve their English, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills and gain relevant qualifications. First-time pass rates for functional skills tests are improving, but remain low for ICT and written English. ▪ Hospitality apprentices develop good customer service skills, becoming confident in communicating with customers and responding to their diverse needs and requests. Advanced apprentices develop good team-leading skills and business acumen which help SSP achieve its operational targets. ▪ Apprentices have a very good understanding of how the apprenticeship programmes link to career progression within SSP. A large majority of advanced apprentices gain promotion to assistant manager roles during, or on completion of, their programme. SSP provides opportunities for apprentices to progress further to foundation degree-level qualifications. ▪ The variation in performance between male and female apprentices identified at the previous inspection is no longer evident and all groups of apprentices achieve at similar rates. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good; this is reflected in improving success rates and the progress that current apprentices are achieving, as well as the development of good skills and knowledge. Managers set high standards for apprentices to ensure high levels of customer service. Assessors and unit managers have high expectations for apprentices to make good progress in their qualifications and jobs.
- Apprentices receive good support and encouragement from assessors and managers, and demonstrate good commitment and motivation to progress. Assessors undertake frequent and productive visits to support apprentices, who can contact them easily between visits.
- Assessors and managers work very well together to plan training to meet the needs of apprentices and of the organisation. Very effective mapping of workplace training, against the requirements of the vocational qualification, results in apprentices achieving their qualification while completing SSP's internal training programmes. Where assessors identify that apprentices need additional training on specific topics, for example coffee making, they plan the necessary actions effectively, using good resources as well as further on-the-job training by unit or assistant managers.
- Assessors have very good operational experience and knowledge which they use well to provide effective one-to-one coaching. Assessors promote e-learning well, and apprentices use online resources very effectively to improve their knowledge. Group workshops for management apprentices are proving very successful in preparing advanced apprentices for new management positions.
- Managers set apprentices suitably challenging learning activities. Team members often carry out team leader responsibilities; this builds their confidence and helps motivate them to make progress in their careers. The Discovery programme, for potential assistant managers, challenges apprentices to develop a project that improves business performance. For example, one apprentice successfully completed a waste reduction project and another improved their ICT spreadsheet skills by creating a training plan to meet staff shift patterns.
- Assessors are rigorous in assessment, challenging apprentices to work to a high standard; they use probing questions to check apprentices' knowledge. Assessors provide consistently helpful verbal feedback on apprentices' performance, including on how they can improve. Written feedback is less consistent in quality, and apprentices do not always receive a clear summary of what they need to do to improve. Assessors provide constructive action plans for apprentices in the main, but do not always sufficiently involve them in setting their own targets, and some actions are not sufficiently specific.
- The planning and delivery of learning to develop skills in English, mathematics and ICT are improving and are generally effective. Staff carry out initial and diagnostic assessments of new apprentices' skills in English and mathematics, which provide an accurate overview of their development needs. Apprentices then use online resources well to develop their skills and prepare for tests. Apprentices with English as an additional language improve their confidence in using speech particularly well.
- Assessors generally provide good support to apprentices, but do not always tackle their weaker areas promptly or challenge more able apprentices. Not all assessors routinely correct apprentices' spelling and grammatical errors, and they do not always encourage apprentices to locate and use appropriate resources to improve their written English. Assessors do not have the experience or qualifications to provide specialist support to those with specific needs such as dyslexia or dyscalculia.
- Apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance from managers and assessors who regularly discuss progression to team leading and assistant manager roles. At induction, apprentices receive a thorough initial introduction to the e-learning portfolio and resources, and are confident in using them. However, the induction into the apprenticeship programme is

insufficiently interactive. Assessors do not check apprentices' understanding of different aspects effectively and apprentices do not get a copy of the induction information for reference.

- Assessors and other staff promote the understanding of equality and diversity well in teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in relation to meeting customers' diverse needs. Apprentices have a good understanding of how to support customers who have disabilities or specific support needs, such as language barriers or allergies. Apprentices are encouraged to view a video to raise awareness of diversity, and team leaders and managers undertake comprehensive training that gives them a fuller understanding of company procedures and relevant legislation.
- Assessors ask useful probing questions to check apprentices' understanding of diverse customer needs. However, topics such as bullying, harassment and online safety are not always routinely reinforced with apprentices. The apprentice induction does not promote awareness of equality, diversity and safeguarding sufficiently well.

