

NSL Limited

Employer

Inspection dates

31 July–2 August 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	Requires improvement	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have significantly improved the weaker aspects of the provision identified during the previous monitoring visit.
- Apprentices benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment and managers ensure that tutors and assessors continually improve their performance.
- Apprentices develop their skills, knowledge and leadership and managerial behaviours and so improve their performance at work. A significant minority have gained promotion as a result.
- The small number of apprentices who have so far completed their programmes achieved distinctions.
- Apprentices and tutors benefit from high-quality training facilities and resources.
- Managers have carefully tailored the leadership and management programmes to meet business needs well, including mapping the qualifications to relevant professional body membership.
- Apprentices enjoy learning and can readily identify aspects of their performance that have improved as a result of training.
- Despite managers' much improved monitoring of apprentices' progress, actions to hasten progress have not yet been successful for many apprentices.
- Apprentices who are making slow progress are not identified soon enough.
- Managers know most of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, but they do not link clearly the areas for improvement with actions to support improvement; they cannot therefore accurately assess the impact of these actions on improvement.

Full report

Information about the provider

- NSL Limited provides a range of civil enforcement, highways planning and traffic-management services to local authorities and airports across the country. The NSL academy was formed in May 2017 to provide levy-funded, standards-based apprenticeships to company managers. At the time of the inspection, 104 apprentices were on either level 3 or level 5 apprenticeships in leadership and management. In addition, apprentices take Chartered Management Institute examinations.
- The company is one of 16 in the Marston Group. The NSL academy is a group asset and is directed at group management board level as well as by the managing director of NSL Limited.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that tutors and assessors work closely with apprentices' managers to make sure that apprentices complete their assignments on time.
- Identify apprentices who are at risk of making slow progress early in their programmes and make sure that directors and senior managers support early interventions by relevant staff to get apprentices back on track.
- Ensure that identified areas for improvement link more clearly to actions being taken to support improvement, and that these are reviewed by leaders and managers to assess their effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve the weaker aspects of the provision identified during the previous monitoring visit. This has resulted in significant improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including the teaching of English and mathematics.
- Managers monitor very closely those apprentices at risk of not achieving and agree suitable interventions to support them. This has helped improve the progress of most apprentices. However, many who had a slow start to their programmes will still complete beyond their planned end dates. The small number who have completed their final assessments have achieved distinctions.
- Managers use very effective performance monitoring and management processes. They accurately identify where improvements are needed, or where good practice exists. Managers successfully link the findings of their monitoring to professional development plans to help improve teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders developed the curriculum carefully to meet the leadership and management skills needs of managers at different levels in the company. They have carefully mapped the standard against the company's business requirements and added training where required, such as training in recruitment and in how to create and deliver successful presentations.
- Leaders and tutors promote equality of opportunity well, with the current cohort of apprentices reflecting the gender and ethnic demographic of the company well. Apprentices benefit from a good range of ways they can learn, including online, through self-study, practical activities, and group and individual learning sessions.
- Leaders set clear objectives to ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of topics such as bullying, harassment and discrimination. Apprentices' awareness is developed through discussions in progress reviews and vocational training sessions.
- Leaders and managers understand the strengths of their provision and most of the areas that need to be improved. They track progress made against a wide range of actions. These actions are closely monitored but it is difficult for managers to link these actions to a specific area for improvement to confirm whether a weakness has been resolved.
- Managers have reduced the numbers of late assignment submissions, which is hastening progress. However, managers do not yet identify apprentices who are making slow progress early enough in their programmes.
- Managers have recently started monitoring the progress of different groups of learners. There are no differences in the progress different groups are making or in the achievements of the very small number who have completed their programmes.

The governance of the provider

- The Marston Group director responsible for the academy, and the NSL managing director provide the head of academy with good levels of support and challenge. This has resulted in a good focus on improving the provision through close monitoring of the actions for

improvement.

