

# Inspection of Well Associates Limited

Inspection dates: 20–22 July 2021

<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

Well Associates Limited, trading as Well Training, is an independent learning provider based in Wolverhampton, West Midlands. The provider specialises in management development and training and was approved to begin offering apprenticeships in 2017. At the time of inspection, there were 52 apprentices following a level 5 operations/departmental manager standard, all of whom were employed by one employer.

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

Apprentices enjoy their learning. They can clearly identify the links between what they are learning and how to apply their new knowledge and skills in the workplace. They value the way tutors tailor their learning to add the context they need to understand fully how they can use what they have learned to be better managers, and how to get the best from their teams.

Apprentices understand the career opportunities their apprenticeship offers, both within and beyond their employer, with a small but significant number of apprentices achieving promotion before completing their course. Not all apprentices fully understand the arrangements for end-point assessment, but those that do discuss how they are motivated to aim for a distinction grade.

Apprentices enjoy the interactive nature of learning sessions and feel this helps them to engage with and remember their learning well. They can clearly recall their learning and can identify how this is helping them in their day-to-day job roles. For example, one apprentice described how they needed to change their methods of communication when engaging with new members of staff to ensure their instructions were understood. As a result, apprentices and their teams benefit from the training they receive.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves and their teams safe. They describe how the provider has worked with their employer during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic to support them with the relevant information and training they need to manage the changes they have faced in their lives and work.

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

Leaders work well with the employer to develop learning programmes which meet the needs of both the apprentice and their employer. Through this partnership they have developed additional learning to support the aims of the employer and restructure the curriculum as necessary, to ensure that apprentices learn key concepts when most relevant to them. For example, when the employer was ready to reopen stores when national restrictions were relaxed, the curriculum was adapted to move change management training to earlier in apprentices' programmes. This subsequently helped apprentices to understand better how they can manage the changes that had been put in place and how to support their teams better. As a result, apprentices' skills are developed in a timely and relevant way to support their learning and their work.

Leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the benefits the programme offers apprentices. They have worked well to ensure that learning was able to continue online throughout the challenges the provider, apprentices and their employer have faced during the pandemic. Apprentices were offered additional equipment, such as laptops, where they needed these to participate in learning. As a result, all

apprentices were able to continue their learning throughout the periods of national restrictions.

Leaders ensure that staff continually update their teaching and vocational skills through a programme of development opportunities, including both formal qualifications and training. For example, teaching staff have completed training on how to use technology to teach effectively online, and several staff are currently undertaking higher-level qualifications with other providers. As a result, staff are well equipped with current knowledge and skills to support apprentices through their learning.

Leaders have recently appointed a governance board with significant expertise and have developed appropriate terms of reference to ensure that governors hold leaders to account. The board understands and discusses convincingly the areas of the provider's apprenticeships which need to improve and demonstrate the steps it has taken so far to support this improvement. However, as yet, the newly formed board has not had the opportunity to tackle all of the areas it identified. As a result, the impact it has had on the quality of apprenticeships so far is limited.

Leaders monitor attendance and punctuality well. They hold monthly team meetings to review the attendance and progress of apprentices and communicate this information to the employer. Where necessary, leaders discuss any attendance issues with apprentices' line managers to ensure apprentices receive the support they need. As a result, apprentices' attendance at teaching sessions is high.

Leaders have developed an additional module in resilience and well-being which all apprentices complete as part of their learning. The module covers topics such as mental health and well-being and how apprentices can recognise the signs of potential issues in those around them, both at work and at home. As a result, apprentices receive the information they need to develop their own and their teams' resilience and independence, in addition to both physical and mental well-being.

Tutors support apprentices well to develop English and mathematics knowledge and skills. They use master classes in topics such as grammar and percentages and one-to-one coaching sessions to help apprentices to learn the skills they need to achieve their functional skills qualifications. Those apprentices who do not need to complete the qualifications are offered support and can attend teaching sessions. However, some do not take up this offer, even when initial assessment has indicated a development need. As a result, not all apprentices develop the English and mathematics skills they need to reach their potential.

Leaders work well with apprentices' managers to ensure they plan the opportunities they need to practise their new skills. For example, where apprentices do not have the opportunity within their job role to practise their newly learned knowledge or skills, managers support them by delegating relevant duties to them. As a result, apprentices can quickly apply what they learn in the workplace to embed their new skills.

Teachers use a range of methods well to assess learning. They review pre-session assessments of apprentices' prior knowledge, conduct observations and use questioning during teaching sessions. Feedback from these assessments is often oral and – where they identify gaps in apprentices' knowledge – they fill them through one-to-one coaching sessions. As a result, coaches take apprentices' individual needs into account when planning their learning.

The provider supports apprentices with careers advice relevant to their current job roles and also to support their wider interests in other career opportunities or studies. Careers is a theme within teaching sessions and is discussed during apprentices' reviews. Leaders have recently purchased a new online platform which provides detailed and unbiased information on potential career paths and other opportunities for apprentices. However, this was purchased shortly before inspection and has not yet been shared with apprentices. Consequently, no evidence of engagement can yet be seen.

Teachers offer support to apprentices in pursuit of their interests outside of the established curriculum. A number of apprentices have changed their career aspirations as a result of following particular units of study. For example, one apprentice, who would like to go into teaching following the study of the mentoring unit as part of their apprenticeship, has received advice and support in understanding how to achieve this. Other apprentices are actively involved in charitable work in their local communities, with the support of their employer and the provider.

Coaches do not take a sufficiently holistic view of apprentices' starting points at the beginning of their programme. For example, apprentices complete assessments of their prior learning in English and mathematics and of their existing vocational knowledge and skills, but coaches do not assess apprentices' wider development needs, for example study skills, confidence or interpersonal skills. Where an individual need is identified, coaches support this in one-to-one sessions. However, this is not systematically planned. As a result, coaches do not ensure that all apprentices' needs are met swiftly enough.

Tutors' written feedback is not always sufficiently developmental to allow apprentices to understand how to improve their work. Tutors sometimes place too much focus on the achievement of units, and feedback does not provide apprentices with sufficient information to understand what they need to do to improve. As a result, feedback does not always identify what an apprentice needs to develop to meet their potential.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy have completed appropriate training to carry out their roles. The DSL has ensured that all staff have completed appropriate safeguarding training and training on other topics such as the risks

associated with radicalisation and extremism. They use this training well to develop apprentices' understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Coaches provide safeguarding-related training to apprentices as part of regular 'hot-topic' sessions throughout their programme. Coaches subsequently review these topics with apprentices during reviews to develop apprentices' understanding.

Apprentices demonstrate an understanding of the topics they have been taught and articulate well how these topics relate to them. For example, during the pandemic a number of apprentices and their staff were lone working. Apprentices could clearly identify the risks associated with this and the steps they took to keep themselves and their colleagues safe. Most apprentices identify and value the 'hot-topic' sessions on personal safety that cover aspects of bullying, harassment and stalking as being particularly relevant to their work.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to access help if they need it. They understand the steps the provider has taken to keep them safe when learning online and how these extend to their everyday lives.

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

- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices develop sufficiently their knowledge and skills in English and mathematics throughout their programmes to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders must ensure that all feedback is sufficiently developmental to ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to reach their full potential.
- Leaders must ensure that that an assessment of apprentices' wider skills needs takes place at the start of their programmes and is used to inform the planning of learning.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Lindsey Flynn
<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 chief executive, 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

Stuart Collett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Bev Ramsell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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