

Learning Skills Partnership Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

19–22 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have overseen significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have a clear and carefully considered vision to specialise in apprenticeships within the automotive and construction industries.
- Leaders and managers have strong partnerships with high-quality national employers; these enable apprentices to benefit from good vocational training.
- For the vast majority of apprentices, well-planned and effective teaching, learning and assessment lead to the development of good occupational skills which their employers value highly.
- Tutors and employers provide good support so that apprentices can overcome barriers and achieve.
- A very high proportion of apprentices who complete their programmes remain in permanent employment at the end of their apprenticeship.
- Written feedback on apprentices' work does not consistently challenge apprentices to improve the standard of their work or their written English.
- Managers do not ensure that all apprentices receive impartial advice about the next steps in their career.
- Too often, tutors focus insufficiently on ensuring that the most-able apprentices make rapid progress in developing their skills.
- Apprentices aged 19 and above do not achieve as well as younger apprentices.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Learning Skills Partnership is a national independent learning provider based in Hessle, near Hull. Apprentices are located across the country. There are currently 318 apprentices enrolled, with three fifths aged between 16 and 18, and the remainder aged over 19. The majority of apprentices are completing administration or customer service programmes with employers in the automotive industry, and a quarter are on construction programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of written feedback on work by:
 - developing the skills of tutors to provide feedback that enables apprentices to understand how they can improve the quality of their written work
 - ensuring that tutors correct spelling errors so that apprentices do not continue to repeat mistakes and, as a result, the quality of their work improves over time.
- Ensure that all apprentices have access to impartial advice during their programme to improve their understanding and awareness of the career opportunities both within their current employer and more widely.
- Ensure that tutors provide sufficient challenge to enable the most able apprentices to make rapid progress.
- Identify the reasons for the decline in the proportion of apprentices aged 19 and above who successfully complete their qualification, and improve their achievement to a level that matches that of younger apprentices.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have taken effective action in response to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have been successful in addressing nearly all the recommendations made.
- Senior leaders have a strong vision and clearly articulated ambition for their organisation. They focus successfully on providing a high-quality experience to both businesses and apprentices. They select carefully the vocational areas in which they specialise with a focus on the automotive and construction industries, and design their curriculum offer effectively to meet the needs of apprentices and employers. The curriculum reflects local, regional and national needs well.
- Management of staff performance has improved and is now good. Most staff make effective use of the professional development that they receive. Underperforming staff either improve as a result of effective support, or they leave the organisation. Leaders and managers now have a clear focus on raising standards, which they combine with a renewed focus on high expectations for staff and apprentices. As a result, the support that apprentices receive from their tutors is good, and they are making at least the expected progress.
- Leaders are self-reflective and can articulate clearly the key strengths and the areas that they need to improve in their provision. Their use of self-assessment is sufficiently self-critical and they make effective use of a quality improvement plan to identify and address areas for improvement.
- Leaders' use of data to inform management decisions is good. Leaders recognised the need to improve their management of data and now have a system that works effectively. Staff and leaders have better access to information about apprentices' progress and use this well to identify improvement actions. For example, leaders now monitor progress and achievement by apprentices with different employers and put in place remedial measures where necessary. Where improvements are not evident, they take the decision to stop working with those employers.
- Managers evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively. They observe lessons routinely, and make reliable and broadly accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In a minority of observations of lessons, observers take insufficient account of the progress that apprentices make when identifying improvement actions for tutors.
- Links with employers are very strong. Employers, many of whom operate nationally, are involved closely in the planning of learning programmes for apprentices and they value highly their relationship with Learning Skills Partnership. They recognise clearly the value that apprentices add to their business, and offer apprentices good opportunities to develop their skills and progress within their careers.

The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have introduced an external governance structure that provides appropriate support and challenge.
- Those with governance responsibility know the main strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They hold leaders and managers to account for outcomes for apprentices and the quality of provision, and are clear about what actions leaders need to take to improve quality further. However, minutes of board meetings do not record sufficiently the level of scrutiny and challenge that governors provide, and a few of the actions that governors identify for leaders to implement are not sufficiently clear.
- Recent recruitment activities have focused on adding experience of education and training to the governors' skill set, and the current board now consists of three very experienced, external, non-executive directors. However, it is too early to fully measure the impact of these new arrangements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers maintain an accurate and up-to-date single central record of the checks made during recruitment and they follow safe recruitment practices.
- Designated safeguarding officers carry out appropriate training and they ensure that all staff have introductory and refresher training on safeguarding. All members of staff have completed appropriate training on the 'Prevent' duty. However, the 'Prevent' action plan requires further development to reflect the challenges within modern Britain.
- High-quality workbooks have been developed to raise apprentices' awareness of safeguarding and e-safety, and these are used by apprentices to good effect during induction.
- When managers have any safeguarding concerns about an apprentice, appropriate actions are taken to provide support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Well-planned and effective teaching, learning and assessment ensure that the great majority of apprentices make at least the expected progress from their starting points. A small minority of apprentices whose progress had been slowed by staffing changes have now caught up.
- Apprentices benefit from good and frequent individual and group coaching with their tutor, which ensures that they understand and complete their work to a good standard. Coaching sessions focus sharply on what apprentices need at each point in their programme. In many sessions, apprentices enjoy a range of effective, interesting and engaging learning activities.
- Tutors use their good subject knowledge and industrial experience well, and draw on apprentices' workplace experience within their teaching, so apprentices value and see the relevance of their learning.

