

Travis Perkins plc

Employer

Inspection dates

26–29 April 2016

Overall effectiveness**Good**

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Apprentices benefit from a wide range of very effective learning activities that are planned well to meet their needs.
- Managers have high expectations of apprentices in both their job roles and their written projects; apprentices respond well to this approach and perform to high standards.
- Apprentices gain confidence and are proud of their work so that they are good ambassadors for their company.
- Most apprentices make good progress through their qualification.
- Leaders and managers throughout the organisation are strongly committed to the apprenticeship and eager for apprentices to succeed.
- Managers encourage and support apprentices well to contribute new ideas and research ways of improving practices in their business.
- Managers create and maintain close links with local employment partnerships to identify skills gaps and employment opportunities and work productively with local schools to stimulate interest in apprenticeships.
- Apprentices understand well how to keep themselves safe at work.
- Managers challenge apprentices in their job roles so that they perform to their potential.
- Managers use a well-designed project and workshop to develop apprentices' understanding of diversity early in their programme.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Managers do not record quality improvement actions sufficiently well to ensure that all those involved know the time by which actions should be completed and how the activity will be monitored to improve apprentices' experience and progress.
- Managers do not help apprentices understand the wider implications of safeguarding and equality of opportunity early enough in the programme.
- Not all branch managers are trained sufficiently to develop apprentices' English, mathematics and wider learning skills, such as note-taking in presentations.
- Managers have not promoted the development of mathematics and English for those apprentices who need these skills with sufficient urgency early in the programme.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Travis Perkins plc has its head office in Northampton, from which trainers manage apprenticeships throughout Britain. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funds 72 of the 254 advanced apprenticeships in management and one of 18 retail intermediate apprentices. Around a third of funded apprentices are female. All the apprentices are assessed by their branch managers. The awarding body requires that the three assessment standards mentors, who are trained internal verifiers, verify all assessments as the branch managers are not trained assessors. A training manager oversees the programmes.
- The previous inspection was of an intermediate retail apprenticeship. Funding for this was discontinued in September 2013. No more apprentices were funded by the SFA until November 2015, following a two-year in-house pilot of the new qualification. The management programme is planned so that apprentices learn the job skills they need in the first year, and the qualification aims in the second year. Current SFA-funded apprentices are six months into their first year of training.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that managers record in sufficient detail the outcomes of quality improvement actions, including observations of reviews and coaching, and feed back to apprentices on their unit projects and job performance. Specify dates by which actions should be evaluated or completed so that managers can monitor the impact of the improvements on apprentices' progress and take prompt action when necessary.
- Provide more training for branch managers who assess apprentices so that from the start of the apprenticeship they are:
 - confident to help apprentices develop their skills in English and mathematics in the workplace to at least the level required for the framework in order that apprentices' communication with customers and other employees is accurate and well presented
 - aware of materials available to help apprentices with the learning skills, such as note-taking and researching topics, that they need to complete their projects.
- Ensure that all apprentices understand how to protect themselves and others from radicalisation and pressure from extremist groups. Make sure they understand the wider implications of safeguarding so that they are well prepared to manage a workforce, some of whom may be young or vulnerable.
- Plan to make apprentices more aware of what equality of opportunity means early in the programme, and reinforce this at reviews, so that they have a good understanding of its implications in the workplace.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

