

Inspection of Buttercups Training Limited

Inspection dates: 20–23 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Information about this provider

Buttercups Training Limited (Buttercups) was awarded a direct contract to provide apprenticeships in May 2017. Previously it had provided apprenticeships through subcontracting arrangements with further education colleges.

Buttercups provide training for 1,423 apprentices, 95 of whom are aged 16 to 18. Currently 282 apprentices are on frameworks in pharmacy at level 2 and 3. All other apprentices study either the level 2 pharmacy services assistant or level 3 pharmacy technician (integrated) apprenticeship standard. The level 3 apprenticeship leads to professional registration with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). There are eight apprentices who study level 2 interior systems installer standard. Buttercups are based in Nottingham and all apprentices study and train online.

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

Apprentices thoroughly enjoy their studies and professional work. They have high levels of motivation to achieve. They swiftly develop new knowledge and skills to become critical pharmacy team members. Employers are right to recognise and value the depth of knowledge that apprentices gain.

Tutors' enthusiasm and knowledge helps apprentices understand how to apply theory in the workplace. Tutors and employer workplace training supervisors (WTSs) are highly skilled and qualified. Their good subject expertise enables them to bring subjects to life and to ask apprentices challenging technical questions.

Apprentices often demonstrate commitment beyond their role and make a real difference to their communities. They lead on impactful health promotion campaigns that benefit their patients. For example, smoking cessation coaching and cervical screening promotion.

Apprentices demonstrate very high levels of resilience to continue to work, study and undertake community activity while the pandemic continues to place extra pressures on them and the sector.

Apprentices benefit from access to high-quality resources that support their mental health. They receive frequent pastoral support calls, which increase if they require extra support. Apprentices and employers value this support which helps them in their demanding roles.

Apprentices feel safe and understand how to report any concerns for themselves, a colleague or a patient. They know how to stay safe online and adopt safe working practices.

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

Leaders work in very close partnership with the pharmacy sector. They play a pivotal role in the development of high-quality pharmacy training. Leaders plan a highly ambitious curriculum that definitively meets the needs of the sector.

Leaders, managers and tutors expect apprentices to develop a thorough knowledge of pharmacological science, workplace procedures and professional behaviours. Apprentices quickly develop knowledge and skills in all these areas. For example, early in their studies pharmacy services assistant apprentices know and apply confidently, accurately and safely the processes of dispensing practice.

Leaders are equally ambitious for apprentices who have additional learning needs. Managers identify support needs early and help apprentices with a range of useful strategies and specialist support. As a result, those with additional learning needs make equal or more rapid progress than their peers.

Managers and tutors take great care to ensure the curriculums are appropriately sequenced. Apprentices' individual training plans are a mixture of online self-study, live online lessons, workplace activities and practical assessments, that provide comprehensive coverage of the knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices need.

Most theoretical material is taught through online resources that apprentices work through. Materials are comprehensive and pitched at an appropriate level. Apprentices find the resources helpful, but a few find the different tools and platforms difficult to navigate, which can slow down their progress, particularly at the start of their studies. Leaders recognise this and have plans in place to simplify their range of systems.

Tutors teach live online lessons that supplement apprentices' independent study. They carefully select topics that benefit from discussion and further explanation and exploration from a subject expert. Tutors review the progress of apprentices monthly. They check that apprentices understand the e-learning material they complete. Where apprentices struggle with a topic tutors rely too heavily on referring them back to the work that they have already studied. This slows their progress.

Apprentices revisit and practise what they have learned throughout their studies while at work. They develop fluency and consistency in the skills and knowledge they gain. For example, they learn about the concept of consent, develop their understanding over several months and apply their expertise to increasingly difficult situations as they approach the end of their studies.

Managers ensure that most WTSs have a good knowledge of the apprenticeship course. WTSs communicate closely with tutors to provide support and plan effectively apprentices' on- and off-the-job training. However, a small number of WTSs do not support their apprentices well enough and this affects their apprentices' progress. For example, they do not provide pre-review information to enable tutors to discuss progress effectively with the apprentice.

Staff assess apprentices starting points in English and mathematics well. They provide carefully sequenced tuition in these subjects through well-designed online learning packages. Virtual lessons complement these packages, along with support from specialist tutors. Most apprentices make good progress as a result.

Tutors prepare pharmacy services assistant apprentices well for their final assessments and most achieve distinction grades. Pharmacy technician apprentices are yet to undertake any final assessments. Those in the early stage of their studies are less clear on the requirements for the final assessments or the grades they can achieve.

Career discussions take place at suitable points in apprentices' studies with independent tutors. Tutors are very knowledgeable about the pharmacy sector and the opportunities for apprentices. Most apprentices are clear about their career plans. They benefit from information about different pharmacies to their own, such

as prisons or progression in the National Health Service. Leaders have plans in place to widen the personal development curriculum to include areas, such as financial management.

Leaders have in place a comprehensive teacher development programme that helps tutors to develop their teaching and online tutoring skills. Leaders pay very close attention to the views of apprentices, employers and staff and they use this information well to improve.

The board of directors has members with extensive industry, professional and technical expertise. They receive a very wide range of performance reports that they scrutinise carefully and pose constructive and challenging questions to senior leaders, which challenges them to continually improve the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have effective policies and processes in place to keep apprentices safe. Safeguarding referrals are thoroughly reviewed and investigated and, as a result, apprentices receive high levels of support when they need it. Individual cases are appropriately referred to specialist staff working for the police, mental health organisations and charities.

All staff complete training in safeguarding and in the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead and team gains helpful information and advice from local authorities and the regional 'Prevent' coordinator. They use this information to share useful updates with staff and apprentices on things they should be aware of in their local areas.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should urgently complete the work that they have started to improve apprentices' experience of the learning platforms they use.
- Leaders should identify and work with the few WTSs who find it difficult to fulfil their coaching roles fully.
- Tutors should widen the range of strategies they use to support apprentices to understand topics that they find difficult.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276392
Address	Unit 4 Castlebridge Office Village Castle Marina Road Nottingham NG7 1TN
Contact number	0115 937 4936
Website	https://www.buttercupstraining.co.uk/
Principal/CEO	Vanessa Kingsbury
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

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