

Inspection of Decidebloom Limited, trading as Stoneacre Motor Group

Inspection dates: 20 to 23 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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

Information about this provider

Decidebloom Limited, trading as Stoneacre Motor Group (Stoneacre), began providing apprenticeships in 2017. At the time of the inspection, 67 apprentices were enrolled, of whom 60 were on standards-based programmes and seven on frameworks. Of the apprentices on standards-based programmes, 48 were on level 3 motor vehicle service and maintenance technician (light vehicle), 10 were on level 3 business administrator and fewer than five were on level 3 customer service specialist and level 2 customer service practitioner. The seven apprentices on frameworks were on level 2 vehicle parts, level 2 customer service and level 2 business administration programmes. Stoneacre has a training academy in Thorne and a technical training centre in Goole. Apprentices work in Stoneacre car dealerships across England.

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

Apprentices successfully develop a highly professional approach to their work that enables them to represent the company very well. They enjoy working for Stoneacre, wear their uniform with pride and encapsulate the values of the organisation in their professional behaviour.

Apprentices value their apprenticeship highly. They benefit from a high level of support and care from staff, which helps them to maintain a high level of motivation and participate actively in their learning and work, including during periods of COVID-19 restrictions. They develop excellent communication, team-working and customer-service skills. Apprentices take on additional responsibility at work and actively seek opportunities to progress in their learning and careers with Stoneacre.

Tutors provide light vehicle technician apprentices with valuable specialist training to develop their skills in electric and hybrid vehicle servicing and maintenance. This equips apprentices very well for work in the fast-changing automotive industry. Apprentices benefit from leaders' investment in specialist machinery and vehicles to help them to develop quickly the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in their roles.

Apprentices feel safe in the workplace. They know who to contact if they have any concerns. Apprentices have a useful understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and, through frequent reinforcement by tutors, know how to recognise and report any safeguarding issues. They know how to keep safe in their communities and are aware of local risks such as gang activity, knife crime and drug-related crime.

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

Leaders have very high expectations about the impact of their training on apprentices, and they successfully achieve their ambition to deliver high-quality apprenticeships. They work very closely with vehicle manufacturers so that they understand the skills and knowledge required in the automotive sector, both currently and in the future. They design a curriculum that successfully supports apprentices in developing new knowledge and skills in emerging technologies. For example, leaders have identified and put in place training for apprentices in electric vehicle and hybrid technologies which are not yet contained within the standard.

Managers have a very clear curriculum rationale for the apprenticeship programmes that they offer for motor vehicle technicians, business administrators and parts operatives. They plan the curriculum very effectively to develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours to become skilled in their job roles and to take on specific responsibilities at Stoneacre. For example, light vehicle technicians are able to progress to the role of master technician, and business administrators take on new roles, including buying used vehicles for the company on a nationwide basis.

Managers and tutors sequence the curriculum very effectively to enable apprentices to build their knowledge and skills successfully over time. Vehicle parts apprentices begin their programmes with health and safety training specific to the parts with which they work initially, such as how to store car batteries safely and how to collect them from the warehouse for safe distribution. They then successfully apply their health and safety knowledge when working with other vehicle parts, consistently managing storage and distribution safely.

Tutors accurately assess apprentices' progress and clearly identify where apprentices have gaps in their knowledge and skills. They set clear curricular goals throughout the programme, with frequent assessment points. They ensure that apprentices have learned and retained their knowledge and skills before moving on to the next learning goal. Tutors prepare apprentices well for the end-point assessment.

Tutors provide highly effective teaching for apprentices; they impart their knowledge and demonstrate skills well. They check apprentices' understanding using probing questions, and they closely observe and evaluate apprentices' application of practical skills. For example, tutors teach the theory of steering geometry to light vehicle technician apprentices, including the 'Ackerman Principle'. They then assess apprentices' practical application of their new knowledge when completing wheel alignment and tyre checks.

Tutors work very closely with apprentices' line managers to ensure that apprentices have planned opportunities to practise their skills in the workplace and develop them further. Light vehicle technician apprentices learn about servicing gearboxes and replacing clutches in vehicles and become skilled at doing this in the workplace, with support from their mentors and other technicians.

Apprentices develop substantial new skills rapidly and use these skills confidently in the workplace. For example, light vehicle technician apprentices who have recently completed the first year of their programme confidently carry out vehicle services, fault diagnostics, tyre changing and brake system replacements with minimum supervision.

Leaders are highly considerate of the workload and well-being of staff. They place sensible limits on tutors' caseloads, ensure that staff have access to administration time and provide additional learning resources to support tutors' planning. Staff are positive about working for Stoneacre and affirm the organisation's mantra of providing a 'career for life'.

The few apprentices who have completed their studies so far have achieved their apprenticeship. Business administrator apprentices have taken on additional responsibilities, including looking after warranties for a range of car brands and completing important management information reports.

The few apprentices who need to gain qualifications in English and mathematics as part of their apprenticeship develop their skills well over time. Tutors provide helpful support, including group and one-to-one teaching, to enable apprentices to improve

their skills. Where apprentices require additional support, tutors allow more time and provide extra teaching and coaching. Tutors have provided extra teaching for the few apprentices who were unable to fully access English and mathematics teaching during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Leaders and managers provide prospective apprentices with helpful information about Stoneacre as an employer. They organise a number of information events each year that give prospective apprentices useful information about the potential for them to develop into highly skilled technicians, customer service representatives and administrators. Tutors provide apprentices with helpful information during the apprenticeship about career progression opportunities in the organisation on completion of their apprenticeship.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have established a very effective safeguarding culture at Stoneacre that helps to keep apprentices safe. They carry out background checks on new staff to ensure their suitability to work with apprentices. All staff complete training in safeguarding and in the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding leads are appropriately trained and seek helpful information and advice from local authorities and the police. Managers frequently review safeguarding incident records so that they are aware of any increases in incidents and concerns, including deteriorating mental health during the pandemic. They take swift and appropriate action to intervene and support apprentices when they have concerns. Leaders and managers have invested in mental health first aider training, enabling designated staff to respond confidently to concerns and provide support for apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276536
Address	Omega Boulevard Capitol Park Thorne Doncaster DN8 5TX
Contact number	01405 744202
Website	www.stoneacreademy.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Shaun Fowweather
Provider type	Employer provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the group academy manager, 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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