

# Inspection of ARC Academy UK Limited

Inspection dates:

7–9 December 2021

## Overall effectiveness

## Inadequate

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

## Information about this provider

ARC Academy (ARC) was formed in 2011 by two directors. In May 2017, ARC began training apprentices on behalf of companies operating in the rail engineering and construction sectors. They currently offer building, construction and rail engineering apprenticeships, Construction Skills Certification, and medical, drug and alcohol screening. Only apprenticeships were in scope for inspection.

ARC has 96 adult apprentices studying programmes at level 2 and level 3. Around two-thirds are studying on level 2 apprenticeships in construction, with the remainder on level 2 rail engineering, level 3 occupational work supervision and level 3 safety, health and environmental technician.



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

Apprentices are keen to complete their apprenticeship. However, they have not had sufficient visits from assessors to enable them to make good progress in learning substantial new knowledge and complete their apprenticeships in the agreed timescales. As a result, they feel disappointed.

Apprentices develop positive behaviours and attitudes at work. They rightly recognise the significant improvements they make in their abilities to work confidently, and that these improvements were gained through working alongside civil engineering specialists. Apprentices feel valued in the workplace and are proud of their contribution to wider society in maintaining utilities and transport networks.

Employers and ARC staff set high expectations for health and safety in what is a dangerous and highly regulated sector. As a result, apprentices understand clearly the importance of effective health and safety practices on sites.

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

Leaders do not ensure that the programmes they offer meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. They have not made sure that all apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. In some cases, apprentices have to complete their studies in their own time, contrary to funding rules.

Leaders and managers are clear on the intent of their curriculum, which aims to provide skilled, competent staff to plant construction and rail industries. However, they have not put in place education and training which matches their intentions and meets apprentices' needs.

Assessors do not use information about what apprentices already know or can do at the start of the programme to provide a curriculum responsive to individuals' needs. As a result, assessors often teach skills and knowledge that apprentices have already acquired before joining the programme. Apprentices who speak English as an additional language do not receive the help that they need to improve their speaking and literacy skills.

ARC does not have sufficient assessors to cater for the number of apprentices it has enrolled. Leaders have been too slow to implement their plans to increase the number of assessors. As a result, most apprentices do not receive regular visits or feedback on their progress from assessors, and too many planned visits are cancelled.

Apprentices rarely complete their apprenticeships on time, and most are significantly behind or are past the date planned for their apprenticeship to finish. No arrangements are in place to help them catch up. ARC does not communicate with



employers regularly or keep them informed of the progress that their apprentices are making.

Trainers have a wealth of knowledge and experience of national construction and engineering sectors. However, they do not have sufficient expertise in teaching despite undertaking recent professional development and gaining teaching qualifications. Learning materials they use show outdated work practices in areas such as track ballast compaction and give incorrect guidance on the wearing of protective equipment when working on the rail network.

Apprentices complete a wide range of useful short courses leading to certification to enable them to work on specialist equipment or in specific jobs. These include, for example, abrasive wheels awareness training and training for working in confined spaces. This training improves the apprentices' career options. However, most apprentices are not aware of the range of career opportunities available to them when they complete their apprenticeship. This is because managers rely too heavily on assessors' current knowledge of the sector and do not ensure that all apprentices receive high-quality, impartial careers guidance.

Apprentices' behaviour and attitudes to work on site are appropriate and the vast majority are keen to progress further in their roles. They have continued to collate evidence of their work through videos, photographs and statements despite assessors not being available to assess it. Apprentices develop confidence at work and become reliable members of their employers' teams. Many apprentices are working on prestigious projects, such as sea defences, and are proud to serve the general public.

Governance is not effective. Senior leaders currently take responsibility for governance. They have not yet implemented their plans to introduce suitable external scrutiny of their actions. As a result, they lack appropriate support and challenge to help them identify underperformance or hold them to account for the improvements ARC requires.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices receive good training from ARC and their employers on how to keep themselves healthy and safe when at work. Consequently, apprentices feel safe on site and understand that the environment they work in is high risk. However, ARC does not sufficiently check on their welfare when they stay away from home for work.

Leaders generally ensure that suitable checks are in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices. However, occasionally, staff responsible for carrying out these checks do not follow agreed procedures closely enough.



Apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of how to spot the signs of radicalisation and extremism, particularly in the context of their work. They receive basic information at start of their apprenticeship, but assessors do not sufficiently reinforce this subsequently.

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

- Ensure there are sufficient assessors and suitable procedures in place to assure the quality of the apprenticeships.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive their off-the-job study entitlement so that they develop substantial news skills and knowledge.
- Put in place actions to help apprentices to complete their apprenticeship and/or to assist those who need to catch up.
- Provide effective training for tutors to develop further their teaching skills.
- Improve the quality of information, advice and guidance given to apprentices throughout their programme to ensure that they know the options available to them when they complete their apprenticeship.
- Expedite plans to put in place effective governance which supports and challenges leaders and managers to improve the quality of the apprenticeships.



## Provider details

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<b>Address</b>	ARC Academy UK Ltd Unit 4–5 Centre Court Treforest Industrial Estate Rhondda Cynon Taff CF37 5YR United Kingdom
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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Chris Davies
<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 operations director, 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 apprentices' workplaces, visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff, employers and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Lyn Bourne, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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