

Academies Enterprise Trust

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

7–9 November 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 successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, resulting in improved outcomes for most apprentices.
- Leaders and managers now expect and achieve higher standards from staff, and provide apprenticeship programmes that are effective and well matched to apprentices' needs, interests and aspirations.
- Apprentices make good progress in their programmes as a result of close and effective monitoring by managers and assessors.
- Most apprentices successfully develop a broad range of practical skills and professional standards as a result of effective and well-planned on- and off-the-job training, including relevant additional training and qualifications.
- Almost all apprentices enhance their personal and social skills and confidence; as a result, they make valuable contributions to their workplaces.
- A significant proportion of apprentices progress to full-time employment and/or further and higher education.
- A few assessors do not challenge apprentices to extend their thinking skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of the qualification to maximise their potential.
- A small minority of apprentices do not achieve their qualifications, including English and mathematics, in the time allocated to them.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) is an educational charity with its head office based in Camden, London. It sponsors 64 primary, secondary and/or special academies located across England. The trust provides apprenticeship training programmes in supporting teaching and learning in schools, business administration, and information and communication technology (ICT).
- There are around 80 apprentices currently enrolled, with most following advanced-level programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment further by ensuring that:
 - leaders and managers implement swiftly their proposed actions to secure further improvement, such as enabling all apprentices to develop their functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at an early stage of their programme
 - assessors set targets for apprentices which help them understand how they can achieve to the best of their ability; and also find ways to challenge apprentices to deepen and extend their skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of the programme, so that they fulfil their potential
 - leaders and managers make certain that apprentices receive independent advice and guidance to better inform apprentices about the choices they can make to achieve their future aspirations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders' and managers' actions have had a positive impact since the last inspection: since 2015/16 the volumes of apprentices recruited have significantly increased, and apprentices' achievements have significantly improved in most subjects.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are now good. Training both on and off the job is highly relevant to apprentices' job roles and enables apprentices to contribute positively to their organisations, resulting in the vast majority making good progress in their subjects.
- Leaders and managers work well in collaboration with staff within work placements to plan and deliver learning programmes which are well matched to apprentices' aspirations and the needs of the local community. For example, an apprentice based at a primary school is undertaking a research project with a local university to collect data on child movement.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have established robust methods to track and monitor the progress of all apprentices. Managers effectively ensure that all staff are fully trained and compliant in the use of systems. As a result, staff are now much more effective at tracking learners' progress, and managers are able to follow up how staff are tackling weaker progress by individual apprentices or groups.
- The head of talent and the apprenticeship manager have established a strong ethos of the sharing of good teaching and assessment practice. As a result, staff work effectively and collaboratively to ensure that training and skills development is tailored to each apprentice and their potential. Staff are highly skilled and their industry-related skills are strengthened as a result of good-quality professional development and training.
- Apprentices' achievement in English and mathematics functional skills have significantly improved since 2015/16. Managers now monitor much more closely apprentices' progress in English, mathematics and ICT, and also their first-time achievement rates in these qualifications. The progress of a minority of apprentices is too slow. Leaders and managers have taken steps to ensure that more apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications early in their programmes. It is too soon to see the impact of this recent development.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of apprenticeship programmes. As a result, they plan their actions precisely in order to improve provision. A few of their actions have been too slow, and have not fully resolved problems identified. For example, managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in assessors' performance, but a minority do not provide good-quality feedback to assessors or ensure that assessors have improved as a result of their agreed self-development plans.

The governance of the provider

- The board of trustees provides oversight of the apprenticeships provision. The senior team reports into the board of trustees regarding apprenticeship provision. Managers ensure that the board of trustees receive accurate and timely information about the

changes in the arrangements for both the funding and the delivery of apprenticeships.

