

Inspection of CSR Scientific Training Limited

Inspection dates: 25–28 February 2020

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

Information about this provider

CSR Scientific Training Limited (CSR) is an independent learning provider that specialises in training for the healthcare and science sectors. CSR provides training in a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, specialist laboratories, the police, and schools. Having delivered apprenticeships as a subcontractor for nine years, CSR has been a prime contract holder since March 2017. CSR currently has 190 apprentices on programmes ranging from level 2 to 5. The largest proportion of apprentices are on level 3 apprenticeships for laboratory science technicians. Most of the apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships, with a small number completing frameworks in 2019/20. The provider works with 84 employers. It works with the National Physical Laboratory, which is the sole subcontractor.

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

Apprentices develop knowledge and skills which are highly valued by employers. For example, they apply quality assurance and control effectively in commercial scientific settings. As a result, they become more employable.

Apprentices enjoy learning both at work and in the classroom. Working in clinical, structured and orderly environments, apprentices develop a resilience which enables them to work under pressure. Apprentices use technical language well when communicating with clinicians. They become more confident.

Apprentices enjoy a range of additional activities which support their broader development. For example, they attend events at the Institute of Physics and participate in the WorldSkills Competition.

Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe. They understand the importance of mental well-being and show awareness of the risks posed by drugs and alcohol. They develop a sound understanding of British values and appreciate the need to treat people with respect and in hospitals to treat patients with dignity.

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

Apprentices are exceptionally motivated to achieve their qualification and have a very positive and proactive attitude. For example, many apprentices outline their next steps and have clear aspirations to become a biomedical scientist or cardiac practitioner.

Apprentices are highly committed to their course and work very well independently. They attend regularly and are punctual in the classes and at work. As a result, they are developing the skills, attitudes and behaviours required to be effective members of staff. For example, apprentices are learning about the requirements of clinical and technical ISO standards audits. The apprentices are highly valued by their employer as they increase the expertise of the workforce.

From the very start of the programme apprentices are clearly informed about the expectations of learning and professional behaviour at work. Apprentices fully appreciate the confidential nature of their job roles, the employers' business and the sector. They have exceptional understanding of the work environment and the importance of their job roles for businesses, their careers and society at large. For example, apprentices have visited the Culham Science Centre to see the Tokamak and to learn about nuclear fusion. They contribute to outreach events, share their skills and knowledge, and develop valuable networking skills.

Leaders and managers have established strong and productive partnerships with professional institutions and employers such as The Royal Society of Chemistry and the National Physical Laboratory – tailoring training to the sector's needs.

Leaders and managers provide a wide range of continuing professional development to improve lecturers and vocational skills coaches' skills. As a result, the training which apprentices receive reflects current industry standards. Leaders have developed effective arrangements to improve teaching and learning, for example the observation of teaching and learning in classes and of online learning. As a result, teaching and learning are showing an improving picture and most apprentices are now achieving as planned and achieving higher grades.

Leaders are investing in the development of teaching, learning and assessment skills for CSR staff. Staff are taking teaching qualifications, which is having a positive effect on their teaching practices. The development of strategies, such as understanding personal behaviours for success, is helping apprentices have a greater awareness of their own skills and the impact that negative behaviours may have in the workplace.

Lecturers and vocational skills coaches use their extensive professional experience to enliven lessons, using relevant examples to add authenticity and context to their teaching. In most sessions lecturers and vocational skills coaches use effective teaching approaches to develop apprentices' understanding. For example, within a well-structured session, the teacher established apprentices' prior knowledge of immunology through them listing all they knew about it on post-it notes, then built on that understanding through encouraging discussion and drawing out key points. However, apprentices joining online sessions do not consistently receive high-quality training. In some online sessions, teachers do not use the technology well enough to ensure that all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

Lecturers and vocational skills coaches use assessment well to check the knowledge and skills of apprentices. However, they do not consistently use the outcome of the assessment to inform the future teaching to ensure that all have a secure understanding of the subject. Trainers do not consistently provide written feedback that helps apprentices know in detail what they need to do to improve. As a result, not all apprentices achieve the highest grades.

Apprentices develop subject-specific, technical language that allows them to communicate effectively with fellow professionals. Lecturers break down the constituent parts of a complicated term to help apprentices remember the meaning. For example, a lecturer helped apprentices to understand the term 'phagocyte', by explaining that 'phago' means 'to eat'. By explaining the derivation of the term, lecturers enable apprentices to secure the knowledge in their long-term memory.

Lecturers ensure that apprentices know more and remember more. For example, apprentices develop their skills of analysis and evaluation, improving their interpretation of histopathology slides. As a result, apprentices are more able to make positive contributions to the teams in which they work, developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be effective and successful employees. They are able to take on more responsibility. For example, an

apprentice who has recently completed their apprenticeship now line-manages a current apprentice. In a very small minority of cases, apprentices are unable to connect the theory taught in off-the-job training to on-the-job training and roles.

Lecturers and vocational skills coaches do not routinely develop apprentices' mathematics and English skills in a planned and consistent manner. This results in a very small minority of apprentices making slow progress in functional skills. Leaders have plans in place to improve this; however, these have not yet been implemented.

Leaders have developed the company's governance arrangements to enable professional discussion with someone who can provide an external perspective. Those responsible for governance work closely with leaders to focus on improving provision and use a range of key performance indicators, gathering evidence through routine visits and 'deep dives' to measure progress. As a result, governance ensures that leaders are held to account for the quality of provision.

In a minority of cases trainers do not always prepare apprentices early enough in the course to undertake professional discussion. This forms part of the end-point assessment. As a result, apprentices do not have sufficient opportunities to reinforce their skills and understanding. A few apprentices are not confident when entering the final assessment and do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Leaders and managers had been slow to ensure that apprentices achieved their qualifications on or before the planned end date because they were unaware of the lead-in time for end-point assessment. As a result, apprentices' completions were delayed. However, they now ensure the effective tracking of apprentices' progress and timely support for apprentices who are not on track to achieve. This change has brought about significant improvements in timely achievement during 2019/20.

In a very few isolated cases, leaders and managers do not communicate with employers in enough detail. For example, they do not provide employers with information about the progress of their apprentices, the nature of end-point assessment and how they can help their apprentices develop the skills they need.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders have developed detailed and appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. These include policies for e-safety, child and vulnerable adult protection, anti-bullying, and the prevention of terrorism and radicalisation. Staff are clear about how and to whom they should report safeguarding concerns. Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices feel safe, work safely in their professional scientific settings and know how to keep themselves safe.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should identify apprentices' English and mathematics skill levels promptly and provide relevant training to support their continued development.
- Leaders and managers should continue to refine the monitoring of apprentices' progress to ensure that all apprentices make good progress towards completing their apprenticeship by the expected completion date.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that lecturers provide a consistently high-quality teaching and learning experience online as well as in the classroom.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276261
Address	1b Mitre Court 38 Lichfield Road Sutton Coldfield West Midlands B74 2LZ
Contact number	0121 354 2442
Website	www.csr-group.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Simon Jukes
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	National Physical Laboratory

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of business development and quality, 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

Sharon Dowling, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Roger Pilgrim	Ofsted Inspector
Rosy Belton	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Harmesh Manghra	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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