

# Inspection of Estio Training Limited

Inspection dates: 30 November–3 December 2021

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

## Information about this provider

Estio Training Limited (Estio) specialises in apprenticeships in digital skills. The company operates nationally with a head office and training facilities in Leeds and further training centres in Manchester, Birmingham and London. In May 2017, Estio became a levy-funded provider for apprenticeships and, in January 2018, the company secured further funding for non-levy apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, 1,220 apprentices were in learning. Of these, 675 were on apprenticeship standards at level 3, comprising 228 digital marketers, 140 information communications technicians, 122 infrastructure technicians, 77 IT solutions technicians, 73 software development technicians and 35 data technicians. A further 545 apprentices were following standards at level 4, with 162 data analysts, 105 cyber security technologists, 61 network engineers, 49 software developers, 59 software testers, 51 business analysts and 58 DevOps engineers.

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

Apprentices value their interesting and interactive online learning sessions and appreciate their professional and knowledgeable trainers. They come prepared to learn and are respectful to their peers and attentive in sessions. Most have adapted seamlessly to the protocols of online learning. They show a positive attitude to their apprenticeship programme and take pride in their achievements.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours and grow in confidence, through linking what they learn to real-work projects. For example, data analysts refine and improve modelling of competitor price comparisons. Software developers lead projects in scripting and traceability that result in efficiencies and benefit their workplaces.

Many apprentices gain additional qualifications over and above the apprenticeship standard to equip them with industry-standard current knowledge. Apprentices benefit from the skills that they develop as a result, and most apprentices feel well prepared for their next steps.

Apprentices participate in purposeful additional activity such as making videos of their learning journeys for 'National Apprentice Week' and visiting schools with employers to raise awareness of apprenticeships as a career route.

Apprentices feel safe online and in the workplace. They thoroughly understand the risks associated with digital technologies and know what action to take should their workplaces be compromised by common threats, such as phishing emails and hacking of systems.

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

Leaders and managers have constructed a curriculum that successfully meets the digital skills development needs of a wide range of industries and employers. The training that apprentices receive equips them with the knowledge to implement strategic changes. For example, IT solutions technicians learn about using VPN access to allow staff to work from home during the pandemic and to improve security systems to minimise risks to sensitive data. This means apprentices have a positive impact on the workplace by implementing changes and improving workplace processes.

Managers and trainers coherently plan and sequence the curriculum to enable apprentices to build their knowledge in a logical order. For example, in the curriculum for IT solutions technicians, networking comes sensibly before more-complex knowledge such as cloud databases and establishing server connections in commercial settings. Consequently, apprentices retain and can recall what they have learned, and can apply their knowledge in their workplaces.

Trainers are highly knowledgeable in the subjects and courses that they teach. They present information skilfully and check understanding systematically. This enables

apprentices to build knowledge over time, linking new knowledge to what they have learned before and what they do at work. As a result, apprentices make rapid and secure progress in their learning, talking confidently, for example, about the impact of 'grey-hat hacking' on safety and security.

Apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications benefit from targeted support and guidance to enable them to be successful. As a result, the proportion of apprentices achieving their functional skills qualifications is high, especially in English.

Apprentices successfully develop their mathematical skills while carrying out data analysis. For example, cyber security technologists present contextual information about the number of incidents or threats they have encountered and resolved. Most apprentices develop their writing and presentation skills through the detailed and analytical reports that they complete in the course of their work. However, in a few cases, trainers and progress management coordinators do not highlight grammatical errors in apprentices' written work, such as the misuse of apostrophes and Americanised spelling errors. As a result, apprentices continue to make the same grammatical errors, making their reports look less professional.

Leaders are considerate of the workload and well-being of staff. Trainers and support staff benefit from a welcoming and calm working atmosphere in the office and from appropriate support and resources to work effectively from home. Staff are positive about working for the provider, citing good-quality continuous professional development and effective support from senior leaders and throughout the organisation.

Employers appreciate good communication and close collaborative working with leaders and managers, which leads to a well-structured and detailed induction to apprenticeships and a curriculum that meet their needs. Employers work with Estio staff to develop effective on- and off-the-job learning and work experiences to ensure that apprentices carry out their required duties and achieve well.

Governance is strong. Through monthly meetings, board members know about the strengths and weaknesses of apprenticeship training delivered by Estio. They evaluate well the data presented to them and challenge leaders and managers to explain high-level actions taken to improve performance in underperforming areas such as cyber security. As a result, leaders and managers have a sharp focus on what they need to do to improve further the quality of learning and teaching so that apprentices succeed in their chosen careers.

Too often, staff do not set challenging enough targets for apprentices during progress reviews, including for apprentices with specific needs. Leaders have recognised this, and plans are in place to improve the review process. A recently introduced 'RAG' rating system and strengthened monitoring processes have improved oversight of apprentices' progress, with earlier identification and intervention for those at risk of falling behind and catch-up plans for those that have already done so.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers champion a culture of safeguarding for all staff and apprentices. They provide comprehensive and accessible policies and procedures and well-targeted training to ensure that apprentices and staff know how to identify and report concerns. Leaders and managers respond quickly and effectively to any issues to provide the support that apprentices need to remain safe.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff and apprentices benefit from safe learning environments. Apprentices demonstrate safe working practices in workplaces and when learning online.

Leaders and managers carry out appropriate background checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices. The designated safeguarding officers are appropriately trained for their role.

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

- Ensure that staff use the outcomes of reviews of progress to set challenging targets, so that apprentices understand what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Ensure that staff consistently reinforce high standards of written English for apprentices who aspire to work in the digital technologies industry.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	1276525
<b>Address</b>	Estio Training Central Park New Lane Leeds LS11 5EB
<b>Contact number</b>	0113 350 9811
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://estio.co.uk/">https://estio.co.uk/</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Lee Meadows
<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 chief operations officer, 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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