

Appris Charity Limited

Independent learning provider



7–10 December 2015

Inspection dates

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable and requires improvement.
- Weak target setting and reviewing of progress has resulted in apprentices not making the expected progress within the planned timescales.
- Training advisers place too much attention on the requirements of the apprenticeship framework rather than the development of skills to a higher level.
- Punctuality is not yet good enough for apprentices attending off-the-job training.
- British values are insufficiently promoted throughout the curriculum.
- Written feedback to learners does not focus on what they need to do to improve their skills beyond the requirements of qualifications.
- Too few advanced apprentices are challenged to develop their skills in English further.
- Leaders and managers do not use self-assessment and quality improvement planning well enough to influence improvements in the provision.
- The scrutiny and challenge by trustees and senior managers are ineffective; they do not monitor performance of the organisation rigorously.

The provider has the following strengths

- Good partnerships with employers result in apprentices gaining relevant skills and employment.
- Current apprentices make good progress in the development of their practical engineering skills.
- Apprentices' standard of work is of a good quality.
- Tutors and training advisers are experienced industry experts, which benefits apprentices in developing the skills they need for work.
- Apprentices enjoy their apprenticeships, and are motivated and committed to learning and progressing in their job roles and careers.
- Apprentices attend well, show high standards of behaviour at work and become valued employees.
- Learning resources in the engineering training centre are of high quality.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Appris was established in August 2011, following the merger of Bradford Training Association Limited and the Leeds Training Trust, which were both established in 1967 as not-for-profit group training associations. It operates from its head office in Bradford and delivers apprenticeships mainly in Bradford and Leeds. In 2014, a bespoke training facility was opened, funded by the charities' reserves and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) capital funding.
- There are currently 371 apprentices enrolled; almost three quarters of all apprentices are aged from 16 to 18 with the remainder being adults. Almost two thirds of all apprentices are undertaking engineering qualifications with the remaining undertaking mainly administration and business management programmes. Appris has subcontract agreements in place with three local colleges to meet the specific needs of employers, which account for a very small minority of all apprentices at the provider. Unemployment rates in the Leeds City Region stand at 6.2% compared with a national rate of 5.7%. Jobs in the manufacturing sector in the Leeds City Region account for 10.8%, which is significantly above the national rate of 8.5%.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning by:
 - improving the quality of action planning following observations of teaching and learning to ensure that identified areas for improvement are swiftly acted on to improve the quality of provision
 - improving the target setting for skills development in progress reviews to ensure that apprentices have challenging targets to achieve, which are specific and time bound
 - ensuring that targets set are regularly monitored and accurately recorded, and that interventions are rapidly put in place where progress is slow
 - providing high-quality written feedback on apprentices' work to allow apprentices to reflect on how they can further improve the standard of their work and achieve higher grades.
- Ensure that trustees receive, scrutinise, monitor and evaluate data on the performance of apprentices at Appris. Hold senior managers to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to improve the proportion of apprentices completing within their planned time.
- Ensure that apprentices receive challenge and support to develop higher levels of English skills in their work to support them in their career development and enable them to take on more demanding job roles.
- Ensure that managers plan the accurate and systematic collection of apprentices' progress data to ensure that any variations in progress are identified quickly, and that robust action plans are put in place to improve individual apprentices' performance.
- Ensure that self-assessment and associated development plans are inclusive and accurately identify the strengths and areas of improvement at Appris. Set clear measurable targets, which are regularly monitored, leading to swift, demonstrable improvements particularly in the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve the punctuality of apprentices attending classes at the training centre. Create a robust reporting system, allowing managers to clearly identify poor attendance, and work collaboratively with apprentices and employers to improve their timekeeping.
