

Skills for Security

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates	26–29 January 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

- The very large majority of apprentices achieve their intended qualifications within the expected timescale and this proportion has risen significantly since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers have taken rapid and successful action to improve the provision since the previous inspection.
- Apprentices show a mature attitude to learning and demonstrate excellent communication skills when dealing with customers.
- Apprentices benefit from accurate and timely assessment to support their completion of the framework.
- Apprentices complete additional qualifications to enhance their ability to develop their career further.
- Apprentices develop their skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) well and achieve very high pass rates in external examinations.
- Managers have ensured that the programme meets both the apprentices' and employers' needs, and they oversee off-the-job training well to enable good skill development and attendance by apprentices.
- Managers have a good understanding of the progress of apprentices through their apprenticeship to make sure that they complete on time.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Targets set for apprentices are not personal to their career paths.
- The inconsistent quality of written feedback does not match the very good oral feedback that apprentices receive.
- Assessors promote equality and diversity with apprentices, but they do not develop a strong enough understanding of diversity to prepare them for working in modern Britain.
- The newly established board does not yet sufficiently challenge the senior managers of Skills for Security.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Skills for Security (SfS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Security Industry Authority (BSIA), the largest trade body for the security sector. It is the largest provider of security systems apprenticeships in the UK. As a sector skills body for the security industry, it is a not-for-profit organisation that works with employers to improve security skills and standards of professionalism.
- A total of 164 apprentices are currently undertaking their qualifications with Skills for Security. Of these, 96 are aged 16–18 and 68 are aged 19 or above. Skills for Security are the security sector based work academy, and leaders and managers have designed a range of security-based employability courses that are delivered nationally.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the target-setting, feedback and review processes to ensure that all apprentices have targets for their personal development, including improving their written English and mathematical skills.
- Support apprentices to explore diversity issues with their peers to gain a good understanding of the world they work in.
- Strengthen the governance of Skills for Security to improve the oversight of the business and encourage further improvement by challenging and supporting managers. Governors need to monitor and ensure that the strategic objectives are timely.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The provider has significantly improved key aspects of the provision effectively since the previous inspection. The leadership team at Skills for Security (SfS) sets high standards and is ambitious for its apprentices. Managers set well-defined performance targets and staff understand these; consequently, the very large majority of apprentices are successful on their courses.
- The senior management team monitors the performance of the programme very effectively. Senior managers meet weekly to establish the current progress of all apprentices and examine other indicators of quality to ensure that the programme remains effective. Managers ensure that staff respond swiftly if required improvement is identified.
- Senior leaders have developed programmes that meet the needs of the security sector. Managers have redesigned the off-the-job training delivery since the last inspection, supporting better achievements for apprentices. Employers and apprentices are very complimentary regarding how these arrangements are better, and as a result, attendance is high. Apprentices are enthused and motivated by the significant contribution that members of the trade body make, such as providing current equipment and acting as role models.
- Staff receive regular appraisals of their performance, which leads to good staff development tailored to the training requirements of staff. Managers ensure that the sub-contracted provision is of a high standard to ensure learners receive good training. The current sub-contractor receives a thorough quality assurance visit of its provision on a quarterly basis. Improvement actions resulting from the visit are undertaken swiftly and as a result, the sub-contractor is highly effective.
- Senior managers use the self-assessment process well to develop a sound analysis of the performance and quality of the provision. Managers use a variety of evidence indicators, for instance, views of employers, analysis of data, and apprentices' progress and achievement. The report is an accurate account of the provision.
- Apprentices and employers of small- to medium-sized enterprises who are from minority ethnic groups are under-represented on the programme. The extensive marketing activities have not been effective in widening the participation of these groups.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Leaders at SfS have recently changed the governance arrangements of the provision. The leadership team has recently reviewed the skills of the existing board. A smaller governance board has been established to support and challenge the government-funded training aspect of the provider. This new sub-board comprises new members with experience of education and training. This recent change has delayed the achievement of a few of the strategic priorities set for the business in 2015.
 - The board receives a much-improved monthly operational report outlining the performance of the service and it regularly reviews the quality improvement plan. However, the monthly report does not contain sufficient commentary on the quality of teaching and learning to enable board members to have a sound understanding of this aspect.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - SfS has placed great emphasis on ensuring that apprentices are safe. SfS has ensured that contractors involved in the domestic arrangements for apprentices attending training away from home are appropriately checked. Staff brief hotels and taxi firms on the requirements to keep apprentices safe, and should any incidents occur, procedures for alerting the provider are well established.
 - All staff have appropriate checks, and records of staff appropriateness and training are well maintained. Leaders and managers have introduced sound procedures to raise the awareness of staff, employers and apprentices to have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and to implement the duties required by counter-terrorism legislation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Staff are motivated and enthusiastic, have high expectations of apprentices and use a wide range of teaching and learning methods that engage apprentices. Assessors and tutors are well qualified and have up-to-date, relevant experience within the industry. Apprentices receive specific vocational advice and support. Apprentices very much enjoy their learning, achieve well and are keen to make good progress.

