

Inspection of HTFT Partnership Limited

Inspection dates: 5–8 October 2021

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

Information about this provider

HTFT Partnership Ltd is an independent learning provider based in Solihull, West Midlands. The company was formed in 2013 to offer accountancy training on a commercial basis and started offering accountancy apprenticeships in 2017. At the time of inspection there were 126 apprentices, all following standards. Twenty-one were studying level 3 assistant accountant, 20 were studying level 4 professional accounting, and the remaining 85 were studying the accountancy or taxation professional standard at level 7. The provider teaches almost all of its apprenticeships online and has done so since before the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

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

Apprentices enjoy their learning. They are highly motivated and demonstrate a clear commitment to their apprenticeship. They value highly the support they receive from well-qualified and experienced talent mentors and tutors and feel appropriately challenged to achieve their best.

Apprentices benefit from well-planned teaching sessions, which are scheduled carefully to fit around their commitments, allowing them time to focus on their learning. They enjoy the mix of live, online masterclasses and pre-recorded videos, which they can review at any time. They feel that the online experience is well supported by the course materials and the one-to-one support they receive from their talent mentor.

Apprentices benefit from the relationships which the provider has established with their employer. These relationships facilitate exposure to a variety of different shadowing opportunities, which give apprentices the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in specialist areas of accountancy and finance.

Apprentices feel safe and understand what to do if they need help. The provider has placed appropriate focus on online safety, which ensures that apprentices develop a detailed awareness of the risks associated with working and learning online, information security and confidentiality, and how these topics apply to both their lives and their work.

Leaders have a clear focus on assuring the health, safety, and welfare of both employees and apprentices. Discussion groups and online learning forums are actively monitored by moderators, who ensure that these are safe places for apprentices to share their views with others.

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

Leaders and managers have developed a small number of specialist apprenticeships, which are designed to meet regional and national skills priorities, and have maintained a strict focus on their areas of expertise. As a result of this focus, leaders have developed an ambitious financial services curriculum designed to ensure all apprentices achieve that of which they are capable.

Leaders make effective use of the information they receive to monitor the quality of provision. They closely monitor in-year performance against challenging targets set out in the apprenticeship plan and take swift action to resolve any areas of underperformance. For example, they challenge managers and staff regarding the high number of apprentices in 2019/20 who withdrew early from their programmes of learning and are focusing sharply on the retention of current apprentices.

Managers have developed quality assurance arrangements which are well structured and largely effective in assisting the improvement of the provision. They have completed a self-assessment report which is suitably evaluative and reflective of the quality of apprenticeships. They use information from a range of sources to plan and make improvements in a timely way. Leaders monitor progress closely against each action; however, a few of the recommendations identified at the previous monitoring visit have not yet been fully resolved, for example the establishment of unbiased careers guidance, and the provision of support to extend apprentices' literacy skills.

Teaching and mentoring staff are well qualified and highly experienced financial services professionals. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular access to targeted professional development training that is suitably aligned to the registration requirements of relevant accounting professional bodies, for example learning how to account for cryptocurrency, digital assets, and ethics in the digital age. Staff benefit from access to wider training and professional updating provided through the weekly meetings, such as approaches to embed critical thinking and presentation skills into the work set for apprentices.

Leaders and managers have developed strong and effective relationships with employers. These relationships work well to ensure that apprentices receive their entitlements for time away from the workplace to complete their learning, and appropriate opportunities in the workplace to develop and practise the full range of skills, knowledge, and behaviours within the apprenticeship standard. For example, one employer provides a series of week-long leadership and management residential programmes, which are aligned with the apprenticeship standard, where apprentices develop their decision-making skills within a survival task.

Talent mentors assess the starting points of apprentices carefully to ensure that they have the aptitude to succeed as an accounting professional. Apprentices analyse their perceived knowledge, skills and behaviours with their employer and their talent mentor at the start of the programme and complete a self-assessment that is revisited regularly during their programme, with their employers' input. As a result, apprentices can clearly identify and understand the new skills and professional behaviours they develop over time.

