

Inspection of Calex UK Ltd

Inspection dates:

7–10 December 2021

Overall effectiveness**Good**

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

Calex UK Ltd (Calex) is an independent learning provider with headquarters in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, and offices in Lutterworth, Leicestershire. Calex works closely with Volvo and Stellantis to offer a range of apprenticeships in the automotive industry.

At the time of the inspection, there were 461 apprentices studying 10 different apprenticeship standards at levels 2 and 3. Just over half of the apprentices follow the level 2 auto care technician standard and a quarter of apprentices study the motor vehicle service and maintenance technician standard at level 3. The remaining 99 apprentices are on apprenticeships in customer service, vehicle damage technician, accident repair technician, business administrator, digital marketer or supply chain warehouse operative. Most apprentices are under 25 years old, with just under 300 apprentices being aged 16 to 18.

Apprentices work at just over 200 different employers across England. They attend training centres in either Coventry or Daventry for periods of training. The frequency of training varies according to the apprenticeship they are studying. Calex does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices train in extremely well-equipped training centres where they practise on the same resources they have at work. For example, the Volvo training centre replicates the layout of workshop bays and the customer waiting areas from dealerships. Apprentices have access to their brands' latest vehicles and state-of-the-art equipment and tools. They get to experience new models, such as electric vehicles, before they are released to dealerships. As a result, apprentices quickly transfer the new skills, knowledge and behaviours they develop from their training to their workplace and are well prepared to support and advise customers effectively.

Apprentices represent their employers' values by displaying professional behaviours at work and in training. Apprentices respond well to the high expectations that staff have of them beyond the training centres. For example, apprentices who stay at local hotels during their off-the-job training, regardless of age, agree to refrain from drinking alcohol and to remain in the hotel in the evenings, as instructed by staff.

Apprentices rightly appreciate the very effective individualised support they receive from staff. Trainers provide apprentices with extra help if they are struggling with any aspect of their studies. Managers and trainers make frequent checks on apprentices' well-being. They support apprentices with personal issues which may be affecting their learning, such as financial or relationship worries.

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

Leaders and managers work closely and very effectively with car and light vehicle employers and manufacturers. Together they plan and teach a well-considered and relevant curriculum that meets workforce training needs as well as those of the wider automotive industry. Employers rightly value the progress that apprentices make and how they become more skilled employees as a result of their training. For example, an auto care technician apprentice who is three months into their apprenticeship now carries out pre-delivery inspections on new cars without supervision. Customer service apprentices use their body language and tone of voice to help diffuse difficult situations and are able to deal confidently with challenging customers.

Leaders and managers have invested in a powerful online platform and the design of innovative and appealing interactive resources for remote learning. Apprentices complete specific online training on the theory aspects of their apprenticeship that prepares them very well before attending the intense practical sessions at the training centres. Throughout these online activities, apprentices answer questions, use chat and voting functions and complete assessments to confirm their understanding.

At the training centres, trainers test apprentices' understanding of the theory they have covered in the online training and gradually build on the practical skills that

apprentices have developed in previous training sessions. Consequently, apprentices grow in confidence and complete more-complex tasks. For example, auto care technician apprentices use their understanding of the tread and rubber combinations of new tyres to explain the impact of various combinations on road holding. They discuss the differences between standard and high-performance tyres and learn how to change different car tyres and to balance wheels.

Trainers are highly experienced in the automotive industry and are appropriately trained to teach both face to face and remotely. They use their knowledge and industry expertise well to teach apprentices in practical sessions. For example, in motor vehicle service and maintenance, trainers guide apprentices through a technique to prevent gears from turning when removing them from the drive train using manufacturer special tools. In customer service, trainers ensure apprentices know the importance of data protection when handling customers' details. As a result, apprentices understand why customer data should be protected and not disclosed to others.

For a few apprentices, mostly in customer service, staff do not use the information they collect about apprentices' prior learning and experience to tailor their training. Consequently, these apprentices repeat work they have already completed or receive training on activities in which they are already competent.

A small proportion of apprentices are not always able to complete the practical activities they need for their apprenticeship at work. Due to workload pressures, their managers allocate jobs such as replacing cam belts to more skilled technicians who can complete them more quickly. As a result, these apprentices fall behind in their learning and take longer to complete their apprenticeships. Many apprentices are behind with the completion of their apprenticeships as a result of having been furloughed during the COVID-19 national restrictions. Leaders and managers have detailed plans to support these apprentices to catch up with their learning and the large majority are booked to take their final assessments in the next three months.

The feedback that trainers provide on apprentices' written work does not often indicate what apprentices could do to improve their work. As a result, many apprentices do not know what they need to do to achieve distinction grades. In most subjects, trainers rarely comment on how apprentices can improve their spelling or grammar. Consequently, a few apprentices continue to make mistakes in their written work, such as job cards. In digital marketing, trainers provide specific feedback that highlights to apprentices what they can do to improve their work. As a result, most apprentices in this area achieve merit grades for their apprenticeship.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel safe at work, in training and when staying overnight for their training. Leaders and managers have suitable checks in place to ensure that all staff who work with apprentices are safe to do so. Apprentices follow safe working

practices at work, for example they know how to move vehicles around a car showroom safely.

Leaders and managers do not provide trainers with information about risks specific to the areas where apprentices live and work. Trainers do not have the knowledge or the skills they need to confidently support apprentices to develop their understanding of the threats they may face. As a result, apprentices are not able to relate how the information they receive about radicalisation and extremism when they first start their apprenticeships is relevant to them or their jobs.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should work with employers to ensure that apprentices have opportunities at work to practise all the skills they need for their apprenticeship so that they are fully prepared to take their final assessments in a timely manner.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that staff use the information they collect about apprentices' prior learning and experience to tailor apprentices' training so that they are challenged to develop their existing knowledge and skills further.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that staff provide apprentices with feedback on their written work which helps them make improvements, including in their use of English, and makes them aware of what they need to do to achieve merit and distinction grades.
- Leaders and managers should provide trainers with the necessary information and training so that, throughout the apprenticeship training, trainers can confidently develop apprentices' awareness and understanding of the threats they may face in their local area and how these are relevant to their lives and jobs.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58586
Address	21 The Quadrant Barton Lane Abingdon OX14 3YS
Contact number	01235 553296
Website	www.calexuk.com
Principal/CEO	David Miell-Ingram
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

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 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 learning 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
Viki Faulkner	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Scanlan	Ofsted Inspector
Robert Mottram	Ofsted Inspector
Baz Wren	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Dearnley	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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