- Leaders and managers provide good information to the senior team and the board of trustees to ensure that they are fully informed about recruitment to apprenticeships, use of the levy and the strategic importance of apprenticeships to the trust's operations. Managers produce an annual self-assessment report, but do not provide the board with regular information regarding the progress of apprentices or the quality of provision. As a result, the board of trustees have insufficient oversight of the quality of apprentices' experiences, and are therefore not able to challenge leaders and managers routinely and in an informed way.
- Leaders and managers have recently developed a management information reporting structure to provide the senior team with more detail and clarity about apprentices' experiences and progress. However, they have yet to implement this fully.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and managers ensure that effective and safe recruitment processes are in place to vet staff suitability. Staff record and follow up any concerns effectively, including referrals to the local authority, ensuring that they have been resolved.
- All staff and apprentices have had relevant training in safeguarding and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Arrangements for risk assessments in respect of the 'Prevent' duty guidelines are comprehensive. Apprentices have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and how to stay safe, although in a few localities staff are less convinced of the relevance of 'Prevent' than those in other areas. In an example of good practice, apprentices were involved in 'lockdown' procedures to strengthen their understanding and awareness of what to do if a dangerous event occurs.
- Apprentices understand the values that support living and working in modern Britain, and they demonstrate their understanding through their work with others of different faiths, genders, ages and disabilities. Apprentices confidently discuss with their assessors and within their settings the importance of how to stay safe when using the internet and how to report any concerns. Apprentices play an active role in keeping pupils safe within the organisations they serve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Assessors plan apprenticeships programmes well to ensure that they meet the framework requirements and the demands of employers. They take into account apprentices' prior experience and qualifications, and use the outcomes of induction and pre-assessments effectively when planning programmes. They ensure that programmes offer the right level of challenge for individual apprentices, and meet their interests and future aspirations.
- The vast majority of apprentices are briefed comprehensively during recruitment and induction on the requirements and expectations of the programme. As a result, apprentices are following the correct framework at the right level.
- The majority of assessors have high expectations of their apprentices. Teaching and

assessment methods are good. Most assessors ensure that learning activities are tailored to support the development of individual apprentices. Apprentices enjoy their learning and are motivated and challenged to develop their skills and knowledge, and apply these confidently in the workplace. For example, assessors continually check apprentices' understanding of complex topics and ask probing questions to reinforce theoretical concepts.

- Assessors are well qualified and have good industry practice. For example, assessors working with apprentices on the supporting teaching and learning in schools' programmes are former practitioners with highly relevant qualifications. They have the ability to shape tasks and provide good guidance to apprentices based on current and relevant practice, ensuring that learning supports their roles within schools. Assessors' communication and relationships with employers are very good, and the levels of support employers receive are high.
- Managers and employers ensure that apprentices receive well-planned and regular training. All apprentices benefit from protected time within their working week to undertake their off-the-job training. Apprentices also have time set aside to enable them to complete their coursework and gather and upload their evidence to fulfil the requirements of their programme. Many benefit from a flexible approach to this, enabling them to tailor both the allocated hours and the location to best suit their individual style of independent study. For example, apprentices who struggle to complete work at home can opt to study in their workplaces, where they access good support and guidance from their colleagues. This practice results in increased confidence and good progress towards the qualification.
- Most assessors provide detailed and effective verbal feedback, enabling apprentices to produce work which fulfils the needs of their qualification. Assessors do not always suggest ways in which apprentices could further extend their skills and knowledge beyond the requirements of their current role or qualification.
- Assessors record targets for apprentices which are too broad and not sufficiently detailed about how to improve. As a result, apprentices and assessors have an insufficient understanding of the progress being made in their practical skills and theoretical knowledge.
- Managers and assessors monitor apprentices' progress closely and quickly identify apprentices who begin to fall behind. Managers take action to put in place swift and effective support with both the assessor and staff within the workplace. As a result, those who do fall behind are able to get back on target and progress at the expected rate.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices demonstrate highly effective and professional behaviours. They are punctual to work, dress appropriately and have good attitudes. Apprentices communicate with colleagues effectively and with confidence; they fully understand the importance of confidentiality in the workplace and in the work they undertake.
- Apprentices develop successfully their competence and skills to undertake their job roles independently, and gradually take on greater responsibilities. For example, apprentices develop good verbal communication skills when talking to parents as they collect their

children from school, and then attend parents' evenings, where they discuss children's progress with parents and carers.

