

Expedient Training Services Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

22–25 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Safeguarding is ineffective.
- Leaders and managers have failed to address the majority of areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Management of the apprenticeship programme is inadequate.
- Too many apprentices are not employed.
- Directors do not scrutinise and challenge the decisions of managers effectively enough.
- The management of subcontractors and associate delivery partners is ineffectual.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate; apprentices fail to develop the skills and knowledge they need to progress in their career.
- Assessors do not ensure that apprentices develop their skills in English, mathematics and where appropriate information and communication technology.
- Managers have failed to implement appropriate systems to monitor the progress that apprentices make; they do not know how well apprentices are progressing on their programmes.
- Assessors accredit apprentices' existing competencies rather than supporting them to develop new skills.
- The provision of independent careers information, advice and guidance is weak.
- Too few apprentices understand the principles of British values; most tutors do not promote them or their significance in modern society.
- Apprentices have a very limited awareness of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Assessors do not set sufficiently challenging targets for apprentices to achieve, resulting in apprentices making slow progress on their programmes.

The provider has the following strengths

- This provider has no strengths.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Expedient Training Services Limited (Expedient) is based in Jarrow and provides apprenticeships nationally; the majority of apprentices are located in the North East of England. The largest subject areas provided are business administration, health and social care, leadership and management, and performing manufacturing operations. Expedient work with four subcontractors based in the North East and Yorkshire who provide education and training for a small minority of apprentices. The vast majority of the remaining apprenticeship training is provided by an associate partner. This arrangement has not been sanctioned by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
- The percentage of pupils in the local area gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent, including English and mathematics, is broadly in line with the national average. The unemployment rate in the area is significantly higher than the national average.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of the utmost urgency, managers should review safeguarding policies and procedures and assure that all apprentices are kept safe. They should do this by:
 - ensuring that appropriate checks, risk assessments and training take place for all staff, subcontractors and associate partners who teach and train apprentices
 - ensuring that the designated safeguarding officer receives appropriate training to allow them to fulfil the duties of their role
 - ensuring that apprentices improve their awareness of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism in their work and personal lives.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, both internally and in subcontractors' provision; ensure that staff are suitably trained and have the appropriate experience to teach the component aspects of the apprenticeship.
- Strengthen the contract management of subcontractors and associate partners to ensure they are held to account for improving the quality of provision.
- Ensure that directors receive accurate and timely information on the quality of teaching and learning and the outcomes of apprentices, so that they can more effectively hold managers to account.
- Improve the quality of careers information, advice and guidance that apprentices receive prior to them being placed on apprenticeships, to ensure that they are on the right course and at the right level to support their occupational skill development.
- Ensure that assessors develop apprentices' understanding of what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain incorporating democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and having mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- Ensure that managers monitor the progress of all apprentices, so that they can provide support to those who make slow progress, and challenge the more able to achieve their potential.

- Significantly improve the management of the apprenticeship provision to ensure that apprentices receive a high standard of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that all apprentices are employed in placements which are relevant to their personal and career aspirations
 - ensuring that managers and assessors plan the apprenticeship programme to meet the specific requirements of every apprentice, so that they all improve their subject-specific skills by the end of the programme
 - ensuring that assessors set finely honed developmental targets for apprentices that challenge them to make good progress on their programmes from their relative starting points
 - ensuring that apprentices are not placed on apprenticeships merely to accredit existing skills and experience.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and managers have failed to address the majority of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. A marked deterioration has occurred in the quality of other key areas of activity, and a major new concern has arisen in the safeguarding of apprentices.
- Leaders and managers have failed to focus sufficiently on improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. In their ambitions for the organisation, they focus mainly on meeting financial targets and ensuring compliance with regulatory bodies, and do not give enough attention to ensuring that apprentices receive a high quality of learning.
- Leaders and managers have not formally evaluated the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or the progress of apprentices since the last inspection. In the current quality improvement plan, they do not identify all the areas for improvement identified by inspectors, or provide sufficient actions to tackle those they have recognised.
- The arrangements for observing teaching, learning and assessment have not led to improvements. Observers pay too much attention to the practices of tutors and assessors, rather than accurately evaluating the impact of their actions on the progress of apprentices. As a result, recommendations arising from observation reports have little impact on improving the quality of what assessors do.
- The management of subcontractors has led to poor outcomes for learners. Directors and managers have entered into a partnership agreement with a new provider, outside of their normal subcontracting arrangements and not sanctioned by the SFA, to recruit and provide training to nearly half of all current apprenticeships at Expedient. Managers identified too late that this provider's assessors were not working to consistent quality standards. As a result, the progress of a high proportion of current apprentices is poor.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is underdeveloped. Apprentices' application of these values is confined to only a few vocational areas, such as health and social care. Managers have only just started to analyse the achievement of different groups of apprentices, and have therefore not been in a position to identify the significant gaps in attainment between male and female apprentices.

