

The Learning Foundry Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

11–14 June 2019

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	Not previously inspected	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors, leaders and managers have taken incisive and effective action to eradicate poor-quality provision. As a result, both the quality of education and training and the number of apprentices who complete and achieve their programmes have improved rapidly.
- Senior leaders have worked very skilfully, with employers and partners, to develop a well-designed, often bespoke, curriculum that meets the needs of apprentices, employers and wider local and regional priorities.
- Apprentices receive useful support from their employers. Consequently, they develop a broad range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours which benefits their employer's business.
- Apprentices receive regular and beneficial coaching sessions from their assessors. As a result, most apprentices make at least the progress expected of them.
- Apprentices and trainees benefit from a broad range of valuable enrichment activities, which prepares them very well for the world of work.
- Apprentices and trainees benefit from very effective pastoral and specialist support. As a result, most current apprentices and trainees remain on their programme and make at least the expected progress.
- Assessors do not plan sufficiently to support apprentices to further develop their English and mathematics skills from their starting points.
- A minority of assessors do not check apprentices' understanding or challenge apprentices skilfully enough to ensure that all apprentices reach their full potential.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Learning Foundry is based across two sites in Liverpool. It is part of the Regenda Group, a not-for-profit organisation. Most learners are from the Liverpool City Region. At the time of the inspection, there were 330 apprentices studying on programmes at levels 2, 3 and 4. Apprenticeship programmes include dental nursing, childcare, health and social care, housing, business and management. A small group of three trainees are working towards a childcare-specific traineeship programme.
- Around one third of the working-age population in the Liverpool City Region have qualifications at level 4 or above, which is lower than regional and national averages. Levels of unemployment are also lower than the regional and national averages. Key stage 4 average attainment for pupils in the Liverpool local authority is below regional and national averages.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all assessors:
 - support apprentices to further develop their English and mathematics from their starting points
 - check apprentices' understanding and challenge skilfully so that they reach their full potential and achieve the highest possible grades in their apprenticeship.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors and leaders have a very clear vision to deliver engaging and inspiring training for apprentices and trainees. They have developed an open and positive culture of continual improvement. Governors, leaders and staff have a shared goal to improve the lives of their apprentices and to 'make talent shine'. Staff feel valued by their employer and are proud to work for The Learning Foundry.
- Governors, leaders and managers take incisive action to successfully eradicate poor provision. They have expertly improved a number of processes, such as self-assessment and the observation of teaching, learning and assessment. Consequently, both the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the number of apprentices who complete and achieve their programmes have improved significantly and are now high.
- Leaders and managers oversee skilfully the performance of staff. They hold staff to strict account, and those who have been unable to meet the high expectations of leaders and managers have left the organisation.
- Senior leaders work successfully with employers and partners to produce a well-designed, bespoke curriculum. This effectively meets the needs of apprentices, trainees, employers, and local and regional priorities. For example, senior leaders have developed an apprenticeship in housing. This provides well-trained professionals to meet the skills needs of the City Region housing associations.
- Governors, leaders and managers use a range of accurate and up-to-date information to monitor the progress of current apprentices. Assessors meet frequently with their line managers to monitor and review the performance of their apprentices. Managers take swift action to support those apprentices who make slow progress. As a result, most apprentices make at least the expected levels of progress and achieve their potential.
- Leaders and managers ensure that staff develop apprentices' and trainees' understanding of equality and diversity. They make good use of planned events with guest speakers to promote this.
- Leaders and managers monitor regularly achievement gaps between different groups of apprentices and trainees to identify and address swiftly areas for improvement.
- Managers provide good professional development for assessors. Assessors have close links with their specialist subject areas to ensure that they provide apprentices and trainees with up-to-date knowledge and skills.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have a good understanding of the provider's strengths and areas for improvement and an accurate overview of the progress that apprentices and trainees make.
- Board members challenge senior leaders effectively to identify and improve weaknesses. They hold senior leaders to close account for the operational performance of the apprenticeship and traineeship programmes. This ensures that the swift pace of recent improvements is sustained. Governors ensure that the apprenticeship and traineeship programmes continually develop to meet local and regional priorities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have developed an effective approach to safeguarding that has successfully raised awareness of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty for staff and apprentices. Apprentices and trainees have a good understanding of safeguarding. They know how to keep themselves safe in the workplace and in life. Leaders ensure that appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, which staff understand and follow. Staff benefit from suitable safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.
- The designated safeguarding officer and deputies have appropriate experience, training and qualifications and carry out their roles effectively. Managers keep up-to-date and accurate records. They follow safer recruitment practices rigorously.
- Managers have developed strong links with a wide range of external agencies, including social services, the police and 'Channel' representatives. They use these links effectively to train staff, apprentices and trainees on the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and to make referrals when appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Apprentices enjoy their learning. They receive regular and highly beneficial coaching sessions from their assessors. As a result, most apprentices make at least the progress expected of them. Apprentices who fall behind are supported well by assessors to catch up. Assessors put in place a clear intervention plan that includes additional visits, contact by email and webinars.
- Apprentices receive highly effective support from their employers. They develop swiftly a broad range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours which benefit the employer's business. For example, team leading apprentices competently manage conflict situations in the workplace. Housing apprentices are confident in dealing with tenants' concerns. Dental nursing apprentices are skilful when aspirating patients' mouths in preparation for dental treatments.
- Assessors are knowledgeable and experienced in their subjects. They use their current industry expertise to develop apprentices' understanding. For example, childcare assessors share their experiences of dealing with children who have hand, foot and mouth disease. Dental nursing assessors help apprentices to compare and contrast dental care practice in different surgeries. However, a few assessors do not check routinely apprentices' understanding or challenge apprentices skilfully enough so that they reach their full potential. As a result, not all apprentices develop their knowledge and understanding to a higher level.
- Assessors monitor and evaluate apprentices' and trainees' progress thoroughly. They identify clearly what apprentices do well and what they need to do to improve. Apprentices act promptly on the feedback they receive. As a result, they improve the quality of their work. For example, housing apprentices prepare skilfully a project for their final assessment. They produce a comprehensive and detailed project proposal on how to improve the management and security of tenants' keys. This proposal adds value to the employer's business.

