

# Halfords

Employer

## Inspection dates

8–11 August 2017

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

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- The board was slow to respond to the recommendations of the previous inspection and to recognise the subsequent decline in performance.
- Too few apprentices have completed their apprenticeship by their planned end date.
- Managers' planning of functional skills delivery in both English and mathematics has been weak, resulting in too few apprentices developing and extending these skills.
- Managers do not monitor apprentices' progress and achievements in sufficient detail for them to take swift actions for improvement.
- Managers have not improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment quickly enough.
- Apprentices do not have enough understanding of extremism and radicalisation to discuss their relevance to their lives.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Recent management changes and the appointment of new and experienced assessors have led to improved progress and achievements for apprentices.
- The board values apprenticeships and has invested in a strategic vision which combines the new apprenticeship standards effectively with existing in-house training.
- Apprentices conduct themselves professionally in the workplace and develop skills through in-house training, which enable them to make a valuable contribution to the business.
- Leaders successfully support a wide range of local community initiatives aimed at disadvantaged groups, by taking part in a range of well-considered and effective corporate social projects. These improve participants' chances of employment.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Halfords is a large retailer of motoring and cycling products. Trading since 1892, it employs approximately 8,000 employees across 460 stores in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.
- Halfords began delivering its apprenticeship programme in February 2015. The provider has concentrated on intermediate apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, there were 693 intermediate apprentices in retail, 215 in management and 138 in warehousing. Since June 2017, the company has enrolled 83 learners onto team-leading apprenticeships at advanced level.

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

- Improve the level of scrutiny by the board through:
  - developing specific performance measures for the apprenticeship programme
  - ensuring that the board regularly receives reports on performance against these measures so that directors hold managers to account where targets are not being met or progress is too slow.
- Improve the effectiveness of management actions by:
  - developing the use of information by managers so that they can monitor apprentice performance in more detail and make effective and timely decisions that improve the apprentices' progress and achievement
  - changing the focus of assessor observations to provide an accurate judgement of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that initial assessment is used effectively to plan the support that is needed for each apprentice
  - ensuring that apprentices studying English and mathematics qualifications receive high-quality and timely support which enables them to progress and achieve
  - ensuring that all apprentices continue to develop and extend their independent learning skills to help their continued progress
  - improving the quality of target-setting so that apprentices know what they need to do to progress swiftly.
- Improve apprentices' understanding of extremism and radicalisation by training assessors so that they feel confident and able to extend apprentices' understanding.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Leaders and managers are ambitious for the Halfords apprenticeship programme, but they have been slow to address the recommendations from the previous inspection report. Until recently, strategies to improve outcomes for apprentices have not been successful.
- In the last nine months, directors and senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of provision. They have appointed new leaders and assessors who are starting to improve the provision. Assessors now have realistic and manageable caseloads. As a result, apprentices are now benefiting from more regular and frequent assessment visits. They are making better progress. Leaders have now established the management capacity to secure further improvement, but it is too early to judge the full impact.
- In the recent past, leaders did not place sufficient importance on their planning for the development of apprentices' skills in English and mathematics. This resulted in too few apprentices developing these skills. As a result of actions by the new leadership team, apprentices are now benefiting from more regular and timely support.
- Arrangements to improve teaching, learning and assessment through direct observation require improvement. Observations take place frequently and provide a supportive approach for the large team of new assessors. However, observers focus too much on compliance. They place insufficient emphasis on the effectiveness of teaching and on how well apprentices learn. Observers do not include sharply focused evaluations of key aspects of the training. For example, they do not report sufficiently on how well assessors teach English and mathematics, equality and diversity or safeguarding.
- Managers now collect much more information about apprentices' starting points and progress. Managers meet with assessors on a monthly basis and identify key performance issues. Assessors ensure that they provide support for those apprentices identified as making slow progress. As a result, retention and success rates are beginning to improve. However, managers do not use information effectively to manage all aspects of performance. For example, they do not analyse variations in the performance of different groups of apprentices.
- The self-assessment report is accurate, and comprehensive. However, within the improvement plan, managers do not set sufficiently challenging targets. They report on the completion of processes, rather than on the impact of these processes on the quality of the apprentices' experience.
- Assessors are well qualified and a majority also have a teaching qualification. Managers provide good, continuing professional development activities and training. This improves assessors' performance and develops their skills. This enables them to quickly develop and extend their technical skills and product knowledge. Despite recent training, too few staff have the confidence to explore and extend apprentices' knowledge of the risks posed by extremism and radicalisation.

