

# Short inspection of Starting Off Limited

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2021

## **Outcome**

Starting Off Limited continues to be a good provider.

## **Information about this provider**

Starting Off is a private recruitment and training company that was formed in 1989 and changed ownership in 2014 and 2020. It operates as an employment agency for young people. There are currently 229 apprentices in learning. The vast majority follow standards-based courses from level 2 to level 4 in accountancy, business administration, customer services, digital marketing, infrastructure technician, professional accounting/taxation technician and team leader. There are fewer than five apprentices on frameworks and eight adult learners in education and training. Since the COVID-19 national restrictions, all training is remote. Starting Off was last inspected in March 2016, when they remained good.

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

Apprentices appreciate the high-quality training they receive. They particularly enjoy being taught by industry experts who bring subjects to life and make them relevant to their own workplace. Apprentices benefit from fortnightly meetings to discuss their learning and any support needs.

Trainers help apprentices develop their knowledge and confidence to be more effective in their roles. They work closely with apprentices' line managers to devise interesting projects that allow apprentices to effectively apply their new learning.

Employers are actively involved in reviewing apprentices' progress and contribute insightful comments about how apprentices are developing in the workplace. Apprentices' studies have a positive impact on their work. They develop confidence to deal with challenging customers or unfamiliar requests.

Leaders ensure apprentices receive regular updates about safeguarding issues. As a result, apprentices are safe and know who to contact if they have any concerns.

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

Apprentices benefit from a well-planned, logically sequenced curriculum. Employers usefully contribute to the design of the apprenticeship by determining the order that content is taught in so that it has the maximum impact at work. Apprentices make good progress and their end-of-unit assessment results are high.

Apprentices acquire a wealth of new knowledge and skills. In business administration, apprentices learn about different models of problem-solving which they successfully use to mitigate issues they come across at work. In customer services, apprentices learn ways they can use feedback from colleagues to improve their performance in the workplace.

Trainers are careful to revisit and revise topics and practise the skills apprentices need. They set useful monthly assessment tasks to check apprentices' learning. As a result, apprentices remember what they have learned and are well prepared for their final assessment.

Apprentices' written work shows a good understanding and application of concepts. Trainers' written feedback is detailed and clear, giving appropriate guidance for improvement. Trainers do not sufficiently support apprentices to develop the quality of their written English. Apprentices make basic spelling errors in their work or use informal language in their written work, which impacts on the quality of their writing.

Trainers are skilled at identifying apprentices who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) such as dyslexia. As a result, apprentices benefit from useful additional support, including extra sessions with trainers to break down assignments. Trainers also ensure that apprentices receive support for their needs at work, such as the use of different coloured screens or overlays.

Leaders ensure that apprentices have access to impartial careers guidance. Most apprentices, particularly those in accountancy, successfully progress to the next level of apprenticeship available at the provider. Others progress to university or sustain their employment as a result of their studies. Leaders work well with local businesses to provide work experience opportunities to prospective apprentices unsure of their next steps.

Leaders and managers make use of an appropriate range of quality assurance processes to evaluate the quality of assessment and feedback which apprentices receive. They are aware of the need to further develop the way they monitor remote training to support the continual improvement of trainers.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong emphasis placed on safeguarding throughout the organisation. Staff with safeguarding responsibilities are well trained for their roles. There are appropriate steps in place to ensure that staff are safely recruited. The provider carries out appropriate risk assessments on apprentices' workplaces. Although apprentices recall covering the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, this was at the start of their courses and they now have only a vague recollection of these issues.

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

- Trainers should teach apprentices how to improve the quality of their written English, help them rectify recurring spelling and grammatical errors and unsuitable register.
- Leaders and managers should initiate their plans to review the quality of remote training and support trainers with any development needs.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	57165
<b>Address</b>	3–5 Wood Hill Northampton NN1 2DA
<b>Contact number</b>	01536 851193
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.startingoff.co.uk">www.startingoff.co.uk</a>
<b>CEO</b>	Katie Goodall
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23–24 March 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	N/A

## Information about this inspection

The inspection was the second short inspection carried out since Starting Off Limited was judged to be good in March 2016.

The inspection team was assisted by the operations 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 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

Helen Whelan, lead inspector

Saul Pope

Allan Shaw

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2021