is good

- Apprentices benefit from the strong commitment that leaders and managers have to ensuring their success. Leaders and managers, including the chief executive officer, demonstrate how much they value apprentices through a high-profile event at which they welcome new apprentices and celebrate the success of current apprentices. This results in new apprentices being inspired from the start of their programme by the high expectations and potential rewards within the company.
- Apprentices are encouraged and supported by their managers and regional directors to contribute new ideas and to research potential improvements to their business. In a large majority of instances the managers put these ideas into practice. This motivates apprentices well and they are often further rewarded through pay increases for good performance when they have a useful six-monthly review with their regional director.
- Managers create and maintain close links with local employment partnerships. The training manager has met with 30 of the 38 partnerships to make them aware of skills gaps within the building trades businesses and to share information about the employment opportunities their companies offer in each area. As a result, they work together to increase sustainable employment and training opportunities.
- Managers work productively with schools near the training centre to pilot ways of encouraging pupils to apply for work experience and apprenticeships. For example, they have created an engaging online game to explain the variety of jobs available within their companies, and to act as an incentive for work experience in their outlets.
- Managers ensure that apprentices have good information, advice and guidance about possible progression routes when they join the company. This is well reinforced through the plentiful opportunities they give apprentices to experience different management styles in the many areas of building trade supplies that make up the Travis Perkins partnership.
- Quality improvement actions are effective. Leaders and managers have improved all the areas inspectors identified in the previous report. Although it is not yet possible to say whether apprentices will complete their framework within the planned time, only a few are not making their expected progress currently. Managers share good practice regularly through dedicated websites, which contributes further to their ability to improve provision for apprentices.
- Managers do not record quality improvement activities sufficiently. They monitor the outcomes of actions they take to improve provision for apprentices in regular meetings. However, the self-assessment report and the quality improvement plan do not state specific times and impact measurements by which to check that the rate of improvement is rapid enough. Managers do not state clearly how they intend that the outcomes of the proposed actions will improve apprentices' experience and success.
- Leaders and managers do not place sufficient strategic importance on developing apprentices' mathematics, English and wider learning skills, such as the ability to take useful notes in presentations. They train assessors and give them good feedback on their assessments of projects and job-related activities. However, they do not train them to identify apprentices' development needs in mathematics, English and other learning skills necessary for their future roles, or how best to advise apprentices about how they can get help to improve these skills.
- Managers do not ensure that apprentices understand the wider implications of equality of opportunity until their second year. This limits the extent to which apprentices are able to consider the impact of equalities legislation as they complete their projects and do their jobs. However, apprentices gain a good understanding of diversity and tolerance of differences early in the programme through a workshop and projects on self-awareness.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The group executive board, who provide direction to the whole company, and the divisional board, who are focused on human resources and training, are strongly committed to apprenticeships. They acted decisively to stop offering the SFA-funded apprenticeships through another provider in 2013 as too few apprentices succeeded. They supported managers to design and pilot an apprenticeship that met their needs so that they could assess its success before returning to SFA-funded provision.
 - The divisional board monitors the progress and progression of apprentices regularly and challenges the head of training if apprentices do not reach management roles rapidly enough.
 - The divisional board is heavily involved with planning recruitment of apprentices to meet the needs of the company.

- Governors talk with regional managers to identify the most-able learners and enable them to make rapid progress to more responsible roles.