- Arrangements for appraising staff performance are effective. Managers ensure that all assessors have individual development plans linked to the provider's key priorities. They plan effective staff appraisals which lead to staff improving their skills as assessors. Performance management arrangements are strong. Leaders have challenged under-performing staff; they have supported them to improve, or leave the business.
- Leaders, managers and assessors promote a culture of mutual respect. This reflects the organisation's commitment to an inclusive and diverse workforce. Leaders make particularly good use of projects which show their corporate social responsibility by working with and supporting community groups. For example, they promote bicycle safety to young children, donate used bikes to disadvantaged communities overseas, and provide training in bicycle maintenance to offenders nearing the end of their sentence. This enhances their chances of gaining employment upon release.

### **The governance of the provider**

- During 2015/16, the board of directors did not put in place the systems, processes and people needed to establish a successful apprenticeship programme. Directors did not provide effective and timely challenge to leaders and managers. During this period, apprenticeship performance and standards declined.
- Recently, directors have prioritised significant extra investment to support the apprenticeship programme. They have also overseen the appointment of new but experienced leadership and assessor teams. Early indications are that apprentices are now making better progress.
- Directors aim to improve the business by expanding training through apprenticeships. Directors have high expectations of all staff and apprentices. They communicate their commitment to apprenticeships and training through a clear set of company values.
- Directors use their industrial experience well to provide support for the new management team. For example, they have ensured that the recently launched standards-based apprenticeship programme meets the needs of the business and the retail sector.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Apprentices feel safe, which reflects the strong culture of health and safety across the organisation. Managers follow up accidents and near misses effectively. Apprentices know how, and to whom, they can report issues. They feel confident that managers will act on their concerns.
- Safeguarding incidents, including those of bullying and harassment, are rare. When they arise, the designated safeguarding officer investigates appropriately. Managers ensure that training opportunities are available for all staff in line with their duties.
- Managers pay good attention to maintaining the health and safety of staff and apprentices. They lead health and safety committee meetings, annual assessments and ongoing reviews of apprentices' activities in the workplace.

- Managers have implemented effective policies covering staff recruitment. The central register that records the status of Disclosure and Barring Service checks for staff is accurate and up to date. All training staff have attended a training workshop about the 'Prevent' duty. They are aware of its basic aims of preventing radicalisation and extremism. However, their understanding of how to promote and develop apprentices' awareness of extremism and radicalisation is underdeveloped.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Managers have been too slow to improve standards of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. Assessors provided too little support or feedback for apprentices. Too many apprentices have progressed slowly and have not completed within their planned timeframe. However, apprentices who have started their programme in recent months receive effective support from their assessors. Assessors now visit frequently and provide clearer guidance about what apprentices need to do to complete their workplace training.
- Most apprentices practise their mathematical and English skills at work, for example by calculating discounted prices and producing written reports. However, managers and assessors do not provide apprentices with sufficient support to improve their English and mathematical skills quickly. Assessors do not provide enough detailed feedback to help learners improve their written English. As a result, too many apprentices have not completed their apprenticeship framework by the expected date.
- Assessors do not plan apprentices' learning consistently well. They do not help apprentices sufficiently to set and monitor focused targets to enable them to progress rapidly. As a result, apprentices do not produce work that consistently demonstrates the skills they have developed with Halfords.
- Assessors do not use initial assessment information effectively to plan individual apprenticeship programmes. Assessors do not always identify accurately the apprentices' starting points or their specific support needs. As a result, apprentices' programmes do not meet the needs of a minority of learners. For example, apprentices who speak English as an additional language receive too little support to help them to produce work of a consistently high standard. However, assessors are now starting to plan and implement more effective support which meets the needs of individuals well.
- The newly appointed team of experienced and skilled assessors has begun to support apprentices well. They now visit apprentices frequently and provide clear guidance that helps them progress. They carefully plan a good range of assessment activities that meet apprentices' needs well and show the progress they have made. For example, apprentices demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have gained through observations, voice recordings and written reports. As a result, current apprentices are well motivated and are now progressing rapidly towards completing their learning programmes.