- Ensure that apprentices are appropriately prepared for life in modern Britain and espouse the values of the rule of law, individual and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior managers have not been successful in halting the decline in achievement which followed the last inspection. Trustees do not invite or receive enough meaningful information on the performance of apprentices. They do not hold senior managers sufficiently to account for the improvements of teaching, learning and assessment or for the improvement of outcomes for apprentices.
- Leaders and managers do not use self-assessment and quality improvement planning well enough to deliver improvement across all aspects of provision, or reverse the decline in success rates. The self-assessment report is too descriptive, insufficiently evaluative and actions for improvement are not specific. Although a number of accurate judgements are identified, such as the effectiveness of mathematical skills development, too many areas requiring improvement have been omitted such as ineffective target setting and weak progress monitoring.
- Performance management and associated professional development have not led to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. In formal observations, staff focus too much on what the tutor or assessor is doing, as opposed to the progress that apprentices are making or the skills that they are acquiring. Observers of teaching and learning rarely identify any areas for tutors or training advisers to improve. Although a number of targets set in appraisal meetings are individualised and helpful, too many are generic and do not focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders' management of subcontractors requires improvement, although appropriate due diligence checks are completed on a yearly basis, in addition to bi-annual performance management meetings. Too little focus is afforded to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Issues picked up by learners and employers are not identified through Appris' internal quality processes, leading to a few learners making slow progress.
- Leaders and managers have not placed sufficient focus on the development of apprentices' English skills. Routine correction of spelling, punctuation and grammar errors do not take place and opportunities to develop communication skills are not fully utilised. The promotion of mathematical skills is good, and these are an integral part of all apprentices' engineering programmes. Staff support well the small number of apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics, and are currently developing more learning resources to support apprentices following an internal review.
- Equality and diversity were areas for improvement at the last inspection. Managers have failed to set targets to increase the proportion of under-represented groups and although the proportion of women has increased, the participation of minority ethnic groups has declined.
- Leaders and managers aim to provide high-quality apprenticeships in engineering to meet the needs of employers, learners and the local and regional priorities. Leaders and managers have developed an extensive and well-developed strategy of capital investment to support the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)'s priorities and contribute to the narrowing of the skills gap in the region. They have successfully increased their capacity to deliver qualifications by opening their own well-resourced training centre, which enhances the apprentices' experience. Plans are in place to extend the training centre further.
- Leaders and managers engage very well with a range of stakeholders, including the LEP, to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the member organisations and those of the local and regional economy. Staff have a wide-ranging marketing programme which includes engagement with local schools, both primary and secondary, to raise awareness of engineering and the benefits of apprenticeships. This has led to a significant increase in advanced apprenticeships in engineering in the current year.
- Apprentices receive comprehensive information, advice and guidance prior to joining their programme, so that they are aware of the expectations of Appris and their employer. However, on-programme and exit advice and guidance require improvement, leading to a number of apprentices not being clear about what options are available to them at the end of their apprenticeship.
- Curriculum planning is good. Employers are consulted on a regular basis, identifying their specific requirements. These requirements are implemented effectively to ensure that apprentices rapidly gain skills to enable them to be productive engineers in their workplace. Apprentices acquire very relevant additional skills, which ensure that employers gain multi-skilled engineers who are greatly valued. For example, all full-time mechanical engineering advanced apprentices also gain skills in electrical engineering, hydraulics and pneumatics. A number of employers have donated equipment, such as air compression systems, so that apprentices can develop their skills to high industry standards.