The governance of the provider

- Despite being actively involved and demonstrating high levels of commitment, directors do not scrutinise and challenge the decisions of managers effectively enough. As a result, the pace of improvement has been far too slow and the poor performance of the largest associate provider has not been tackled quickly enough.
- Directors use their extensive contacts with local employers to help shape the curriculum, for example in the development of new courses in port operations, property services and digital marketing.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is ineffective. Information on current Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) checks of assessors from the large associate provider is incomplete, so managers cannot be certain that apprentices are safe. Managers do not consistently implement the provider's policy of renewing DBS checks every three years.

- The designated safeguarding officer does not have the training and knowledge to fulfil the duties of the role. Assessors do not undertake mandatory training on safeguarding beyond an introduction to policies and procedures at induction. As a result, their ability to identify apprentices who may be at risk or who are vulnerable is weak.
- Managers have not established effective relationships with external agencies that can provide support and advice to apprentices in the event of safeguarding concerns arising.
- Staff have undertaken training on the 'Prevent' duty, and understand how to recognise the signs of radicalisation and extremism. However, apprentices do not see the relevance of these risks to their work or everyday lives.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Management of apprentices' programmes is weak. Too many apprentices are not employed. The provider does not meet the principles and requirements of apprenticeship programmes; apprentices do not receive their education and training entitlement. Managers have failed to take swift and decisive action to ensure that learning programmes, which are inadequate, are swiftly improved.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is generally poor. Too many apprentices do not receive high-quality on- and off-the-job training, tutoring and coaching. Their knowledge, skills and understanding are inadequately developed and the progress they make is too slow.
- Assessors' planning is poor and often delayed. Apprentices on team-leading apprenticeships do not receive regular assessment or feedback on their progress; consequently, they make slow progress and are unsure when they are due to complete their apprenticeship.
- Managers have failed to ensure that subcontractors and the one associate partner provide a well-balanced training programme to meet the specific requirements of all apprentices. Too many apprentices fail to improve their vocational and technical skills from their starting points owing to ineffectual planning. For example, a number of experienced rail track maintenance engineers fail to gain new skills, because assessors simply accredit existing competencies.
- Apprentices receive insufficient off-the-job training to enable them to develop their skills fully. For example, port authority employers do not release their employees from the shop floor to attend training and meet with their assessors. This failure demotivates apprentices and severely delays their progress.
- Apprentices' skills in English, mathematics and, where applicable, information and communication technology (ICT) are inadequately developed. Tutors do not challenge apprentices enough. Too many tutors do not include English and mathematics in vocational studies, resulting in apprentices not understanding how to apply these skills in their workplace.
- Assessors do not set sufficiently challenging targets after reviewing apprentices' progress and carrying out assessments. They do not give sufficient attention to apprentices' personal development, but limit target-setting to the completion of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) units. Too many targets are not met.
- Many apprentices do not complete their apprenticeship on, or before, their planned end date because of slow progress. Assessors track apprentices' progress poorly and fail to record it sufficiently. Many progress review records lack detailed information about

apprentices' theoretical knowledge, practical competencies and progress.

