

# Inspection of The IT Skills Management Company Limited

Inspection dates: 11–14 February 2020

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

## Information about this provider

The IT Skills Management Company Limited (ITSM), trading as Intequal, delivers apprenticeship standards at levels 3 and 4 within the digital sector. The provider operates nationally and has offices in Birmingham, Portsmouth and Manchester. At the time of the inspection, there were 290 apprentices enrolled across seven digital apprenticeship standards – with almost half of apprentices following the level 3 IT (information technology) infrastructure technician standard. ITSM holds a contract for apprenticeship delivery and delivers apprenticeships for levy-paying employers. Through a strategic partnership with Microsoft, ITSM delivers its apprenticeships using a variety of online teaching tools blended with more traditional delivery methods.

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

Apprentices enjoy the mix of learning online and regular visits from pathway planners. They rapidly develop new skills and knowledge, which increases their confidence and value in the workplace.

Apprentices benefit from the relationship the provider builds with their employer. This ensures that they can apply their new knowledge and practise newly developed skills in the workplace quickly.

Apprentices rightly value the teaching they receive. Their tutors are well qualified in the subjects they teach and use real-world examples to help apprentices understand how to apply their learning in the workplace.

Most apprentices make good progress on their apprenticeships and are well prepared for their end-point assessments. Most pass at the first attempt, and almost half achieve a distinction grade. Apprentices take valuable additional industry-standard IT qualifications as part of their apprenticeship.

Apprentices learn how to work independently and to solve problems flexibly. They learn to manage their time effectively and respond positively to issues that they face. They become more productive and valued in the workplace and take on extra responsibility as their skills and confidence grow.

Apprentices feel safe and understand how to protect themselves from harm. They develop a detailed understanding of staying safe online, which is highly relevant to their apprenticeship and their job roles.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear focus for the apprenticeships they offer. They have worked with stakeholder groups to understand employers' needs and have carefully chosen programmes which address local and national skills shortages in IT.

Leaders and managers have developed a curriculum that is well designed to ensure that apprentices develop industry-relevant skills and knowledge rapidly. As a result, they are able to add value to their workplace quickly and apply their newly developed skills. For example, IT support technician apprentices develop the confidence and skills to manage anti-virus software across a large network to maintain the security of the system.

Leaders have strengthened governance arrangements since the new provider monitoring visit and have recently introduced an external governor with educational expertise to the board. Those in a governance role have a good understanding of the performance of apprentices and understand their duties clearly.

Apprentices receive a blend of online and face-to-face learning and support, which suits the apprenticeships they follow very well. For example, apprentices can access their learning without having to travel to training sessions and are able to take part in group discussions and learning using online classrooms.

The provider has worked well with employers to make sure that they understand the benefits of supporting apprentices through on-the-job learning. As a result, there are many examples where employers support apprentices with additional time and training to learn particular skills or take qualifications for their specific business need. For example, one employer included manufacturer-specific training to support their own internal systems.

Apprentices develop appropriate behaviours for their roles as a result of high expectations from both their assessors and managers. They work well in teams and communicate with others well. For example, one employer supports and encourages technical sales apprentices to lead client visits, developing their confidence and communication skills.

Some apprentices take part in charity and local community activities. These help to develop their character. For example, some apprentices organised an event for mental health week to help promote well-being and mental health. A few apprentices have developed their public-speaking skills by giving talks about apprenticeships in schools.

Attendance at online sessions and pathway planner visits is good. Learners are highly motivated and are keen to learn. The provider gives apprentices who are not able to attend their scheduled sessions the opportunity to attend others to make sure that they can continue to make progress.

Pathway planners prepare apprentices for end-point assessment well, and most apprentices are aware of the requirements at an early stage in their training. As a result, most apprentices rightly feel confident when approaching this stage of their programme.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff keep up to date with the changes in the IT industry and continue to develop their technical knowledge. However, the development of pathway planners' and tutors' teaching skills is less well planned, and managers do not consistently evaluate the impact of staff training on learning.

Leaders and managers agreed to receive a transfer of apprentices from another provider by the funding body since the monitoring visit. Following a significant review of their starting points and progress to date, most apprentices have made good progress since the transfer, and some are now beginning to complete their apprenticeship.

Pathway planners work well to plan apprentices' learning activities both on and off the job. Employers are regularly involved in apprentices' progress reviews and are kept well informed of the progress apprentices are making; however, not all

employers are consistently well involved. Managers have recognised this and are taking steps to resolve these issues. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these actions.

Most apprentices make good progress from their starting points and develop substantial new skills and knowledge. Many apprentices already have the required qualifications in English and mathematics. Those that need functional skills qualifications as part of their apprenticeship receive support to complete them early in their programme. However, the development of English and mathematics skills for all apprentices is not well planned, and as a result learners are not encouraged to achieve their potential.

Apprentices are clear about the career opportunities available to them with their employer and the possible next steps. They are ambitious to continue their development with their employer at the end of their apprenticeship and take on new projects and responsibilities. As a result, most move into permanent positions when they finish their apprenticeship. However, apprentices do not consistently receive guidance about the breadth of possibilities and broader opportunities available to them outside of their current employer.

Apprentices develop an understanding of life in modern Britain early in their apprenticeship. They can remember some of this training later in their programmes. However, pathway planners do not revisit the training often enough to make sure that apprentices have a sufficiently good understanding of this topic.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers give safeguarding a high priority. The provider has safeguarding officers who have received enhanced training, and all staff receive mandatory training, which is updated regularly. Managers have appropriate links with external bodies and a link with a 'Prevent' coordinator. These keep them apprised of new developments.

Apprentices' induction includes training on safeguarding, life in modern Britain and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. However, apprentices' understanding of these is not well developed throughout their programmes. As a result, apprentices are often unable to recall aspects of this training at a later date.

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

- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills throughout their apprenticeships and should measure the extent to which apprentices have acquired these skills and knowledge.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices are fully prepared for life in modern Britain by developing this understanding throughout their apprenticeship.

- Leaders should make sure that tutors and pathway planners keep employers well informed of apprentices' progress and are using this information to plan the apprentices' route through their learning programme with the employer.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	1276439
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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Dominic Gill
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

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