Talent mentors ensure that apprentices' learning is planned in a logical manner, so that apprentices continually develop new skills and build on previous learning. As a result, apprentices demonstrate increasing competence in the workplace throughout the duration of their course. For example, level 4 apprentices learn about business and technology, and how businesses operate, before moving on to financial and management accounting and how these fit into the larger business structure.

Talent mentors support apprentices well to develop a detailed understanding of the professional behaviours appropriate to the accounting profession. As a result, apprentices grow in confidence and resilience, recognise their responsibility to set an example for more junior colleagues and quickly become valued professionals in the workplace. For example, apprentices gain the confidence to challenge more senior

colleagues when invoices are presented for payment and demonstrate professional scepticism appropriately.

Tutors and talent mentors use assessment well to check what apprentices have learned and to ensure that they are given appropriate further opportunities to secure learning into their long-term memory. They measure apprentices' learning at various points throughout the apprenticeship, for example using mini tests before live sessions as well as more formal assessments at the end of each module. They use this information well to plan the next stage of learning. As a result, talent mentors ensure that all apprentices develop the wide range of skills, knowledge and behaviours required to be successful.

Managers and tutors have designed a well-thought-out teaching model with live lessons planned to take place at times suitable for the large majority of apprentices and employers, with specific consideration given to key accounting periods. A few apprentices find the time they are given to prepare for the masterclasses is sometimes too short. However, tutors take this into account and develop more flexible arrangements such as one-to-one sessions, to support these apprentices when this becomes necessary.

Apprentices benefit from effective online classes that develop their professional accounting knowledge well. Tutors use pre-session videos and tasks to introduce apprentices to new topics and use a range of activities during classes to develop and assess apprentices' knowledge such as workbooks, written exercises, and group discussions. As a result, apprentices retain what they have learned and discuss how these new skills are helping them to contribute more effectively in the workplace.

Talent mentors ensure that apprentices understand the career opportunities that are available to them within the businesses in which they work, and a significant number of apprentices gain promotion as a result of their training. However, apprentices do not receive sufficient careers advice and guidance about the wider career opportunities and further training available to them.

Talent mentors do not focus enough on developing the English skills of apprentices beyond the level required for the apprenticeship. Apprentices start their apprenticeship with prior qualifications in both English and mathematics, and their mathematics and digital skills are continuously developed throughout the apprenticeship. However, leaders have not ensured that there is sufficient focus on the ongoing development of apprentices' written English skills to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.

Tutors prepare most apprentices well for end-point assessment. They ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to complete their apprenticeship successfully and provide appropriate opportunities to develop and embed the skills that will be assessed. However, the end-point assessment for the small number of apprentices following the level 4 apprenticeship is graded, and talent mentors do not ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to achieve high grades; consequently, they are less well prepared.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers, and staff place a high priority on the safety of apprentices. Staff responsible for the oversight of safeguarding are suitably trained and make effective use of links with external agencies to ensure that policies and procedures are well aligned to regional and national priorities. They use their knowledge well to enable apprentices to study in a safe and supportive environment.

Leaders proactively consult with external agencies to help them to understand the threats to apprentices from radicalisation and extremism, and they have updated action plans to reflect regional vulnerabilities that may affect apprentices.

Apprentices have a broad awareness of topics such as the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, and online safety. The provider has started to introduce topics such as physical and sexual abuse. Apprentices understand the relevance of these topics within different parts of their apprenticeship such as law and ethics modules.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to access help if they need it. They understand how to keep themselves safe when learning online and how this extends to their everyday life.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices develop sufficiently their written English skills throughout their programmes to ensure they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices are given suitably impartial careers advice and guidance to allow them to take well-informed decisions on their next steps.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices are aware of the available grades at end-point assessment, and that they know what they need to do to achieve them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278661
Address	1st Floor 12 The Pavilions Cranmore Drive Shirley Solihull B90 4SB
Contact number	0121 745 8842
Website	https://htftpartnership.co.uk/
CEO	Victoria Taylor
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships, 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 visiting 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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