

Inspection of Skillwise Training UK Ltd

Inspection dates:

18–20 January 2022

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

Skillwise Training UK Limited (Skillwise) is a small training provider, specialising in leadership and management qualifications. At the time of the inspection, 97 apprentices were on the level 3 team leader/supervisor standards-based apprenticeship and nine were on the level 3 business administration apprenticeship. Skillwise does not use subcontractors to deliver training.

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

Apprentices know workplace expectations and conduct well, including attendance and punctuality at training activities. In most cases, apprentices are enthusiastic, determined and motivated to learn. They respect the credibility and knowledge of teaching staff, and tutors challenge apprentices to push and extend themselves. Consequently, apprentices develop a good range of occupational skills and relate them well to their workplace.

Apprentices are aware of the career opportunities available to them within the businesses where they work. However, they do not routinely receive sufficient careers advice and guidance about wider careers and further training available to them.

Apprentices benefit from completing a mental health awareness course that helps them to recognise mental health issues in the workplace. As a result, apprentices are better able to identify the signs that relate to issues such as anxiety and depression in colleagues. They are better able to care for colleagues and help them seek appropriate professional support where needed.

Apprentices quickly increase their understanding of topics such as emotional intelligence. For example, team leader apprentices are better able to empathise with team members and understand their personal challenges and how these impact at work. As a result, they become more effective managers.

Apprentices learn about fundamental British values and equality and diversity at the start of their programme. Tutors revisit these topics routinely with apprentices at review meetings to deepen their understanding of these themes at work and in their communities. As a result, apprentices gain an appreciation of diversity in the workplace and how protected characteristics influence working practices – in areas such as recruitment – preparing them well for life and work

Apprentices have a broad understanding of radicalisation and extremist behaviour. They describe clearly the signs they would look out for, such as changes in colleagues' behaviour in the workplace. However, they are less well informed about the potential risks posed to them in the areas in which they live and work.

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

Leaders have devised a focused curriculum specialising in leadership and management apprenticeships. In most cases, the curriculum is ambitious and equips apprentices with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to improve the effectiveness of their employer's organisations. For example, the business administration apprenticeship provides an entry point for younger apprentices to enter long-term careers. The team leader apprenticeship enables new and existing team leaders to become effective people managers. As a result, most apprentices remain with their employer and move into a position with added responsibility or a promotion. In a

few cases, apprentices' curriculum is not sufficiently challenging to ensure that they reach their potential.

As a result of effective actions to improve the quality of education, leaders have improved most of the weaknesses identified in the previous visit. Leaders now monitor carefully apprentices' progress and use this information to ensure that apprentices, including those who have an identified learning need, do not fall behind in their learning. Consequently, most apprentices complete their courses and achieve high grades. Leaders accept that they do not use information about apprentices' starting points well enough to ensure that apprentices develop thoroughly their skills and attributes, such as effective communication, digital skills, confidence and resilience. Leaders have not yet ensured that all apprentices continue to improve their English, mathematics and digital skills beyond level 2.

Leaders and tutors plan the curriculum progressively to ensure that apprentices acquire the new knowledge and skills they need to achieve their qualification and be successful at work. For example, team leader apprentices complete a managing teams module before moving on to more complex topics such as project management. Business administration apprentices learn about how key stakeholders and businesses operate, before understanding how different administrative activities, such as processing financial information and organising meetings and events, support these organisations to become more productive. As a result, apprentices build and apply their knowledge in meaningful steps over time.

Tutors are appropriately qualified and have considerable vocational experience. In theory lessons, they use their expertise to teach a range of suitable activities imaginatively, such as role play, to enable team leader apprentices to practise their coaching skills in a safe environment. Tutors encourage management apprentices to reflect and debate various project management models to understand more deeply project life cycles and how to manage and evaluate projects in the workplace more effectively.

