

# DHL International (UK) Limited

Employer

Inspection dates

2–4 November 2016

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers do not use sufficiently independent assessments of the subcontractor's work to implement actions swiftly enough that lead to sustainable improvements for all apprentices.
- The standard of the subcontractor-delivered off-the-job training received by apprentices based in the South East does not fully meet their needs and slows their progress.
- Quality improvement arrangements focus too much on what has been completed rather than future actions to drive up standards to ensure that apprentices achieve by the agreed date.
- Leaders and managers do not make sufficient use of data to monitor the progress of different apprenticeship groups or for governance purposes.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that apprentices receive adequate impartial information and advice prior to leaving their current employment.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Apprentices enjoy their training and are well motivated; they develop a positive attitude to learning and make good gains in vocational and personal skills, knowledge and understanding that are valued by their employer.
- Through participation in good-quality on-the-job training, all apprentices develop a wide range of industry-standard workplace skills that enhance their employability and help them to progress within their careers.
- Apprentices make good improvements in their English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills that ensure that they become more effective in the workplace.
- Apprentices are well protected from harm while working and training; they know how to stay safe and raise a safety concern.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations and ambitions for all apprentices; they collaborate successfully with trainers and assessors to remove personal and learning barriers to aid apprentices' success.

## **Full report**

### **Information about the provider**

- DHL Express started operations in the United Kingdom in 1974 and today is an international company delivering shipments to over 220 countries and territories. It operates from 39 service centres in England and has a head office based at Hounslow in London and two airport hubs at Heathrow and the East Midlands. DHL Express is part of the wider DPDHL group and employs over 3,700 staff and operates 1,300 vehicles. Its United Kingdom customer service agents are based at East Midlands Airport.
- The majority of apprentices are following a customer service or business administration programme and are based in the East Midlands contact centre. The remaining apprentices are located in the South East, near Heathrow airport. DHL Express directly funds other apprenticeship training, but this provision was out of scope of the inspection.
- The company provides all the off-the job training, with the exception of English, mathematics and ICT, which is delivered by a subcontractor. The subcontractor is also responsible for apprentices' assessment.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve further?**

- Establish comprehensive quality assurance and improvement arrangements for the provision that are independent of the subcontractor. Use the outcomes of these processes to inform an action planning process leading to rapid and sustained improvement.
- Ensure that apprentices based in the South East achieve to their full potential by using the good subcontractor-delivered off-the-job training arrangements evident in the East Midlands provision.
- Provide leaders and managers with appropriately detailed data so that:
  - the progress of different apprenticeship groups can be accurately monitored and rapid interventions initiated where underachievement is identified
  - the board can more effectively hold managers to account for their performance in securing the success of all apprentices.
- Provide all apprentices with relevant impartial information and advice where they are considering career paths that do not include staying in their current employment.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The performance management of the subcontractor requires improvement. Leaders and managers place an over-reliance on the subcontractor's arrangements to evaluate the provision's quality, particularly the impact of teaching and assessment on apprentices' progress. This has restricted the capacity of managers to identify and quickly secure sustainable improvements so all apprentices achieve and do so within the planned time. Managers do not produce a self-assessment report but have compiled an improvement plan using feedback from the subcontractor and apprentices. Overall, the plan refers to completed activities rather than identifying future improvement work to challenge the subcontractor to raise standards rapidly for all apprentices. Managers have yet to evaluate the impact on apprentices of all implemented improvement initiatives.
- Managers recognise that they do not sufficiently monitor the progress of different apprenticeship groups to check that no groups are underachieving. The current range of actions to minimise identified differences is too limited and not precise enough.
- Apprentices receive very helpful information and advice at their induction that helps them to clarify their short-term career goals. The subsequent support received by apprentices effectively allows them to explore the available options, particularly within their employer's group of businesses. However, the provision of impartial information and advice requires improvement to help apprentices explore alternative education, training and/or work should they wish to leave their current employment.
- Leaders and managers have established a clear vision for apprenticeship training within the business that emphasises excellence and high standards. They have high expectations of apprentices and very effectively use the previous success of apprentices as role models to further inspire and raise ambition. Managers have forged productive links with schools to promote the career opportunities available in logistics and the advantages of apprenticeship training.
- Leaders and managers have successfully delivered programme developments that benefit apprentices. Staff have introduced well designed in-house off-the job training that complements the requirement of different apprenticeships. This effectively supports apprentices' achievement and progress to their next steps.
- Since the previous inspection, managers have used a self-critical approach to rationalise the range of apprenticeships offered that better addresses apprentices' training needs and promotion prospects. In addition, managers have recently implemented a more relevant induction and clear career progression routes to higher qualifications and more responsible work roles. Qualifications that had very poor achievement rates, such as management, have ceased. Early indicators suggest these improvements are enhancing the provision, particularly through significantly lowering the early dropout rate compared to previous apprentice cohorts.