- Assessors do not provide enough feedback to apprentices about the accuracy and quality of their written work. They do not give apprentices helpful information about what they can do to improve the standard of their work and obtain a higher mark or grade. Assessors do not appropriately point out spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors to apprentices, with the result that errors are repeated and apprentices' written English skills do not improve quickly enough, or in too many cases, do not improve at all.
- Tutors and assessors provide good support to vehicle maintenance repair apprentices. Tutors are well qualified and experienced and they use their extensive vocational knowledge to ensure that apprentices develop professional standards and good vocational skills. Apprentices make a good contribution to the prosperity and effectiveness of their employers' businesses. They have frequent assessment visits and most of them are making good progress.
- Assessors and employers provide good support to apprentices in estate agency occupations. Apprentices value their learning and apply it successfully in their job roles. Assessors in this area have good industry-standard knowledge, which supports high-quality training.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- Many apprentices make slow progress and, consequently, their personal and professional development is seriously inhibited. Apprentices' attitudes to all aspects of their learning are not consistently positive. Apprentices whose NVQ does not relate sufficiently to their work role find it difficult to generate enthusiasm and motivation for their apprenticeship programme and to be positive about their learning, which they deem to be irrelevant.
- Programmes are insufficiently challenging for apprentices who already have the knowledge, skills and understanding that the apprenticeship requires. Most apprentices receive poor advice and guidance throughout their programme. Too many do not know what the apprenticeship entails and how long it will take them to complete it. Apprentices have inadequate information about their entitlements, for example the specific hours for on- and off-the-job learning.
- Many apprentices produce work that is not of a sufficiently high level. For example, an apprentice who is required to pass functional mathematics at level 2 is working at a much lower and less demanding level. A significant number of apprentices do not have English as their first language. They receive too little support to develop their oral skills and to become more effective communicators and more proficient employees.
- A large majority of apprentices feel safe and work safely, including those on vehicle-maintenance repair apprenticeships. Health and social care apprentices have a good awareness of safeguarding, and equality and diversity. However, not all apprentices have this awareness. For example, inspectors visited apprentices in one workplace, where the apprentices working there were unaware that the premises were hazardous as one of the fire exits was completely obscured.
- Too few apprentices understand the meaning of British values because most assessors do not promote them effectively or make them relevant to apprentices' work and personal lives. They also have a very limited awareness of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism; apprentices and assessors sometimes confuse the terms 'British values' and 'Prevent' and cannot distinguish between them.

- A small minority of apprentices take a pride in their work and are enthusiastic about their learning and development. They value the fact that they are gaining qualifications and improving their long-term career prospects.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- Managers have failed to implement appropriate systems to monitor the progress that apprentices make on their courses. Expedient's staff and subcontractors do not identify new apprentices' vocational starting points so that they can monitor their subsequent progress. Consequently, many of the more able apprentices do not develop new skills to enhance their productivity at work. For example, rail engineering intermediate and advanced apprentices gain very few additional skills, owing to their already wide-ranging experience of working in the rail sector and the extensive skills they have gained in their current and previous roles.
- Achievement rates have declined significantly since 2014/15 in almost all subject areas including health and social care, and business and management, which account for the minority of provision. Rail engineering apprenticeship achievement rates were very high in 2015/16; many apprentices have been employed for up to 15 years in this work before joining apprenticeships where they are assessed on existing skills, as opposed to being encouraged to develop higher-level and new skills.
- Current apprentices make poor progress on their apprenticeships. Very few apprentices achieve their apprenticeship within the planned timescales. All rail engineering apprentices make slow progress on their qualifications and none of the apprentices who were due to achieve this year have done so.
- Staff and subcontractors identify apprentices' English and mathematics starting points through assessments prior to the start of their apprenticeships. However, assessors do not use these assessments to plan learning to develop apprentices' skills in these subjects, nor do they use appropriate assessment methods to monitor the progress that they make. Consequently, many apprentices do not improve their English and mathematical skills throughout their apprenticeships.
- Managers have only recently begun to monitor the achievement of particular groups of apprentices. They have set no targets to improve the differences identified by inspectors, such as a lower rate of achievement within planned timescales by intermediate apprentices when compared with advanced apprentices; or the lower rates of achievement by male apprentices when compared with female apprentices on 25+ apprenticeship programmes.
- Managers have very recently begun to monitor learner destinations. Expedient staff have contacted less than half of all achievers who completed their courses in 2015/16. Very few apprentices feel that they have improved their skills or increased their confidence as a result of their training. Many apprentices continue in the job roles they had prior to starting their apprenticeships, with a small proportion gaining promotion.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51800
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	664
Principal/CEO	Mr Malcolm Atkinson
Telephone number	0191 489 0212
Website	www.expedient-training.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	2	239	1	246	0	6		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	N/A							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Actions Ltd Blue Apple Training Optimum Skills Limited Port Training Services							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the funded operation manager, 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 apprentices 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.

Inspection team

Paul Cocker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charles Searle	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Pat Hornsby	Ofsted Inspector
Catharine Jackson	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2017