Tutors build checkpoints throughout the curriculum effectively, such as quizzes, group discussions and direct questioning, to check apprentices' progress. Also, apprentices know well the expectations of end-point assessment and what they need to do to achieve high grades. Consequently, most apprentices know more and remember more long term.

In most cases, tutors review apprentices' progress effectively. Although tutors review apprentices' progress frequently, employer mentors do not always attend and contribute to these reviews. Tutors and employer mentors do not always use the information about apprentices' starting points well enough, including in English and mathematics, to close apprentices' skills gaps fully. Too often, apprentices' learning goals focus on the completion of tasks and not enough on the development of workplace skills and behaviours. As a result, not all apprentices make the swift progress that they could from their respective starting points.

The few apprentices who need to achieve level 2 English and mathematics qualifications do not receive teaching in these subjects early enough in their studies. Consequently, these apprentices make slow progress in developing these essential skills.

Leaders use information from various sources effectively, such as teaching observations and apprentices' feedback, to identify staff's training needs. They hold weekly meetings with tutors to discuss strategies to improve face-to-face and remote teaching and assessment. These include the planning of lessons so that tutors link teaching to previous learning and apprentices' activities in the workplace. As a result, apprentices now receive helpful and effective teaching at work and online.

Leaders have significantly improved governance arrangements so that these provide them with helpful support and oversight to improve the quality of provision. Board members are experts in their fields and include two experienced educators, a headteacher and deputy headteacher, who have a strong understanding of teaching, learning and safeguarding. Governors have been swift to support leaders. For example, they challenged leaders to ensure that the curriculum was planned logically so that apprentices develop their understanding over time, and that teachers provided apprentices with helpful feedback on their work. Governors accept that, although leaders have made rapid improvements, they need to ensure all apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed appropriate policies that set out clearly their intent to provide a safe and secure working environment for both staff and apprentices. As a result, staff and apprentices receive the appropriate training for them to understand the risks from potential threats, such as extremist behaviour and the risk of compromising financial or personal information when working online. Leaders take apprentices' concerns seriously and ensure that they review all incidents thoroughly, providing the appropriate support and referral if the case arises. Governors make spot checks of leaders' safeguarding procedures and actions to ensure that they meet expectations fully.

Apprentices discuss potential safeguarding and health and safety topics during reviews to ensure that they are sufficiently aware of risks and that they know who to contact if concerned. Leaders issue monthly newsletters that also include various safeguarding topics such as staying safe online, county lines and mental health awareness. As a result, most apprentices are well informed and know how to keep themselves safe.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and two other leaders hold appropriate safeguarding qualifications. Along with tutors, the DSL ensures that they liaise with local safeguarding boards and other agencies to understand the key threats/risks in

the areas in which their apprentices operate. Additionally, apprentices undertake safeguarding qualifications that inform them in detail about the 'Prevent' duty and the risk from radicalisation and extremist activity, county lines, gang culture and sexual exploitation. Although leaders know local threats well, in a few cases, they have not ensured that all apprentices know these well enough.

Leaders follow an appropriate safer recruitment process and ensure that all staff hold the appropriate disclosures for their roles. This includes governors and part-time tutors.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Governors and leaders should ensure that all apprentices follow a curriculum that is sufficiently challenging, given their respective starting points.
- Leaders must ensure that, along with tutors, employer mentors contribute to, and provide apprentices with, helpful feedback to ensure that apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours swiftly from their respective starting points.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices who need to achieve English and mathematics qualifications at level 2 receive the teaching and support necessary to make swift progress in these subjects.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices continue to develop their English and mathematics skills beyond level 2.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices receive sufficient careers information, advice and guidance about wider careers opportunities open to them in the sectors they intend to move into.
- Leaders must ensure that all apprentices know well the potential safeguarding risks in their local areas.

Provider details

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Contact number	07544 548911
Website	Skillwise.biz
Principal/CEO	Lee Croucher, Ian Simms
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of curriculum, 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.

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