

# The Real Apprenticeship Company Limited

Independent learning provider

**Inspection dates**

18–21 June 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>		<b>Requires improvement</b>	
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>Good</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

- Leaders have failed to rectify all of the key weaknesses from the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers have yet to implement fully their actions to improve the quality of provision, so that apprentices remain on their programmes and achieve according to their capabilities.
- Too few apprentices continue with their course and achieve their apprenticeship in the time allocated.
- Coaches do not always use the information gathered at the start of the programme well enough to plan and provide learning that challenges the most able or experienced apprentices to achieve their potential.
- Coaches do not help apprentices to deepen sufficiently their knowledge and understanding of subjects during the small minority of online learning sessions.
- Where provided, written feedback is not sufficiently helpful for apprentices to improve their work.
- Too few apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills beyond the level required by their apprenticeship.
- The impartial careers information that apprentices receive is too narrow. Too few apprentices know well enough the broad employment opportunities available to them.

### The provider has the following strengths

- Most apprentices benefit from additional qualifications that help them to develop good practical and digital skills and work productively in their job roles.
- A high proportion of apprentices move into full-time employment and undertake more complex roles, receive enhanced salaries, or take on greater responsibility.
- Senior leaders and employers have worked effectively together to ensure that apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours demanded of them.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- The Real Apprenticeship Company is an approved apprenticeship provider for levy-paying employers. The company is based in Warwickshire. A team of apprenticeship coaches and trainers delivers training and assessment for apprentices in the workplace across the United Kingdom.
- At the time of the inspection, 274 apprentices were on apprenticeship programmes. The large majority are on apprenticeship standards in retail and commercial enterprise, and business administration and customer service. The remainder follow standards-based apprenticeships in vocational areas, including engineering and manufacturing, logistics, leadership and management, and digital. Around a third of apprentices are aged 16 to 18 and most study apprenticeships at level 2. Around half of adult apprentices study at levels 3 and 5.

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

- Leaders must ensure that:
  - their improvement actions target identified weaknesses
  - they use their revised management information systems effectively to monitor closely apprentices' progress and take remedial action to enable apprentices to make the progress that they should
  - employer mentors have sufficient time and high-quality resources to ensure apprentices receive timely support to make good progress and achieve their qualifications in the time allocated
  - coaches use effectively information on apprentices' starting points to plan and provide learning so that apprentices make the progress of which they are capable
  - where given, coaches' written feedback is sufficiently helpful to enable apprentices to improve the quality of their work
  - coaches enable apprentices to develop further their English and mathematical skills, including those required by their employer, beyond the level required by the apprenticeship
  - coaches enable apprentices to deepen their knowledge of their subject during online learning sessions
  - apprentices receive sufficient information to ensure that they have a good awareness of future employment and learning opportunities on completion of their programme.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders' ambitious plans to deliver standards-based apprenticeship programmes with a major employer have failed to ensure good enough outcomes for their apprentices. This employer accounted for over half of all apprentices with the provider. Although comprehensive delivery plans were agreed with the employer's senior managers, too few of their operational managers implemented effectively recruitment processes or provided apprentices with adequate support. While leaders stopped recruiting new apprentices in the previous academic year, too many apprentices continue to leave the employer early. This contributes significantly to the provider's current low achievement rates and its projected achievements in the academic year 2019/20.
- Senior leaders and managers failed to rectify key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, including aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. A recently appointed senior manager observes coaches to check the quality of their teaching skills and identify support needs. Leaders have now introduced a range of support to help coaches improve their practice, including routine development sessions. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this improvement action as a result of significant staff changes over the previous year.
- Leaders have developed a comprehensive organisational improvement plan that identifies appropriate actions and targets for improvement. However, too few targets have yet to be achieved and it is too soon to judge the impact of new processes, such as an online tracking and monitoring system to ensure apprentices make the progress that they should. Leaders ensure that the provider's self-assessment is inclusive of staff, employers' and learners' views. However, the commentary in the current report is an overly positive evaluation of the provision in scope for inspection.
- Senior leaders and managers have revised their ambitious growth strategy and successfully diversified their business and curriculum offer with large employers nationally. Managers have reviewed their curriculum and delivery plans to ensure that previous problems, such as insufficient support from employer mentors, are not repeated. Leaders now ensure that new employers have a long-term commitment and the sustainable resources to support their intentions of providing apprenticeships. Early indicators show that the provider's new large goods vehicle and freight-forwarding programmes help most apprentices to achieve their end-point assessment.
- Leaders collaborate effectively with employers nationally to develop apprenticeship programmes to meet employers' specific needs. Along with trade groups, they identify skills gaps in the sectors in which they work and devise programmes to fill these gaps. For many employers, the provider is their preferred choice and they value highly the service and support they receive.