- Staff have now integrated the on-the-job training and resources well into the apprenticeship programme. Apprentices use high-quality training resources to help them develop their skills at work. For example, apprentices improve their understanding of retail principles, team-leading skills and product knowledge. Apprentices benefit from the high-quality on-the-job training that managers provide at work. Managers also support apprentices in developing additional skills beyond the requirements of their apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices develop valuable skills and increase their effectiveness at work.
- Assessors now liaise more effectively with managers to support the development of their apprentices. They provide managers with useful verbal feedback about apprentices' progress. Assessors and managers plan assessment activities carefully between visits. They help apprentices to reinforce the skills they have acquired. As a result, current apprentices develop useful workplace skills and are now making better progress.
- Managers have developed a strong team ethos that promotes high standards of professional behaviour and career aspirations. Managers and assessors provide apprentices with effective support to help them plan their careers with Halfords. Managers and assessors support apprentices well to take on new responsibilities and to understand the opportunities for promotion available to them within Halfords. Apprentices often gain additional responsibilities at work and gain promotion. However, assessors provide too little guidance to apprentices on opportunities to widen their learning through further study.
- Assessors and training materials promote apprentices' understanding of health and safety well. For example, apprentices know how to lift large items safely, including bicycles, and how to handle corrosive substances, such as damaged vehicle batteries. As a result, learners routinely work safely.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

- Apprentices enjoy their learning and remain motivated to succeed. The newly appointed team of assessors has quickly established effective working relationships with apprentices and apprentices' line managers. As a result, the progress of current apprentices has improved.
- Apprentices develop valuable employability skills. They develop product knowledge which they use effectively to deliver high levels of customer service. For example, apprentices routinely deal with a range of complex customer requests confidently, often in a very busy and pressurised environment. Apprentices are highly valued members of the team who contribute well to the business. Many apprentices, particularly in retail, benefit from additional training in areas such as bicycle or car maintenance. This increases the range of skills they are able to use at work. Apprentices show a high standard of behaviour. They conduct themselves professionally when dealing with customers and colleagues and develop a good work ethic, in line with the high expectations set by the employer. Their attendance and punctuality at work are good.

- Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They work with a high focus on relevant health and safety procedures and use appropriate clothing and protection correctly in their practical work. Assessors reinforce the importance of good health and safety at reviews and during training and assessment. As a result, apprentices feel more confident and know to whom they should report concerns and how to get support should they need it. Apprentices develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They are clear of where they can obtain further information and clarification of relevant points.
- Apprentices develop sufficient understanding of the importance of equality and diversity. They understand the importance of tolerance and respect and demonstrate this effectively when working with colleagues and customers. Assessors have recently begun to improve apprentices' underdeveloped understanding of British values by using a range of new and appropriate resources. However, assessors do not develop apprentices' understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism sufficiently. Assessors have started to include discussions on relevant topics, and in a few cases, make good use of high-quality video clips to support the discussion. Assessors do not plan sufficient time to explore these topics adequately.
- New arrangements for teaching functional skills have not yet had sufficient impact. A minority of apprentices do not develop their functional skills well in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and consequently too few achieve the functional skills qualifications they need. The majority of apprentices use their functional skills in English and mathematics effectively in the workplace.
- Apprentices do not develop their independent study skills sufficiently. For example, apprentices do not upload their own work. Too many apprentices do not have a clear understanding of their apprenticeship programme and make insufficient use of their electronic portfolio between visits. As a result, many apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable. They do not develop the study skills they will need to progress to higher level learning.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- Too few apprentices have completed their apprenticeship by their planned end date. This will also have a negative impact on future published outcomes. Outcomes for apprentices in warehousing are particularly weak.
- The number of apprentices who have entered for their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics has been too low; however, an increasing number of apprentices are now taking the tests and the proportion of first-time passes is high.
- The large majority of the apprentices enjoy their learning and develop effective personal, communication, professional and technical skills through e-learning, face-to-face meetings and on-the-job training. For example, apprentices on intermediate retail courses acquire technical skills relating to bicycles and cars. They also develop customer service skills and a good understanding of health and safety. Apprentices on intermediate team-leading courses develop skills in self-reflection, communication and the effective management of colleagues. Apprentices are positive about their learning and they remain on the apprenticeship and with the employer. In the current year, retention of apprentices within the business has greatly improved.

- Current apprentices are making the progress expected and are completing their qualifications more quickly. Apprentices on retail and management courses are currently performing particularly well and are making good progress. Apprentices who have enrolled since January 2017 are on track to achieve their qualification by their planned end date.
- The majority of apprentices have progressed in their careers following enrolment onto the apprenticeship programme. They have gained promotion or developed their role in a larger or different store.
- Where relevant, apprentices enhance their knowledge and skills through additional qualifications. For example, apprentices gain qualifications in first aid and in the maintenance and repair of bicycles and cars.



## Provider details

Unique reference number	59232
Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,046
Principal/CEO	Jill McDonald
Telephone number	0845 057 9000
Website	<a href="http://www.halfords.com">www.halfords.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+
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	225	821	0	83	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	0							
Funding received from:	Education and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the group head of people development, 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; 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

Martin Ward, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Victor Reid	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jason Lancaster	Ofsted Inspector
Alastair Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Masterson	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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