- Apprentices are highly valued by their employers and make beneficial contributions to their businesses. Apprentices often play an integral role in the smooth running and the success of their department. They are proud of their work and achievements, and employers are proud that they have been able to 'grow their own' staff, often employing former pupils as apprentices.
- Apprentices have a secure knowledge and understanding of safeguarding; they know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a good awareness of online safety. They are able to demonstrate their knowledge of how they apply safeguarding and health and safety principles to their specific workplaces.
- Apprentices are knowledgeable about how to promote equality and raise awareness of diversity. They apply this knowledge successfully to their job roles and within the context of their employment. Most apprentices have an awareness of the 'Prevent' duty and some are able to demonstrate this in greater detail. However, a marked difference exists between apprentices located in different geographical areas with regard to their deeper understanding of how extremism and the risk of radicalisation is relevant to them.
- Apprentices benefit from effective initial advice and guidance and are fully aware of the expectations and commitment required to undertake an apprenticeship. As a result, their choice of apprenticeship is closely matched to their aspirations, skills and interests. Staff providing independent careers advice and guidance do not effectively support apprentices to consider the full range of options available to them on completion of their programme and outside of the education sector.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- There are currently around 80 apprentices following intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes. Around three quarters of apprentices are following advanced-level programmes.
- The large majority of apprentices have high aspirations and make good progress across all programmes. They develop a broad range of skills pertinent to their job roles and career aspirations.
- Since 2015/16 the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications has increased at both intermediate and advanced levels, with an increasing number achieving within the time allocated to them. Leaders' actions to ensure that male and female apprentices achieve their qualifications equally have had a beneficial impact; more male apprentices are now achieving their qualifications than previously. A significant proportion of apprentices progress to full-time employment and/or further and higher education.
- Apprentices produce work of a good and sometimes high professional standard; they are adept at applying their practical skills effectively within their workplace. Their written work is good, with accurate use of grammar and punctuation. For example, apprentices in business administration are aware of the need to produce good-quality, accurate formal letters and emails to clients, and successfully achieve this standard. The vast majority of apprentices gain good skills in their verbal communications to parents/carers, clients and staff within workplace settings.

- The majority of apprentices make good progress in developing their English, mathematical and ICT skills while undertaking their roles within the workplace, and through the completion of their coursework assignments. For example, apprentices following sports coaching in school-related and business administration frameworks practise their mathematical skills through interpreting and using data, including data about ethnicity, times and heart rates, and the use of algebraic formulas in spreadsheets.
- In a minority of instances apprentices do not make sufficient progress in the development of these functional skills, nor do they make use of the facilities available to them at work to develop these skills further. For example, apprentices who are struggling to master the use of spreadsheets are not encouraged to enlist the support of administrative staff who use them regularly, to strengthen their understanding of complex ICT functions.
- Although the proportion of apprentices who achieve their functional skills qualifications at their first attempt has increased, a small minority of apprentices' progress towards achieving their functional skills qualifications is too slow.
- Most apprentices benefit from the opportunity to undertake a wide range of relevant training and additional qualifications. Almost all apprentices take part in in-house training within their organisations. Apprentices following sport and physical education apprenticeships in schools attend teaching conferences and undertake coaching badges and first aid qualifications. A few apprentices following programmes in supporting teaching and learning in schools take on additional training in supporting pupils who have high needs and behavioural difficulties. As a result, apprentices enhance their learning and experience as well as their future employment prospects.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59131
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	78
Principal/CEO	Julian Drinkall
Telephone number	020 3947 5700
Website	www.academiesenterprisetrust.org

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+		
	3	9	9	38	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							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	0							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of talent, 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

Harpreet Nagra, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Judy Lye-Forster	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

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