Hospitality and catering

Good

Apprenticeships

Teaching, learning and assessment in hospitality and catering are good because:

- the majority of apprentices currently in learning are making good progress; they grow in confidence, communicating well with customers and demonstrating good practical food and drink service skills
- assessors plan learning effectively with unit managers and mentors in the workplace; they provide regular feedback to unit managers and mentors on apprentices' progress and identify where apprentices need to develop further
- resources to support and reinforce learning are good; apprentices regularly access online resources and support materials, which help them make good progress and learn skills such as how to make perfect coffee
- assessors conduct initial assessments using an online system which effectively informs individual programmes of learning in English and mathematics, and ensures that apprentices study at the correct level; apprentices complete tasks assigned by the system to help them improve, and assessors plan well to extend apprentices' learning through additional activities
- assessors check learning well; they use effective questioning techniques, including probing questions, and apprentices respond with detailed examples to demonstrate their knowledge, for example the correct temperatures for storing food and the reasons for safe storage
- apprentices benefit from good information, advice and guidance; the induction programme is comprehensive, so that apprentices fully understand their programme and the opportunities they have to progress to team leading and, consequently, to promotion in the workplace
- assessors develop apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity effectively; apprentices are able to talk confidently about how they can identify customers' individual needs and respond to them; for example, when serving customers with a physical disability, they offer to take their order at the table rather than at the counter.

Hospitality and catering are not yet outstanding because:

- target setting in reviews of apprentices' progress is inconsistent; assessors often set targets which are too general and do not identify apprentices' specific development needs in enough detail
- written feedback on apprentices' work requires improvement; not all assessors provide sufficient written feedback or identify mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar to help apprentices improve their skills

- specialist support for apprentices with additional learning needs in English and mathematics is not sufficient; assessors are not sufficiently qualified or experienced in providing specialist support, and apprentices requiring additional support generally make slower progress.

Business management

Apprenticeships

Good

Teaching, learning and assessment in management are good because:

- apprentices have high standards of work and develop good work-related, personal and social skills; apprentices are ambitious and use their team leading and managerial skills well to delegate and motivate colleagues in the workplace
- apprentices are motivated and inspired to improve their broad managerial skills through well-planned individual coaching sessions and group workshops, where they network effectively and learn from colleagues working across the wide range of brands and locations
- assessors and unit managers work together seamlessly to support apprentices to ensure they develop and use their skills; for example, apprentices are given responsibility for promoting new product lines use their ICT and mathematical skills well to track sales and calculate profit margins
- apprentices make good use of the wide range of resources and activities to improve their knowledge and skills; for example, team-leading apprentices improve their understanding of the cost implications of waste and, as a result, reduce wastage of disposable items such as straws and napkins
- apprentices develop good spoken English skills; during their programme, apprentices, many of whom are not native English speakers, gain confidence in speaking with customers and colleagues, helping to resolve problems and support other staff
- apprentices receive good information, advice and guidance to help them make informed choices about their career; apprentices take part in a rigorous selection procedure that links to promotional opportunities within SSP, and demonstrates their commitment to learning and development
- apprentices have a good understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity; they are well aware of customers' and colleagues' diverse needs, and have a good understanding of ways in which they can support colleagues observing Ramadan.

Teaching, learning and assessment in management are not yet outstanding because:

- intermediate apprentices are not sufficiently involved in identifying and setting their own targets for learning and assessment
- assessors do not encourage apprentices to use additional learning materials to help them improve their written English skills, such as sentence structure and spelling, to professional workplace standards when errors are identified in their work
- apprentices do not receive sufficient information to ensure they know how to stay safe when using social media or the internet.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers reacted quickly to the critical inspection messages they received last year, and promptly implemented new ways of operating to tackle the identified areas for improvement, the majority of which have been successful. They rightly prioritised improving

apprentices' experience; consequently, the number of apprentices completing their apprenticeship has increased significantly. Pass rates in functional skills are much improved, in particular the first-time pass rates. Leaders and managers have demonstrated that they have good capacity to continue improving the provision.