### The governance of the provider

- Senior leaders at board level provide suitable challenge to evaluate staff and apprenticeship performance. They have appropriately identified and supported the changes in the apprenticeship offer that have led to an improved experience for apprentices.

- Senior managers receive regular and informative updates that give them an adequate strategic oversight of the provision's quality and success. However, the range of available management information requires improvement so that they can analyse data in more detail to support effective quality improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All apprentices feel safe, have a good awareness of how to keep themselves secure and know how to raise a concern. They have a very clear understanding of how to stay out of harm when working online. Apprentices demonstrate an adequate or better appreciation of the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism.
- Managers conduct appropriate recruitment checks for all training staff, including those employed by the subcontractor. Monitoring by managers of the health and safety requirements and practices of apprentices is good. Apprentices' training promotes their understanding of safe working practices to a good level.
- Managers have placed a strong focus on ensuring that all trainers and assessors receive relevant safeguarding training and updates on their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. They promote British values well throughout the apprentices' training. As a result, apprentices are able to apply their understanding in a wide range of personal circumstances, as well as work-related situations, and improve their customer management skills.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Enthusiastic and experienced staff engage apprentices well in evaluating their progress, building motivation and their use of reflective practice. In most cases, assessors provide accurate and helpful feedback to apprentices on their written work so that they know what to do to improve. Trainers use questioning techniques skilfully to check apprentices' understanding of how to apply their learning to the workplace.
- On-the-job training assists apprentices very well in developing vocational and practical skills, for example through effective coaching, mentoring and one-to-one sessions with their supervisors. Managers provide apprentices with relevant and challenging tasks, so they develop communication, presentation and advertising skills to an appropriate level. This enables apprentices to progress within their existing role and successfully adopt increased responsibilities.
- Tutors and assessors use the outcomes of accurate assessment of apprentices' starting points to place them on the correct level of study, plan learning and set challenging learning targets. Consequently, apprentices are able to focus correctly on developing the specific skills and knowledge that they need to succeed. The majority of assessors make good use of tracking systems to identify those apprentices who are falling behind and take appropriate action to speed up apprentices' achievements.
- Trainers and assessors place an appropriate focus on developing apprentices' English and mathematics skills during their training. This supports apprentices' effective communication skills development in listening, speaking and writing. For example, customer service apprentices who had found routine telephone calls difficult to answer are now able to complete successful calls. They succinctly record written records and calculate parcel volumes for shipments to decide the appropriate size of delivery van.

