

Inspection of The Apprenticeship College Ltd

Inspection dates: 8–10 January 2020

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

The Apprenticeship College Limited (the Apprenticeship College), previously known as the London College of Apprenticeship Training, is an apprenticeship provider based in Paddington, central London. The Apprenticeship College began teaching apprenticeships in May 2017. It has apprentices in London, the Midlands, the east of England and the north of England.

At the time of the inspection, there were 754 apprentices on standards programmes at levels 2 to 5 in customer service, business administration, team leader, project management, improvement technician, improvement practitioner and operations/department manager. The largest proportion of apprentices study for level 3 team leader and level 5 operations/department manager.

The Apprenticeship College works with three subcontractors, Nine Dots Development, Maguire Business Solutions and Lane 4 Management Group Limited. The subcontractors teach the training components of apprenticeships with ten different employers.

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

Most apprentices study their apprenticeship programmes in cohorts from one employer. As a result, apprentices benefit from training that is tailored closely to their job needs. Employers value the involvement that this allows them to have in the planning of programmes and apprentices make a positive contribution to the businesses in which they work.

Apprentices improve their existing skills and knowledge. They feel that their studies help them to perform their job roles better. For example, apprentices on customer service apprenticeships feel better equipped to deal with challenging situations at work.

Most apprentices are highly motivated to learn, apply themselves well to their studies and gain in confidence and self-esteem. They build up good working relationships with their trainers and coaches and appreciate the support that they receive. However, apprentices who have had a change in coach say they feel that this has been a disadvantage to their work.

A minority of apprentices would like to have understood more clearly the overview of the course, the level of work required, and the workload involved in their apprenticeship prior to starting their programme.

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

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders and managers have increased the number of apprentices on the programmes that they deliver. They have established effective processes to ensure that the quality of the provision they offer remains high quality, as the size of the apprenticeship provision grows.

Leaders have established an advisory board which carries out its governance role effectively. Senior leaders and the board evaluate the curriculum effectively. They ensure that it meets the needs of a diverse range of employers. Governors monitor performance frequently. They challenge senior leaders effectively to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate for the employers that they work with. The board has a good understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement of the organisation.

Leaders have carried out extensive market research into the needs of the employers that they serve. They use this knowledge effectively to establish a clear strategy for the way in which they plan and teach apprenticeship programmes. For example, they have contextualised the level 5 operations and departmental manager apprenticeship for one employer, so that it is more relevant to the food industry.

Trainers, coaches and programme mentors are highly skilled and have the expertise to carry out their roles effectively. Managers provide relevant training so that staff improve their skills and the quality of their training.

Trainers and coaching staff plan teaching carefully so that apprentices develop their skills in a logical sequence. They make activities interesting and stimulating so that apprentices can recall what they have learned. For example, they provide interactive workshops and role plays so that apprentices rehearse and practise their skills. Trainers provide apprentices with frequent opportunities to revise and apply their knowledge. As a result, apprentices understand how topics can be used in the workplace and can apply them to different work contexts.

Many apprentices reflect on and change their own workplace behaviours because of their training. For example, apprentices on level 3 team leading reflect on and improve their people skills. As a result, they learn to manage people at different levels of the organisation more successfully. In a minority of apprenticeships, trainers do not ensure that apprentices understand how theoretical aspects apply to their job roles. Staff on the level 5 operations and department management apprenticeship do not align the sequencing of workshops closely enough with apprentices' job roles.

Most trainers and coaches use assessment effectively to check apprentices' understanding. They use discussions and explore different ideas and approaches to problems well. As a result, apprentices receive feedback from, and provide feedback to, other apprentices, as well as from their trainer. As a result, most apprentices have a thorough understanding of the topics they study. Trainers and coaches provide useful feedback to apprentices on their written work. Coaches on level 4 project management skilfully identify gaps in apprentices' knowledge and review and revise topics so that apprentices gain a deep understanding of those aspects of knowledge. Apprentices understand how to improve their practical and written work and can use it confidently in their workplace.

In early apprenticeship programmes, coaches were not aware of apprentices' progress at reviews. They were too reliant on apprentices to update them on the progress that they were making. Coaches now carry out reviews effectively so that apprentices benefit from helpful planning and target setting so they can organise their work in detail.

Subcontractors teach specialist aspects of training on a few apprenticeship programmes. They provide workshops, for example in managing performance and coaching. Leaders manage the subcontracted elements of the apprenticeship successfully. As a result, the quality of the subcontracted provision is good.

Staff provide apprentices with good advice and guidance at the beginning of their programmes. Most employers take an active role in recruiting apprentices. As a result, apprentices are recruited to the most appropriate level and apprenticeship programme. Those apprentices employed in temporary roles understand the benefit of their training to secure permanent employment. A small minority of apprentices from early cohorts do not know the opportunities available to them on completion of their apprenticeship. Leaders have taken appropriate action to rectify this for current apprentices.

Leaders have put appropriate interventions in place to rectify the poor attendance identified at the previous monitoring visit. As a result, attendance to mandatory taught sessions has improved. Leaders provide apprentices who miss taught sessions with additional training. A minority of apprentices do not attend the voluntary sessions that they sign up to.

For the first cohorts of apprentices recruited, leaders and managers did not provide adequate information to apprentices on the demands of the programme. They also took the decision to give staff extra time to prepare apprentices for their end-point assessments and to achieve high grades. As a result, for apprentices due to complete their programmes by July 2019, the proportion who stayed to the end of the programme, and who achieved in the planned time, was too low. Recent actions to address these issues have been successful. For more recent cohorts, apprentices receive accurate information about the programme and a high proportion now complete their apprenticeship. Those who have recently taken their end-point assessments mostly did so on time, and a high proportion achieved distinctions.

Staff do not identify the support that apprentices need to improve their English and mathematics swiftly enough. Too often, apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve their skills early enough in their programmes. Apprentices frequently receive support for English and mathematics too late.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have the safeguarding of apprentices as a high priority. They have put in place effective procedures which they apply consistently across the organisation. They carry out relevant checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices. Managers have ensured that staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities to keep apprentices safe. Apprentices feel safe in their training and in the workplace. They know who to report issues to if they have any concerns.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices remain on their courses and achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales. They should continue to inform employers and apprentices about the requirements of the apprenticeships so that they understand fully what they are required to do to complete their apprenticeship.
- Leaders, managers and employers should provide apprentices with appropriate advice and guidance on the future opportunities that are available to them when they have completed their apprenticeship.
- Leaders and managers should identify apprentices' support needs in English and mathematics early in their programmes. They should ensure that apprentices

understand what they need to do to improve their skills and knowledge in these subjects and, where appropriate, achieve their qualifications.

- In a minority of apprenticeships, particularly at level 5, leaders and managers should ensure that they order the curriculum so that it is aligned to apprentices' job roles. They should ensure that apprentices can apply their new skills and knowledge within the workplace so that they understand the link between their theoretical and practical work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1274676
Address	258 Harrow Road London W2 5ES
Contact number	020 3651 4747
Website	www.apprenticeship-college.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Graham Howe
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Nine Dots Development Limited Maguire Business Solutions Lane 4 Management Group Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive director business development, quality and human resources, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit 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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