- The high priority that directors place on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been very successful. Their strong focus on improving apprentices' progress has also had success, although they recognise there is further work to do in this area.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers have suitable arrangements for ensuring that learners are safe. Even though no apprentices are under the age of 18, staff have appropriate safeguarding checks. Staff and apprentices receive effective training and development in all aspects of safeguarding.
- Managers' 'Prevent' duty risk-assessment and action plan help ensure that staff and apprentices understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Apprentices benefit from high-quality off-the-job training that tutors match well to their job roles. This results in engaging, relevant and highly interactive learning. Class discussions are often led by apprentices and focus on real-life, work-related challenges. Apprentices are generally very enthusiastic about their training and recognise the positive impact this is having upon their performance at work. Tutors are skilled at using relevant, current examples to support learning and to reinforce understanding. For example, a discussion about Brexit and the current political situation was used to explore the impact on budgets and the need for flexibility in planning.
- In many cases, the work apprentices produce is of very high quality. The work tutors set for apprentices is usually challenging. This supports the development of a deeper understanding of a topic. Apprentices can apply theories learned previously to new topics, demonstrating good retention of previous learning and their depth of understanding.
- Tutors and assessors provide detailed written feedback for apprentices which is clear and includes guidance on how to improve both the work itself and its presentation. Feedback includes the accurate correction of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. In a minority of cases, apprentices have experienced some delays in receiving feedback. However, this position is now much improved as a result of recent changes and additional staff resources.
- Apprentices benefit from a range of learning opportunities, including face-to face and one-to-one tuition, classroom study days and additional small-group workshops using online facilities. The latter approach improves apprentices' skills in the use of digital technology.
- Communication between assessors, tutors, apprentices and their line managers is good. Apprentices value the personalised support they receive during progress reviews between training sessions. In a very small minority of cases, level 3 apprentices remain unclear of significant target dates and a few are behind with their planned progress; some have targets still outstanding a considerable time after their due date.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the importance of equality of opportunity and

of diversity in their workplaces. They know how these concepts should be applied within their jobs, for example in fully recognising the value of diversity within their teams.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices enjoy their learning and take pride in their work. Most develop significantly in confidence as a result of their programmes. A significant minority have been inspired to progress to higher-level training opportunities, such as courses offered by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Apprentices receive good advice and guidance from tutors, assessors and their managers to determine appropriate potential progression opportunities. Managers are working on stepping-stone programmes to bridge the gap between the level 3 and level 5 programmes for apprentices who have limited managerial experience.
- Apprentices display professional behaviours in their attendance and punctuality for training and at work, and they are prepared to learn. They are fully engaged in training sessions, taking part in group discussions and providing thoughtful and appropriate contributions. Within these sessions there is a clear focus on respect and peer support and apprentices work collaboratively in small groups and in classes.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding, including the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices feel safe and are aware of the procedures for reporting and seeking support. Most can provide clear examples of how these important strategies relate to their roles and responsibilities. Apprentices understand the underlying principles of British values.
- Apprentices rapidly develop leadership and management knowledge and skills. This supports improvement in their performance in the workplace. Managers confirm the value of the training and the positive impact this has on the business. Many apprentices are now able to make an increased contribution in the workplace. Apprentices use new knowledge and skills to take on additional duties and some are promoted as a direct result of training. A higher apprentice at level 5 now confidently understands organisational budgeting requirements and uses reflective practice very effectively to secure improvements in his team and across the organisation. A level 3 apprentice has secured a promotion from traffic parking operative to team leader in an office environment managing small teams. Apprentices also improve their emotional intelligence and can deal far more effectively with difficult and challenging circumstances.
- Apprentices make use of appropriate technical terminology when discussing topics during sessions, such as references to accruals when discussing the difficulties of setting a single budget for a financial year. All apprentices produce evidence of a suitable standard to meet the requirements of the qualification and much of the evidence is of a high standard by the end of their training.
- A specialist functional skills tutor provides good support to apprentices. This helps most to improve rapidly their English, mathematical and information and communication technology skills. A small minority, however, make slow progress and have not yet achieved the required functional skills qualification in English at level 2. This has also contributed to slow progress towards completing their programmes. Clear actions are already in place to improve the proportion of apprentices achieving functional skills at the first attempt.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Most apprentices are making improved progress, although too many are approaching or beyond their planned completion date because of the slow start they made on their programmes. A small number of apprentices continue to make slow progress. Where academy staff have agreed new submission targets for overdue assignments with apprentices and their managers, these new dates are not always met. This requires improvement.
- Apprentices enjoy and take pride in their learning. For many, their programme is a return to learning after many years and it has inspired them to continue learning as their career progresses.
- The new skills, knowledge and leadership and managerial behaviours developed by apprentices improve their performance at work. A significant minority have gained promotion as a result of this improved performance.
- Apprentices' work meets, and often exceeds, the requirements of the qualification. This is reflected in the fact that all of the small number of apprentices who have completed their programmes have achieved distinctions.
- Managers' recent monitoring of the progress of different groups of apprentices shows that identifiable groups are making similar progress.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278596
Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	140
Managing Director	Mark Hoskin
Telephone number	0121 6813926
Website	www.nslservices.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)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	82	-	22		
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	-							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of the academy, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the new provider monitoring visit 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 and reviewed marked work, assessment and progress review records. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Mark Shackleton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Pauline Dixey	Ofsted Inspector
Dominic Whittaker	Ofsted Inspector

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