- Assessment is robust and challenging, and used well by tutors to ensure that apprentices understand topics. Tutors question apprentices' explanations in their written work and during in-class assessments thoroughly to ensure that apprentices demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic.
- Tutors and employers support apprentices well to overcome potential barriers to learning. Tutors provide apprentices with good support for personal challenges and with problems at work, ensuring they stay on their programme. Employers ensure that study time is available during the working day, and facilities are available for apprentices to research and complete assessments.
- Employers are closely involved in designing apprentices' programmes and selecting units that develop apprentices' skills and meet the needs of the business. Most apprentices benefit from a seamless programme where employers fully understand what activities are required to support apprentices in the workplace. As a result, apprentices are able to gain the skills that they need and provide evidence of this for their assessments.
- Apprentices benefit from good verbal feedback and improve their work as a result. Feedback given orally during apprentices' training sessions and after assessments helps them to improve their skills and knowledge quickly.
- In too many instances, written feedback on apprentices' work does not challenge apprentices sufficiently to improve the standard of their work or their written English. When apprentices make mistakes in the accuracy of their writing, these are not consistently identified or corrected and, as a result, poor spelling, punctuation and grammar in written work are too common.
- Too often, tutors focus insufficiently on ensuring that the most able apprentices make rapid progress in developing their skills. Targets that tutors set for the most able apprentices are often insufficiently challenging. They focus too much on the completion of assessment materials rather than the development of vocational and personal skills.
- The need for additional support is identified late for a minority of apprentices. Managers have introduced recently a robust system to identify support needs, which has highlighted that more apprentices require support than previously identified. Reports generated by the system show that current apprentices are using the resources available, but it is too early to identify the impact on apprentices' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices are punctual, attend well and display high standards of behaviour and respect for others within the workplace. They take pride in all aspects of their work and they enjoy their apprenticeship. They quickly adapt to their role as an employee.
- Apprentices benefit from working for high-quality national employers with good facilities, resources and staff training, which raises their aspirations and enhances their career options. For example, construction apprentices working on a motorway project use cutting-edge surveying equipment; they also have their classroom onsite to easily link their practical work with theoretical knowledge.
- Apprentices develop relevant occupational skills to a high standard and use these skills with increasing confidence within the workplace. For example, business administration apprentices accurately complete purchase ledgers, and customer service apprentices

develop sufficient understanding of insurance products to provide appropriate advice to customers.

- Apprentices are polite and articulate. They can clearly describe the wider work-related skills they are developing and explain how these are useful within the workplace now and in the future. For example, customer service apprentices appreciate their much-improved telephone skills, and business administration apprentices describe the importance of developing team-working skills.
- Apprentices receive effective advice and guidance at the beginning of their programme so that they understand the components of the apprenticeship and the expectations of their employer and Learning Skills Partnership. Staff work closely with employers to ensure that they recruit the right apprentices and match them with suitable apprenticeship vacancies.
- Diversity is promoted well. For example, recruitment staff actively and successfully seek to recruit females to civil engineering and car hire companies. Apprentices develop a good understanding of equality issues, such as age and disability, and know how these apply to their particular workplaces. For example, they know how to meet the differing needs of a wide range of customers.
- Apprentices are aware and have sufficient understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, but a minority are unable to discuss what they know or explain how it relates to them personally. Tutors sensitively integrate current events into discussions to deepen apprentices' understanding of the dangers of radicalisation.
- Tutors and employers ensure that health and safety have a very high priority and, as a result, apprentices understand and demonstrate safe working practices. Apprentices are knowledgeable about safeguarding and know how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media.
- The provision of careers advice and guidance throughout apprentices' programmes is not planned and delivered well enough. When apprentices receive high-quality advice and guidance about their ongoing careers and long-term plans, this is often led by the employer. A minority of apprentices are not clear about the progression routes available to them or the potential careers within their vocational area.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- A high proportion of apprentices achieve their qualifications. Overall achievement has improved and is higher than that seen in similar providers.
- Current apprentices are making at least the expected progress. Managers have an accurate view of the progress that apprentices are making and they monitor this rigorously, ensuring that tutors intervene quickly when apprentices fall behind. The vast majority of current apprentices are on track to complete their programme within the planned time.
- Apprentices make good progress in acquiring the skills that they need to achieve their required qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology and, as a result, pass rates are high.
- Apprentices work to a high standard in the workplace. They quickly apply their new skills and, as a result, many are given greater levels of responsibility. For example, they move

from the warehouse to dealing face-to-face with customers, and they use newly learned skills in the more responsible role of vehicle damage assessment.

- Employers value highly the skills that apprentices develop, the work ethic they demonstrate and the value that they add to the business. As a result, the great majority of apprentices remain in permanent employment at the end of their apprenticeship. Around a third of apprentices progress to higher level apprenticeships and most apprentices who remain in employment continue with some form of training. Many advanced-level construction apprentices progress to university.
- The proportion of apprentices aged 19 and above who successfully complete their qualification has declined slightly in the current year. Their achievement is higher than in other similar providers but below that of their younger peers. Managers have identified this gap and have plans to improve the induction and support for older apprentices, but it is too early for this to have had an impact.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59154
Type of provider	Independent Learning Provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	225
Principal/CEO	Simon Alsop
Telephone number	01482 338 844
Website	www.learningskillspartnership.com

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	
	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+		
	141	54	43	80				
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:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations 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 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.

Inspection team

Rachel Angus, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Whitehead	Ofsted Inspector
Marina Gaze	Ofsted Inspector

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