- Most apprentices receive sufficient time away from their work to complete their off-the-job training. Employers support apprentices well to gain a broad range of experiences both on and off the job. For example, workplace mentors support childcare apprentices to write detailed reports to parents about the progress of their children. However, assessors do not routinely coordinate what apprentices are doing in the workplace and during their coaching sessions. Consequently, a small minority of apprentices are not challenged sufficiently to make the progress of which they are capable, especially the most able.
- In a few instances, assessors do not always use the assessment of apprentices' starting points well enough to plan learning effectively. As a result, a small minority of the most able apprentices on standards-based programmes do not make the progress of which they are capable. Assessors do not challenge all apprentices to achieve the highest possible grades in their apprenticeship.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices and trainees are confident, self-assured and enjoy their learning. They develop good work-related skills, including increased confidence, team working, problem solving and time management. Apprentices gain additional skills from further work-related training, such as first aid at work and, in the care sector, specialist training on how to deal with clients who have autism. Trainees who lack confidence and have low self-esteem benefit from programmes with the Prince's Trust. Consequently, they are better equipped to progress to apprenticeships.
- Apprentices and trainees benefit from a broad range of highly effective enrichment activities, in which they explore personal, social and ethical issues. For example, trainees sailed successfully from Liverpool to Scotland as part of the 'tall ships' events. During a visit to France, housing apprentices researched homelessness issues and compared their findings to those in Britain. As a result, apprentices and trainees develop a deeper understanding of differences in society across Britain and Europe.
- Apprentices and trainees know how to keep themselves safe online and when using social media. They have a good understanding of how to recognise the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices use their safeguarding knowledge successfully in the workplace. For example, childcare apprentices recognise and report swiftly any concerns they have about children in their care.
- Apprentices and trainees have a clear understanding of British values and apply these well in the workplace. They demonstrate high levels of professional behaviours and are respectful towards each other, assessors, employers and clients. Apprentices and trainees meet the needs of a diverse range of clients in the workplace. For example, dental apprentices adapt their practice with Muslim patients during Ramadan by carrying out scaling procedures that do not use water.
- Pastoral and specialist support is strong. For example, support for apprentices and trainees with mental health and substance misuse issues helps them to better manage their anxieties. As a result, most current apprentices and trainees remain on their programme and make at least the expected progress.
- The information, advice and guidance apprentices and learners receive at the start of their programme are good. Staff work closely with employers to match apprentices' skills

to their level of study. Apprentices view their apprenticeship as a career and are motivated to succeed. As a result, almost all apprentices are on the right programme at the right level.

- Learners on traineeship programmes develop good work-related skills. They prepare their curriculum vitae and practise their interview skills confidently before meeting employers. Most trainees benefit from meaningful work experience. As a result, they develop considerably in confidence and are well prepared for employment.
- Staff monitor apprentices' and trainees' attendance and punctuality carefully. They report and resolve any concerns swiftly. Apprentices' attendance during all parts of their programmes is high. Learners' attendance on traineeship programmes in childcare is too low.
- In a few instances, assessors do not always plan effectively the development of apprentices' skills in English and mathematics. For example, a few dental nursing apprentices struggle to pronounce and spell technical terms. Consequently, apprentices do not improve their English skills swiftly enough.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualifications in 2017/18 was too low. Too many apprentices did not complete in the planned timescale. The introduction of rigorous systems and the close monitoring of apprentices' and trainees' progress by managers have resulted in rapid improvement so that current apprentices are now making good progress.
- Following their courses, a high proportion of apprentices and trainees gain new responsibilities and/or promotion. The majority of trainees progress to apprenticeships, employment or further education.
- Apprentices and trainees produce work that is appropriate to the level of their study. It is neat, well presented and meets industry standards. A minority of apprentices are not aware of pass, merit or distinction grades.
- Achievement gaps between different groups, such as those between males and females, are reducing. Achievement rates for males are now similar to those for females. Students with learning disabilities achieve slightly less well than their peers.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50376
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	852
Principal/CEO	Joanne Abraham
Telephone number	0151 259 0264
Website	www.thelearningfoundry.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	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	29	48	84	154	-	15		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	3		-		3			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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

Kim Bleasdale, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alastair Mollon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Cameron Brandwood	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fallon Southwell	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Shahram Safavi	Ofsted Inspector

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