■ The governance of the provider

- Scrutiny and challenge by trustees, and the extent to which senior managers are held to account for the performance of the organisation, require improvement. Trustees focus too heavily on financial performance and not enough on the quality of teaching and learning. This leads to trustees not inviting or receiving regular detailed information on the performance of Appris, resulting in senior managers not being sufficiently challenged when performance declines.
- Trustees do not have appropriate knowledge or expertise to hold senior managers to account for the decline in performance since the last inspection.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Safeguarding is effective. Managers have ensured that appropriate safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures are in place at Appris and at their subcontractors, which are used well to support and protect all apprentices. Two appropriately trained designated safeguarding officers support apprentices on both pastoral and safeguarding issues. On the very rare occasions when concerns are disclosed to safeguarding officers, they support apprentices with care, compassion and respect and, where appropriate, work with other agencies very effectively to assist apprentices.
- Leaders have made a significant investment in IT infrastructure to protect learners from the risks associated with cyberbullying, radicalisation and extremism, reinforced by suitable training at induction in relation to e-safety. Managers have implemented an appropriate action plan in relation to the 'Prevent' strategy incorporating in-depth training for governors, staff, employers and apprentices. Apprentices have an adequate understanding of these risks and are aware of whom they need to speak to if they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, reflected in the slow progress the minority of current apprentices are making. Tutors and training advisers do not set sufficiently high aspirations for all apprentices in relation to their starting points. Apprentices do not receive sufficient challenge to develop higher-level skills with progress measures based on completion of units as opposed to skill acquisition. On advanced apprenticeship programmes, the large majority achieve their qualifications successfully.
- Tutors' planning to ensure that apprentices are successful within the planned timescales requires improvement. Too often lessons and workplace visits concentrate on the completion of units rather than extending the apprentices' knowledge and skills, and do not ensure that apprentices have fully acquired the concepts and knowledge needed to be effective in the workplace. Advanced apprentices, who are highly motivated and ambitious, are insufficiently challenged to achieve higher standards of work or provided with extension activities that will allow them to learn new skills.
- Managers have failed to promote a culture of high expectation and, as a result, the skills apprentices develop are limited compared with their entry points. Although tutors have an adequate system to track completion of assessments, no monitoring of skills development takes place in relation to their starting points. This leads to a minority of apprentices making slow progress on their apprenticeship and more capable learners not being challenged to achieve more.
- Target setting requires improvement. Tutors and training advisers do not use target setting sufficiently well to ensure that apprentices make good progress on their programme and achieve their full potential. Too many of these targets are insufficiently focused on the apprentices' development of skills, with an over-emphasis on unit completion. For example, in one progress review a target states 'complete assessment for unit'. These weak targets fail to fully explain what skills the apprentices need to acquire, and in what timescales, to successfully complete the unit.
- Staff conduct robust initial assessment of apprentices' starting points including aptitude for engineering, English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). However, managers have failed to ensure that there are appropriate diagnostic assessments in place to allow staff to identify apprentices' areas of development and use these results to plan learning to meet apprentices' individual needs. This leads to a minority of apprentices making slow progress.
- Apprentices' portfolios and the work contained within them are of a good standard. Apprentices submit their work electronically to their tutors, receiving concise and constructive feedback on how to improve their work further before submission for assessment. This leads to apprentices having a full understanding of the areas that they need to improve in future reports, and aids them in being reflective and independent learners. Conversely, apprentices do not receive written feedback on how to improve their work to a standard higher than the requirements of the awarding body, which limits them from achieving higher-level skills.

