

# Inspection of Steve Willis Training Ltd

Inspection dates: 28 September–1 October 2021

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Steve Willis Training Ltd (Steve Willis) is an independent training provider based in Burgess Hill, near Brighton. Steve Willis began working as a subcontractor with other providers in 2004 and has been training apprentices under its own contract for apprenticeships since 2017.

At the time of the inspection, there were 451 apprentices on apprenticeship standards at level 3. Of these, 231 are on the gas engineering operative standard. The remaining 220 apprentices are on the installation electrician/maintenance electrician apprenticeship. Steve Willis has recently taken on additional apprentices as a result of increased demand from employers. Most apprentices are non-levy funded and just under half are aged 16 to 18.

Apprentices work at just under 300 different employers in the south east of England. They attend training centres either in Burgess Hill or in Portchester, near Portsmouth, one day a week for their off-the-job training. Steve Willis does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices thrive in the calm and respectful environment arising from the high expectations that their trainers have of them, both inside and outside training sessions. Apprentices listen carefully, contribute well and diligently respect the views of others in training sessions. Apprentices work closely together to complete complex tasks successfully. For example, apprentices support each other to perform complicated mathematical calculations in electrical science.

Apprentices are highly committed to their studies. They arrive punctually for training sessions and attend very well. Apprentices complete homework to a high standard and in a timely manner. This helps them to remember important concepts, such as statutory and non-statutory workplace documentation.

Apprentices rightly value the high-quality training they receive, which enables them to develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours quickly. This gives them the confidence to apply their learning effectively in the workplace. For example, gas apprentices can describe how they confidently dismantle, repair and maintain diversion valves in a hydro-block on customers' gas boilers. Apprentices showcase their high levels of skills and knowledge at national and regional skills competitions.

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

Leaders and managers work closely with major industry bodies representing employers in the gas and electricity industries to plan and teach a relevant and ambitious curriculum for their apprentices. Apprentices benefit from high-quality training in gas and electrical installation that extends their knowledge, skills and behaviours beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship standards they are studying. They receive useful training from manufacturers to help them familiarise themselves with their products. They complete beneficial qualifications in topics such as working at heights and working in confined spaces as part of their courses. As a result, apprentices develop additional practical skills that enhance their performance in the workplace and that their employers value.

Trainers use their extensive and recent industry experience to order teaching topics appropriately. Apprentices quickly develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to become productive employees. For example, in their first year, electrician apprentices develop workplace 'survival skills' which allow them to operate safely, understand equipment and start preparing and installing cables.

Trainers make sure that they reinforce previous learning carefully in the activities they plan for apprentices. For example, when writing risk assessments before fitting electrical trunking, apprentices review the health and safety theory they learned at the start of their training and recognise the importance of removing burrs and sharp edges to ensure safe working.

Leaders have invested in well-equipped training centres which reflect current industry requirements. Apprentices use an extensive range of modern and older domestic and commercial appliances. They learn how to install, service and maintain the kinds of equipment they will encounter at work. The purpose-built assessment facilities allow gas apprentices to complete their final assessments in a timely manner despite the pandemic.

Most trainers use their training skills effectively to break down challenging concepts into smaller, more understandable topics so that apprentices remember them. For example, a trainer provides apprentices with clear descriptions and drawings to explain the relationship between squared numbers and square roots.

Leaders and trainers ensure that apprentices understand how to work safely. Trainers use their industry expertise to provide helpful examples from the workplace, such as where engineers have ignored safe working practices. As a result, apprentices understand the consequences of, for example, not wearing appropriate protective personal equipment when sawing trunking or drilling.

The progress reviews that trainers carry out with apprentices are too superficial. Trainers do not concentrate well enough on assessing the practical skills that apprentices have developed. Consequently, apprentices are not clear about the progress that they make with their learning or what they need to focus on to improve by their next review.

Managers collect detailed information about apprentices' skills and their jobs at the start of their training. They use this to carefully select apprentices and make sure that they will be able to get relevant practice at work on all aspects of their apprenticeship. For example, managers ensure that electrical apprentices will have experience of both maintenance and installation.

Leaders and managers use the information they collect about apprentices' learning difficulties or disabilities to make special arrangements for them in exams, such as requesting additional time for learners with dyslexia. Trainers support apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities in training sessions as best they can. However, they do not have sufficient understanding of learning difficulties to be able to proactively help these apprentices develop the strategies they need to learn successfully in a practical learning environment.

Although leaders have a well-considered strategy to improve the teaching of functional skills to apprentices, they have been unable to recruit specialist English and mathematics teachers. As a result, a small minority of apprentices have not started studying for their functional skills examinations despite having been on their apprenticeship for some time.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have an accurate view of most of the areas for improvement noted by inspectors. Trainers do not currently plan for their training to include activities to develop the apprentices' knowledge and skills beyond their vocational subjects. Leaders understand the need to reinforce the teaching of

topics such as equality and diversity, fundamental British values and the risks of extremism and radicalisation beyond what apprentices cover at the start of their training. Leaders have recently introduced a teaching resource which provides trainers and apprentices with useful information to help them discuss these topics routinely in training sessions. It is too early to see the impact of the use of this resource.

Apprentices receive purposeful written and oral feedback on their work which helps them improve. Trainers mark written work efficiently, providing apprentices with constructive feedback. Apprentices act on this feedback and improve their work as a result.

Leaders and trainers do not routinely include careers advice in the curriculum, so that apprentices can make informed choices about their next steps. However, most apprentices know why they are training and how this will develop and improve their career choices.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel safe at work and in training. Trainers use their knowledge of apprentices effectively in order to identify and deal with any welfare concerns they raise. In the few cases where apprentices have experienced bullying or harassment in their workplace, managers have acted swiftly and effectively.

Leaders ensure that they recruit staff safely. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training to enable them to work safely with apprentices. Trainers do not have sufficient knowledge about risks specific to their local areas. As a result, apprentices do not know enough about the threats they may face in the areas where they live and work.

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

- Leaders should ensure that they use information about apprentices' standards of English and mathematics and any learning difficulties or disabilities to provide apprentices with the support they may need to be successful in their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices benefit from a well-planned and structured personal development programme that helps them develop valuable knowledge and skills beyond their vocational subjects.
- Leaders should make sure that all apprentices receive impartial careers advice to help them make informed choices about their future careers.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Steve Willis
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeships manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the new provider monitoring visit 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 training sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Montserrat Pérez-Parent, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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