

Inspection of Fuel Learning Limited

Inspection dates: 24–27 September 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Fuel Learning Limited (Fuel) is a privately owned national training provider based in Coventry. The company is working with 10 levy-paying employers to provide management apprenticeship programmes to employees in the logistics, building distribution, engineering, packaging and utilities sectors across England. During the inspection week, 332 apprentices were on programmes. Of these, 236 apprentices were on the level 3 team leader/supervisor standard and the rest were on the level 5 operational/departmental manager standard. At the start of their programme, over half of apprentices at level 3 and a third at level 5 need functional skills in English and/or mathematics to complete their apprenticeship.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices gain new knowledge of management theories, develop analytical skills and apply these in their workplaces to become better managers. They make good progress and complete their apprenticeship programmes with high grades.

Apprentices like the exciting curriculum, which closely relates theory to their work settings. They enjoy learning from expert and knowledgeable staff in groups, one-to-one sessions and online. Using their knowledge and skills, apprentices design useful projects to solve work-based problems to improve business practices and save money for their employers.

Training inspires apprentices, builds their confidence and helps them to deal with challenges, both at work and in life, more competently. Apprentices feel safe.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Fuel works closely with local, national and global businesses to plan a bespoke apprenticeship curriculum. Managers seek to understand the needs of businesses first, including their reasons for seeking apprenticeship training. They then design and agree a curriculum with the employer that builds on their existing programme of training and their current and future needs. Staff adapt the training modules and deliver them flexibly to meet the operational demands of businesses. This training improves the competence and knowledge of employees to take more diverse roles and improve business performance.

Apprentices gain substantial new knowledge of managing self, teams and projects. This helps them become better team leaders/managers. They make good progress while on their programmes and achieve good results. Of the 161 level 3 team leader apprentices who have completed their programme so far, all have gained either a distinction or a merit.

Facilitators and assessors are well-qualified and highly experienced. They provide highly effective training with a clear structure that builds on apprentices' existing knowledge, skills and behaviour. As a result, apprentices develop, practise and consolidate their learning over time. Using management tools and project management software, they manage the critical timings of projects. They feel more confident when dealing with conflict at work and foster a good team spirit among their employees.

Most assessors provide apprentices who fall behind with their studies with helpful support, for example with dyslexia, that helps them to catch up. However, staff do not support apprentices with additional learning needs quickly enough. As a result, a few apprentices make slow progress. No apprentices qualify for high-needs funding.

Apprentices produce a high standard of practical work for their employers. Staff provide apprentices with feedback that helps them to improve the standard of their written work. In a few cases, assessors do not identify the specific actions that level 5

apprentices need to take to produce written work of high standard.

The majority of apprentices develop their English, mathematical and digital skills well. Functional skills facilitators use English and mathematics assignments from the workplaces to ensure that apprentices learn and apply these skills. For example, team leading apprentices confidently plan and deliver team briefings in the warehouse. Using calculations of the area accurately, apprentices make plans for stacking shelves in the warehouse aisles.

Managers do not ensure that all apprentices continue to develop their English language skills on an ongoing and systematic basis, particularly apprentices who have the necessary qualifications in English and mathematics at the start of their apprenticeship. As a result, a minority of apprentices do not develop these skills sufficiently for future roles.

Apprentices are highly organised and the large majority attend well. They use online resources in the learning hub extremely well to complete online learning activities to complement group training sessions.

Staff conduct a thorough analysis of the apprentices' starting points for their skills, knowledge and behaviour and place them on the correct programme. Apprentices have a clear understanding of the progression opportunities within their own employers. However, managers do not make apprentices aware of the transferable skills that they can utilise in other sectors to enhance their employment prospects. Managers do not signpost apprentices to sources from which they can seek unbiased careers guidance.

Leaders' engagement with employers is excellent. Leaders are clear about the intent for the curriculum strategy and have developed niche training programmes. For example, a very large employer has developed 1,000 roles across the company. Over 50% of those roles are being filled by internal promotions within the company. Many of these roles will be promotions for current and ex-apprentices. Employers benefit from a sustainable and skilled work force.

Leaders have made significant investments within the business. These include employing highly skilled staff who feel valued, respected and part of the team. By purchasing a range of hardware and software, managers have significantly enhanced apprentices' experience of learning.

Since the new provider monitoring visit, leaders have secured the services of two well-qualified and experienced governors. Governors hold informal discussions with senior managers to help them. They are clear about their roles and have plans to hold managers to account for the use of public funds, to provide scrutiny of their work and challenge managers to improve further. However, they have not yet had any formal meetings.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to safeguard apprentices. Senior staff take personal responsibility for safeguarding. They have undertaken appropriate training and manage disclosure through to completion. They have established a positive learning environment where apprentices learn and feel safe. Apprentices have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding and British values. They recognise the dangers in society and know how to protect themselves or peers from these. They know how to report concerns. Apprentices' awareness of local risks of radicalisation and extremism is superficial.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Identify opportunities for apprentices to apply their skills in English and mathematics beyond the achievement of the required qualifications.
- Support all apprentices with additional learning needs promptly so that they can make the progress of which they are capable.
- Ensure that apprentices gain a sound understanding of the threats posed by radical or extremist groups in their locality and how to protect themselves against these threats.
- Make sure that managers and facilitators work with apprentices to signpost them to sources of unbiased careers guidance so that they can explore the full range of options to improve their prospects and decide on their next steps.
- Rapidly implement the planned actions to establish a governance function to improve accountability.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276450
Address	Villiers Court Copse Drive Meriden Coventry CV5 9RN
Contact number	0121 651 1200
Website	www.fuellearning.com
Principal/CEO	Ian Prentice
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeship manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous new provider monitoring visit inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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