- Teaching of practical skills in the engineering workshop is good. Well-qualified and experienced tutors with significant industry experience use their knowledge and skills enthusiastically to inspire apprentices to develop a wide range of engineering and manufacturing operations skills, and computer-aided design (CAD) knowledge. They become confident and competent in working on a range of machines after in-depth training at the engineering training centre. They work well alongside their more experienced colleagues and supervisors.
- Apprentices work safely and are well aware of safe working practices. For example, apprentices understand fully the dangers and risks while producing aerosol cans and take good precautions to protect themselves.
- Training advisers give positive and encouraging verbal feedback to apprentices during the progress reviews. This extends apprentices' understanding and helps them to produce a broad range of evidence to support their claim for competence against the qualification framework. Conversely, written feedback requires improvement; a lack of written feedback prevents apprentices from reflecting on what they have achieved and how to improve their skills further.
- Apprentices develop a wide range of mathematical skills very effectively, such as trigonometry and physics, to learn and appreciate the concepts of engineering while producing export-quality centrifugal pumps for the oil and gas industry throughout the world. Apprentices develop a good range of ICT skills that they use well to produce reports and spreadsheets at work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- The vast majority of apprentices make good progress in the development of their work-related skills. They develop confidence and a high level of practical ability from an early stage in their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices in the training centre manufacture components to high-quality tolerances in excess of the qualification requirements. This leads to apprentices' positively contributing to their employers' business early on in the apprenticeship.
- Apprentices enjoy their apprenticeships; they are motivated, committed to learning and progress well in their job roles and careers. Apprentices' attendance is good, both in the training centre and at work, showing good standards of behaviour. They have a great deal of respect for each other, tutors and the training centre. These high standards are effectively communicated at induction and robustly reinforced throughout the apprenticeship. This leads to many employers acknowledging the positive contribution that their apprentices have made to their business.
- Engineering apprentices develop good levels of competence in mathematical concepts. They develop these skills effectively both in the training centre and the workplace. For example, in the first term of the programme, apprentices can accurately apply mathematical techniques well to calculate and plot coordinates to manufacture components on computer-aided design software, before programming on computer numerical control (CNC) software to manufacture the product successfully.
- Apprentices feel very safe at work and in the training centre, and develop a good understanding of safe working practices. The training centre has robust policies and procedures in place, which apprentices diligently follow. These high standards in the training centre prepare apprentices very effectively for the experiences and risks that may appear in their workplace.
- Career guidance to plan the next steps of their programme requires further development to ensure that apprentices are fully aware of the opportunities available to them to progress to further study or employment.
- Although attendance is high, punctuality at the training centre requires further improvement. Managers have very recently implemented a tracking system to monitor individual apprentices' punctuality; however, this is not used effectively enough in the progress review process to allow improvements to take place.
- Tutors and training advisers have only very recently started to develop apprentices' understanding of fundamental British values and to raise their awareness of how cultural values and differences must be respected and considered in their workplace.

- In 2014/15, according to Appris' data, the large majority of all apprentices achieved qualifications. However, a minority of apprentices do not complete within their planned timescales, which requires improvement.
- Leaders and managers do not sufficiently collate, monitor and evaluate the gaps in progress or achievement of different groups of apprentices. This has led to trustees being unaware of the performance of the organisation or not providing sufficient challenge to senior managers to improve outcomes for learners.
- Variances exist between different groups of apprentices, particularly between intermediate and advanced apprentices in engineering. Although managers are aware of these gaps, plans to improve achievement rates for these groups of apprentices have not been successful.
- Despite current apprentices making adequate progress in achieving their vocational qualification, managers and tutors cannot clearly identify whether learners are making sufficient progress in developing their vocational and employability skills, due to not systematically identifying starting points at the beginning of the programme. This leads to managers being unaware of variations in the performance of current apprentices.
- Too few apprentices are challenged to develop their skills in English further. Training advisers place too much attention on the requirements of the apprenticeship framework as opposed to the individual needs of the apprentice. This has led to only a very small minority of apprentices taking qualifications or developing skills at a higher level, to enable them to take on more demanding roles.
- Managers' collection and analysis of destination data require improvement. Leaders have not fully implemented a systematic collection of data to inform them of the impact that an apprenticeship has on an apprentice's future career prospects.
- Progression for apprentices following completion of the programme is good. Almost all of the recently qualified apprentices are successful in securing permanent employment and gaining an improved salary, with the vast majority of these achieving promotions or gaining additional responsibilities in the workplace. In many companies, apprentices can significantly improve their salary once they have completed their apprenticeship, positively contributing to the personal goals they identified at the beginning of their apprenticeship.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	635
Managing Director	Mr John Igoe
Website address	www.appris.co.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	41	24	219	86			1	
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bradford College ■ Leeds City College ■ Wakefield College 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Paul Cocker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barnett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Stella Owen	Ofsted Inspector
Shabana Mahmood	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Cumiskey	Ofsted Inspector

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

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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