### The governance of the provider

- Since the previous inspection, the chief executive officer (CEO) has much improved the governance arrangements of the provision. They have appointed an independent chair

who works closely with the CEO and management team. They extend their knowledge of the provider by attending routinely senior management meetings and staff briefings.

- The chairman has extensive curriculum and funding experience at a strategic level, which helps in the performance of this role. As a result of their informed scrutiny of the provider's performance, leaders now receive effective support and challenge. For example, the governor has supported managers well during the withdrawal from working with a major employer and provided them with suitable challenge to begin improving the quality of provision and staff performance.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior managers assess accurately potential risks for apprentices at work or in training. They have appropriate plans to reduce the risk of harm to apprentices. Managers take the appropriate action when complaints or concerns are raised, recording and referring information to the relevant agencies where appropriate.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved apprentices' understanding of e-safety, and the risks of bullying, harassment, extremism and radicalisation. Staff have received appropriate training and ensure apprentices are able to raise concerns when necessary.
- Managers provide effective support for vulnerable apprentices. They have good links with specialist external support agencies to ensure that these apprentices receive the most appropriate referrals in areas such as mental health and housing.
- Managers ensure that telesales apprentices receive highly effective protection. For example, their vehicles are fitted with CCTV, location trackers, panic buttons and lockdown procedures. These apprentices have a particularly strong understanding of how to stay safe at work.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet good. Coaches do not use accurately information on apprentices' starting points to plan and provide learning to ensure that the most able or experienced achieve their potential. Apprentices' targets focus too heavily on the completion of units, rather than on extending apprentices' skills and behaviours. As a result, these apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- A small minority of apprentices receive training online. These virtual lessons are ineffective. Teaching in these sessions is not sufficiently challenging. Most apprentices simply listen to the coaches' explanation of the information provided on screen. Coaches fail to challenge learners' understanding sufficiently. Consequently, these apprentices do not provide in-depth responses to questions and do not develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.
- As a result of frequent staff changes, a minority of apprentices did not receive sufficient progress reviews. For example, at the start of their programme, a few apprentices did not receive support from a coach for four months. Although these apprentices now receive

support to catch up, many remain behind in their work.