- Staff ensure that off-the-job training is well structured to meet apprentices' needs. The planning of learning which focuses on specific knowledge within short blocks of time enables apprentices to develop their understanding within the context of intensive tuition. Effective peer support leads to the very good achievement of short-term goals. Apprentices respond very well to this approach. Visiting specialist speakers enrich learning by demonstrating current business techniques that further engage apprentices and ensure that they have knowledge of most recent industry innovations.
- Employers provide very good on-the-job training that builds well on the theoretical knowledge provided during block-release learning. Apprentices quickly develop skills to industry standards that enable them to work independently, installing sophisticated intruder alarms and fire alarms in both private homes and industrial premises. Staff provide apprentices with good opportunities to expand their vocational skills and knowledge alongside their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices gain experience and understanding in closed circuit television (CCTV), controlled access, automatic barriers and electronically operated gates.
- Assessment of apprentices' progress and performance is accurate and timely. Assessors and tutors ensure that the development of apprentices' skills and qualification achievements are recorded systematically, which enables regular tracking of their progress and leads to appropriate interventions where progress is too slow. Assessors and tutors provide good oral feedback that helps apprentices to improve, but written feedback is often too brief and limits apprentices' understanding of how to improve.
- Assessors and tutors promote the development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills in discrete classes effectively so that they make good progress and achieve very well. Regardless of whether apprentices already have the qualifications to meet the minimum framework requirements, the great majority of apprentices attend English and mathematics lessons during off-the-job training to develop these skills further.
- Employers, assessors and tutors provide effective advice on future job roles. For example, employers help apprentices choose optional units to best meet industry requirements, whilst assessors and tutors ensure that apprentices' CVs are up to date so that they can take advantage of future employment opportunities.
- Assessors and tutors support apprentices very well. They offer much encouragement, and apprentices are able to contact them, should the need arise, at any time. Staff screen apprentices early in the programme and are aware of apprentices who have additional needs, such as dyslexia. Appropriate additional support is in place so that they achieve as well as others.
- Assessors and tutors do not use individual learning plans sufficiently to highlight areas for improvement; too many progress targets highlight the completion of specific qualification units rather than specific skills or personal development. Assessors and tutors do not regularly use targets to challenge apprentices to develop their skills and understanding beyond the competences required for the qualifications.
- In vocational learning, tutors and assessors pay too little attention to the starting points of apprentices in English and mathematics, which results in insufficient planning to meet their individual needs and which slows their progress. In a minority of cases, staff do not correct apprentices' work for spelling and grammatical errors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

- Apprentices are confident about their future in the sector and are proud of their rapidly developing practical technical skills. They use technical language confidently, for instance when discussing the use of oscilloscopes to display waveforms. They take part in national skills competitions, and two apprentices were recent winners of the security industry's Engineer of the Year competition. Most benefit from additional learning organised by their employer, for instance further technical courses, additional safety courses such as working at height, or on-the-job learning in other sectors of the employer's business. Apprentices learn well at work. Employers value the contribution apprentices make to their businesses. Many give apprentices extra responsibilities, such as responding to call-outs.
- Apprentices become self-confident, and develop a good work ethic. Assessors and tutors stress these at induction and off-the-job training. Assessors and college staff provide supportive feedback when needed. Apprentices behave well and work effectively with colleagues and assessors. Assessors and tutors maintain particularly robust systems to support attendance on day- or block-release programmes which are effective, and as a result the attendance of almost all apprentices is good. Apprentices develop good personal skills from the example set by more experienced colleagues, rapidly improving their ability to meet customer expectations. Employers quickly come to trust apprentices to work unsupervised.
- Assessors and tutors provide comprehensive careers information to help apprentices develop good career plans. Apprentices are ambitious, and the large minority already have a clear idea of their career progression, even at very early stages of their apprenticeships, and they recognise and relish their improving earnings potential.

- SfS promotes healthy lifestyles with posters and discussions at induction. Apprentices feel safe and demonstrate a good awareness of a range of personal safety issues, such as e-safety or being aware of how to protect themselves on late-night call-outs. Apprentices know how to report any misgivings or incidents and are confident that the relevant person will follow these up effectively.
- Reviews do not routinely record details of apprentices' personal development. Where apprentices need to develop or improve their work skills or personal skills, reviews do not record the agreed remedial actions or development, nor set targets for these. Apprentices are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Assessors and tutors maintain apprentices' awareness of equality and diversity with short discussions in most reviews. These do not develop apprentices' understanding of diversity sufficiently. For example, during a discussion, a tutor did not sufficiently deepen the apprentice's existing awareness of sex discrimination by comparing it with discrimination against gay men in the industry sector. Similarly, apprentices are aware of the dangers of grooming, but most are unsure how to recognise it, and few appreciate that the dangers extend to radicalisation and extremism.

Outcomes for learners

are good

- The proportion of apprentices who have completed their frameworks has increased significantly since the previous inspection. In 2014/15, apprentices with SfS continued to complete on time. Senior managers regularly check the current progress of apprentices and this is maintaining the increase in achievements.
- Assessors and tutors support apprentices well to pass external examinations in their vocational subjects and functional skills. The vast majority of apprentices achieve good results on their first attempt.
- The vast majority of apprentices make good progress and gain additional qualifications to make them more employable in the security sector. Apprentices enjoy their learning and can articulate how they have improved skills and confidence to support their further career progression.
- Managers recognise that apprentices aged 16–18 do not achieve as well as adults and have put actions in place to improve this. Staff ensure that younger apprentices receive a comprehensive induction with employers so that they understand what will be required of them to complete the qualification.
- Staff at SfS understand the industry well and have produced good resources to encourage young women into the profession. However, there are currently still too few women in the security industry.
- Managers do not have a complete understanding of the destinations of their apprentices. Employers continue to retain most apprentices after completion of their qualification, but managers at SfS do not keep comprehensive records on apprentices when they achieve promotion, change employers or gain additional skills.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	315
CEO	Terri Jones
Website address	www.skillsforsecurity.org.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)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	82	55	14	13	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14–16	None							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main sub-contractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Uxbridge College ■ Master Locksmith Association. 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Tracey Zimmerman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine Mayer, assistant lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
David Longworth	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Tucker	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the compliance manager 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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