- Apprentices have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity. This was an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Managers have established a safe and enjoyable training environment that apprentices view as their 'big family'. They value the mutual respect found in the workplace and the praise that managers give for the contribution they make to the business. This enthuses and motivates apprentices to aspire through their learning to reach higher standards. The majority of apprentices develop a sound understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They know how to identify and deal with issues relating to discrimination, bullying and extremism effectively. Assessors successfully develop apprentices' confidence in dealing with equality and diversity in the workplace through non-judgemental conflict resolution. However, assessors do not use progress reviews sufficiently well to enhance all apprentices' appreciation of relevant legislation applicable to work and personal lives.
- Off-the-job training is not consistently good. It is highly effective and links well with on-the-job training for apprentices based in the East Midlands. However, South East-based apprentices do not benefit from good links between assessors and supervisors to ensure that on- and off-the-job training are coordinated effectively. Although apprentices make good use of the worksheets and videos provided by assessors, they rely heavily on their own research to develop their theoretical knowledge. Apprentices do not have access to sufficient learning materials at a variety of levels to support their independent studies. This impedes their progress, which they find demotivating.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Apprentices develop their thinking and learning skills well. For example, apprentices can effectively apply problem-solving techniques to facilitate the release of shipments held by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Most apprentices develop their study skills to a good standard during training. For example, assessors challenge them to reflect and comment on the residential training they have received. This helps apprentices to identify how to apply this learning to change future behaviours and become more effective employees.
- Apprentices make good strides in developing valuable employability skills, including attending work as scheduled and arriving on time. Managers support a few apprentices with low attendance records to attend regularly. As a result, apprentices successfully complete their training.
- Tutors' and assessors' understanding of apprentices' needs is good and allows them to provide sensitive support to improve apprentices' personal effectiveness. In the East Midlands, assessors work particularly well with managers to provide apprentices with effective learning support. In a minority of cases, they have given apprentices extra time to complete their training at work. As a result, apprentices have successfully achieved their qualification.
- Apprentices are able to assess accurately potential health and safety risks at work. They use this knowledge well to inform their work practices, for example by adopting the correct screen height and posture when using computers to minimise adverse effects.
- Apprentices understand British values well and apply them appropriately in their work. They participate in national events such as Remembrance Day and Unicef's Day of Change; this extends their knowledge and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Apprentices benefit from a range of additional activities that effectively challenge them to

enhance their appreciation of health, moral and ethical issues. For example, they appropriately enhance their understanding of how to improve their personal finance management, diet and fitness. Participation in charity and school link activity broadens their appreciation of how their actions can contribute to a cohesive and inclusive society.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Apprentices enjoy their training and are well motivated; they have a positive attitude to learning that helps them succeed. Apprentices participate in team-building activities that very effectively develop their ability to work cooperatively to achieve group objectives. This ensures that they quickly settle into working together with their colleagues to provide contact centre support that meets demanding quality standards.
- Apprentices make good gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. This helps them to progress in their current work or secure employment with other organisations at a higher level. A good proportion of apprentices progress to a higher level of training or gain promotion to more responsible roles. Managers very effectively track the destination of all apprentices.
- Apprentices develop a wide range of industry-standard workplace skills that their employer values. For example, customer service apprentices use telephone and email to deal quickly with customers' queries or concerns. Business administration apprentices have improved business efficiency by developing time and attendance user guides for supervisors and managers. Apprentices are suitably adaptive in dealing with a wide range of customers. For example, customers with reading difficulties receive user-friendly rate cards that automatically calculate shipping costs. For non-English speaking customers, apprentices set up and participate in conference calls with translators to allow queries to be resolved.
- Apprentices develop good practical, vocational skills and demonstrate their use to industry standard. For example, customer services apprentices meet performance indicators by responding to invoice queries within a 48-hour limit. Apprentices identify business opportunities with existing customers by advising on larger shipments to reduce costs, which increases business efficiency and income.
- Apprentices' development of English, mathematics and ICT skills is good. They are adept at applying their newly acquired skills to work situations and therefore become more useful and valued employees. For example, apprentices are able to write clear accounts of the work they do, correctly using the technical shipping and logistical terms. Apprentices competently calculate accurate duty and taxes when shipping goods abroad or estimating transportation insurance costs. They develop proficiency in using tracking software and associated checkpoints to enable safe and effective delivery. Apprentices do not routinely have the opportunity to work towards an English or mathematics qualification above the level required by their apprenticeship.
- The large majority of current apprentices are making good progress and are on track to achieve within the planned time. In 2014/15, managers did not ensure that all apprentices achieved sufficiently good outcomes. A significant number of apprentices left the programme because of factors beyond the provider's control, including changes in their employment or personal circumstances. Since then, managers have changed recruitment arrangements and now primarily deliver business administration and customer service intermediate apprenticeships within their call centre.

- For the most recent completed academic year, data supplied by the provider shows that a good proportion of retained apprentices achieved their apprenticeship. However, too few achieved by the planned end date.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	58782
Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	78
Principal/CEO	Phil Couchman
Telephone number	020 8818 8000
Website	<a href="http://www.DHL.com">www.DHL.com</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or 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+		
	14	9	8	5	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	EQL Solutions Limited							



## Information about this inspection

The learning and development manager, as nominee, assisted the inspection team. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; 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.

## Inspection team

Nigel Bragg, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Nelson	Ofsted Inspector
Marinette Bazin	Ofsted Inspector

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