- Too often, coaches' written feedback on apprentices' assessed work is not sufficiently precise to assist in their improvement. Additionally, coaches fail to correct apprentices' repeated errors in spelling and grammar.
- Coaches fail to develop routinely apprentices' written English and mathematical skills beyond qualification requirements. For example, coaches do not ensure that apprentices take accurate notes of their discussions with coaches or workplace mentors to improve their comprehension and writing skills and to capture learning points for future revision. Higher level apprentices do not develop their academic writing skills sufficiently.
- The majority of apprentices benefit from effective one-to-one coaching in the workplace. Apprenticeship coaches use their good subject knowledge and expertise to plan a range of tasks and activities that deepen apprentices' knowledge. For example, sales and telesales coaches explain the complex and abstract theory of consumer law in everyday terms that apprentices understand and can apply quickly in their roles. Apprentices who have particular learning needs receive the necessary support to achieve their qualifications.
- Coaches and employers coordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively. Most employers provide apprentices with effective job-specific training and workplace mentors to enhance their skills. For example, apprentices on large goods vehicle programmes work well with qualified drivers. They carry out pre-driving checks competently and learn to load and unload vehicles safely. However, in a few cases, apprentices do not access sufficient study time at work due to operational demands. As a result, these apprentices do not make the swift progress that they could.
- The majority of apprentices receive frequent and helpful progress reviews. Most employers take a keen interest in apprentices' progress and provide them with useful feedback on the development of their knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace. Coaches provide apprentices with constructive oral feedback that helps them to improve the standard of their work. For example, telesales apprentices improve their speaking and listening skills because of the feedback that they receive, using directed questions very well to increase customer sales.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of equality of opportunity and the value of diversity in society. Apprentices apply this understanding sensitively in their day-to-day work. For example, customer service apprentices who work in sales understand consumers' rights. They deal with challenging customers skilfully when taking orders over the telephone, ensuring that the customers receive appropriate and individualised support.
- Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns they may have. Coaches and workplace mentors ensure that they adopt safe working practices. For example, apprentices on large goods vehicle programmes know how to make their loads safe in the event of a terrorist attack.
- Leaders and managers ensure that the programmes meet fully the principles of an apprenticeship.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Most current apprentices make good progress towards the achievement of their qualifications and develop the skills that their employers require. They are motivated, and proud of the work they do and of the employers for whom they work. Apprentices dress smartly and behave professionally in their roles. Apprentices apply new knowledge confidently and become more self-assured in their work. For example, logistics apprentices develop professional driving and route-planning skills to ensure they drive efficiently and meet challenging deadlines.
- The majority of apprentices gain additional qualifications and training that are highly appropriate to their job role. The training helps them to meet employers' specific needs. For example, level 3 freight-forwarding apprentices complete training for the transport of hazardous goods, such as liquified gas. Business management apprentices visit European countries to gain an understanding of different work cultures and processes to help them manage effectively the potential impacts of Brexit on the export industry.
- Most apprentices' practical and technical work is of a high quality and meets the challenging demands of their employers. They develop their digital skills equally well. For example, logistics apprentices use handheld devices to conduct pre-vehicle safety checks using three-dimensional software. Apprentices' written work is generally at the standard expected for the duration and level of the programme.
- Most apprentices develop new skills and knowledge that they can apply at work. They speak confidently about the new skills they have gained and how they have applied them in the workplace. Apprentices working in a busy warehouse successfully prepare and despatch complex and urgent orders to meet customers' requirements. Consequently, apprentices make a good contribution in the workplace that employers value highly.
- Apprentices feel safe and work safely in their workplaces. They are aware of how to report any concerns and they adhere strictly to safety equipment requirements. Logistics apprentices are well aware of staying safe while crossing international borders. Apprentices have a thorough awareness and understanding of e-safety and staying safe online.
- Apprentices receive effective advice and guidance to ensure they enrol on the right programme for their needs. However, apprentices find the subsequent impartial guidance too narrow, focusing mostly on career options with their existing employer. Too few apprentices know well enough the broad opportunities available to them. Apprentices who leave early receive the appropriate support to enable them to make informed decisions on their next steps.
- Apprentices have a reasonable understanding of the potential threats from radicalisation and extremism in their work context. However, too few know well enough the particular threats they face in their local area.
- A few apprentices benefit from a well-designed health and well-being programme, improving their money management, work-life balance, diet and nutrition. However, too few coaches ensure that apprentices develop fully their understanding of these topics.

## Outcomes for learners

## Requires improvement

- Apprenticeship achievement rates have declined over the last three years and are low. Too few apprentices complete their course or achieve within the time allocated. This is as a result of too many apprentices leaving the provider's largest employer early. At the time of the inspection, nearly all apprentices had completed their learning for the 2018/19 year. The provider's data shows a marginal improvement from the previous year and a higher proportion of apprentices now remain in learning.
- Leaders and managers monitor closely apprentices' progress towards the achievement of their qualifications. However, they do not monitor progress from apprentices' starting points. As a result, leaders are unable to ensure that all apprentices achieve their potential.
- Most apprentices required to take English and mathematics functional skills as part of their apprenticeship achieve these qualifications. However, leaders do not ensure that all apprentices develop these skills routinely.
- Apprentices develop effective practical workplace skills, such as customer service and the use of digital software applications that help them to become productive employees. Most apprentices produce written work of an appropriate standard.
- Most apprentices are male. Around one in eight is female. Female apprentices significantly out-perform males.
- Nearly all apprentices who complete their programme, and around half of those who leave the programme early, move into full-time employment. The majority of apprentices either move on into more complex roles, receive enhanced salaries, or take on greater responsibility in their current roles.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	59162
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	673
CEO	Debbie Shandley
Telephone number	01926 358420
Website	<a href="http://www.therealapprenticeship.com">www.therealapprenticeship.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+		
	46	91	28	89	0	20		
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:	Not applicable							



## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, 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

Richard Deane, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine Mayer	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca Gater	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Goodwin	Ofsted Inspector
Saskia Niderost	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

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