- The much-improved management information system allows assessors and managers at all levels to understand apprentices' progress more clearly, enabling them to monitor and target apprentices' achievement more effectively. Managers throughout the company now demonstrate more commitment to the apprenticeship scheme; most operations managers and directors are enthusiastic about the tangible benefits the programme brings. Managers observe lower levels of absence and sickness amongst apprentices and improved levels of customer satisfaction due to the skill and confidence apprentices develop.
- The apprenticeship team manager evaluates the performance of the team effectively in relation to training and assessment. Development areas are agreed and staff undertake a wide range of activities to help them improve their practice and capability. Managers utilise shadowing opportunities well; staff benefit from working alongside experienced managers to improve skills, such as influencing others. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices is now good.
- Managers have made particularly good use of apprentices' feedback to inform improvement. Soon after the previous inspection, they asked apprentices to identify improvement areas in the apprenticeship programme; as a result, the apprenticeship team added related actions into their improvement plan. Managers have recently conducted a second survey to measure the increased apprentice satisfaction following the improvements introduced.
- The internal verification process is effective. Regular observations by managers and peers take place and best practice sessions allow assessors to conduct assessments to a consistently good standard. However, managers and assessors do not focus sufficiently on measuring the quality of teaching and learning across the entire programme. Assessors informally check the effectiveness of the training delivered by unit managers, but do not record their findings. Senior managers do not have a complete overview of the quality of training delivered.
- The self-assessment process requires improvement. Staff are appropriately involved in self-assessment activity, but the current report is too descriptive, focusing on the distance travelled since the last inspection and not clearly stating the outstanding areas for improvement. The report does not use data sufficiently to illustrate the achievement of different groups of apprentices.
- The apprenticeship programme is an integral part of the company's clear career pathway. A comprehensive training and development programme supports the career aspirations of employees well. The portfolio of qualifications and apprenticeship programmes continues to expand to meet the skills needs of different parts of the business. The new ways of operating have brought quality, consistency and improved support to apprentices, and regional managers consider the apprenticeship an intrinsic part of their succession planning to fill job roles at the next level.
- The promotion of an understanding of equality and diversity is good. SSP offers the apprenticeship programme to all its employees, regardless of their public funding entitlement. No significant differences exist in the achievement of different groups of apprentices. In the last year, managers invested in training the apprenticeship team to meet the needs of apprentices for whom English is not the first language better, and all assessors have completed a qualification in teaching English as a foreign language. Staff place particularly good emphasis on meeting the needs of diverse customers, and apprentices quickly develop an appreciation of these values. Apprentices use a range of suitable resources to develop their knowledge of equality and diversity, which is usually reinforced through discussions during assessment visits.
- The safeguarding of apprentices is good. Managers place particular importance on promoting safe and hygienic working practices to all apprentices. All work activities undertaken by the very few young apprentices are thoroughly risk assessed. Managers and staff effectively implement

appropriate harassment and bullying policies that exist to safeguard apprentices and employees. All have access to a confidential, anonymous helpline where they can raise any concerns about well-being, including safety. Staff also implement a clear policy concerning the appropriate use of internet resources at work; however, assessors do not sufficiently reinforce the topic of how to keep safe when using social media during the apprenticeship programme. Apprentices know how to raise safeguarding concerns and they report that they feel safe.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

SSP (UK) Ltd

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Outcomes for learners	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
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
Hospitality and catering	2
Business management	2

Type of provider	Employer							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	413							
CEO	Kate Swann							
Date of previous inspection	March 2014							
Website address	www.sspcareers.com/uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	3	242	-	88	-		-	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	-							
Part-time	-							
Number of community learners	-							
Number of employability learners	-							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Contextual information

SSP is an operator of food and beverage outlets, under a variety of names and arrangements, in travel locations such as airports and train stations. It is an international concern; in the United Kingdom, SSP has around 10,000 employees working in almost 400 units. SSP provides apprenticeships to many employees, but only those who are eligible receive government funding. Nearly all apprentices work in units at travel locations. Apprentices receive training from their immediate managers and additional coaching from assessors. Advanced apprentices attend workshops at the head office run by SSP's learning and development team. A team of regionally-based assessors provides assessment, guidance and support to apprentices and managers. The central team also provides management of the scheme, including administration, quality assurance and improvement support.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Joy Montgomery HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by SSP's national apprenticeship manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of SSP's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and the re-inspection monitoring visit reports. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gather the views of learners and managers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at SSP. 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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