■ **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**

- All staff are trained in safeguarding. However, although both the training and the safeguarding policy explain how to identify signs of radicalisation and extremism, staff do not reinforce the dangers sufficiently to apprentices.
- Staff from the human resources department investigate identified issues well and take appropriate action. For example, they responded promptly to allegations of bullying of one apprentice and quickly resolved the problem.
- Managers and apprentices are very aware of how to keep themselves and others safe in the workplace. They are diligent about wearing appropriate safety clothing and using equipment safely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Apprentices are well motivated by their branch managers, who have high expectations of them and challenge them to achieve high standards in the quality of their job and coursework. For example, apprentices show that they understand the importance of keeping warehouses tidy, maintaining good knowledge of their products and courteous customer service. They are well prepared to make good progress in their jobs because managers ensure that they gain a wide range of experience, including sales, customer service and warehouse work, both in their own branches and in branches of other businesses within the partnership.
- Apprentices receive good on-the-job coaching from their branch managers and colleagues. The training manager and the assessment standards mentors plan the programme well to ensure that all apprentices gain very good, hands-on experience of all the areas of work they hope to manage in the future so that they understand the job well and can implement practical improvements to their stores. For example, one apprentice improved sales and staff safety by redesigning the way flanges were displayed, and another improved efficiency in loading bays.
- Apprentices benefit from well-devised workshops where they come together and share experiences while they gain up-to-date information on topics such as sales, self-development and sustainable building. In addition they use the company's web-based independent learning portal well to develop the specific skills that they, in monthly consultation with their branch manager, identify as important to their progress and success on the programme.
- Branch managers and colleagues give good support and guidance to apprentices. Apprentices are fairly treated as an integral part of the team. Branch managers ensure that they get sufficient time at work to complete their projects. Apprentices and their managers use a web-based community page so that they can ask questions of each other and solve problems together even though they are all in different locations. Apprentices have regular reviews with branch managers and their regional directors and as a result their training is constantly adapted and designed to match their needs. For example, those with previous customer service or sales experience are fast-tracked and those who have less confidence focus on specific modules so that they can understand the business better.
- Branch managers check apprentices' learning well orally. They frequently question apprentices well to check their understanding of tasks and their product knowledge. They give apprentices good verbal feedback while they carry out tasks and as a result apprentices understand how to improve.
- Branch managers do not always provide sufficient written feedback so that apprentices have a record of what they have done and how to improve further, both in their job role and in their unit projects. The assessment standards mentors check assessments well, and provide support to further develop assessors' skills. When apprentices gain additional learning, for example supervising at other branches to cover absences, this learning is not recorded or formally evaluated by their managers. In the few cases where apprentices make slow progress managers do not record what they need to do to improve and give them specific, time-bound targets so that it is difficult to monitor how rapidly they make improvements.
- Branch managers and assessment standards mentors do not challenge apprentices sufficiently to improve their mathematics and English, and not all apprentices understand the relevance of these skills to their job role. Those who already have qualifications in these skills to the level required for the framework are not assessed so that they can develop further any areas in which they are less confident. Managers do not monitor progress in functional skills regularly in reviews, or check that apprentices' needs are fully met by the web-based independent learning materials.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Apprentices are good ambassadors for their company because they achieve good knowledge of their products and the requirements of their jobs both as practitioners and from a management perspective. As a result, they are confident and self-assured when interacting with customers and colleagues. They are punctual and attend well in the workplace and at training sessions.
- Apprentices are rightly proud of their contribution to the company and the value managers give to the improvements they suggest. This increases their motivation and they readily take the initiative as to what they need to learn. In the workplace and in the training workshops they listen carefully and respect other people's views.
- Apprentices gain a wide variety of additional skills that increase their value as employees. For example, depending on their needs, they learn how to drive forklift trucks, safe manual handling techniques and first aid procedures, and they understand trading standards. These skills extend their experience and support their career development.
- Managers give apprentices good information and advice about progression opportunities. At induction, managers give apprentices clear guidance about the good job progression opportunities within the Travis Perkins partnership. Throughout their training apprentices are able to experience work in other brands. This extends their choice of future career aims. Consequently, they are confident that if they perform well throughout the programme, they are likely to progress to management roles within the company.
- Apprentices gain a strong awareness of their own behaviour, and increased tolerance of other people's views and cultures through a well-planned project and workshop on self-awareness, which they complete near the beginning of their apprenticeship. For example, through a series of interesting exercises they gain respect for the diversity of experience and attitudes within their group. The unfunded pilot indicates that this awareness is followed up in the second year of the programme by a project on elections that gives apprentices a better understanding of democracy in Britain.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of health and safety in the workplace and use this to keep themselves safe, as well as to implement improvements that keep others safe. They take responsibility for management functions such as checking fire doors and fire alarms. All wear appropriate safety equipment. However, branch managers and trainers do not give them sufficient information about how to protect themselves and others from extremist views and radicalisation.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- Most apprentices are making good progress in the first six months of their two-year apprenticeship. All but a very few have completed all the unit projects set, and have gained good job skills. The success rate for apprentices who completed the unfunded pilot in 2015 was high.
- Apprentices are prepared well for their future jobs. The pilot resulted in the vast majority of apprentices remaining in employment and a high proportion moving into management. Managers give most current apprentices increased responsibility and challenge them to use their initiative in preparation for future management roles.
- Apprentices achieve high standards of work and are articulate about what they learn. In a workshop on sustainable building systems they asked detailed and perceptive questions about ways of promoting sustainable technologies to customers. They behave professionally in the workplace and are enthusiastic about their work.
- As none of the funded learners have completed their qualifications no judgement on possible differences in the achievement of different groups can be made, but currently there is no indication of any groups doing less well than others.
- The development of functional skills is too slow. Most apprentices who need to achieve functional skills do not do so early in the programme. At the time of inspection just over a third of apprentices who needed to achieve information and communication technology as a functional skill had achieved it at their first attempt. However, only around a fifth have achieved functional skills in English, and few have achieved mathematics. A few apprentices have chosen not to start their functional skills programme until next year and this slows their progress through the framework.

Provider details

Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	No funded learners
Principal/CEO	John Carter
Website address	www.travisperkinsplc.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)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	1	0	6	66	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ No subcontractors							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Pauline Hawkesford, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Adkins	Ofsted Inspector
Tracey Griffin	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the lead assessment standards mentor, as nominee. 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

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