

Inspection of Applied Business Academy Limited

Inspection dates: 7–10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Applied Business Academy Limited began training apprentices in April 2020. There are 12 apprentices taking the level 3 digital marketer standard and five apprentices enrolled on the level 3 junior content producer standard. Seven adult learners recently completed a traineeship programme, with two learners still enrolled on the programme.

Trainees attend a variety of work placements in a range of industries, including hospitality, information technology (IT) and digital marketing. Learners are taught through a mix of face-to-face and online learning sessions. All learners are aged 19 and over.

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

Learners feel that their experience at the academy has improved since the new leadership team has been in place. For example, learners say that their learning programme is now more organised.

Learners appreciate the fact that the courses they study prepare them for employment. This gives them the confidence they need to apply for jobs. Learners gain useful employability skills and knowledge at the academy, such as learning about how to search for jobs. They also develop knowledge about how to write an effective curriculum vitae (CV) and job application.

Apprentices are sometimes confused about what they need to do to gain a high grade. This is because staff do not make it specifically clear what steps apprentices need to take to aim for a distinction.

Learners do not have access to sufficient opportunities to broaden their talents or wider interests beyond what they study at the academy.

Learners feel safe because they know they can turn to staff if they are experiencing personal difficulties. Learners trust that they will receive the help and support that they need. For example, if learners are struggling with their mental health, staff arrange counselling appointments. Staff also negotiate adaptations to learners' work arrangements with their employers. For example, they arrange for learners to work from home if they need some extra space.

Learners benefit from the inclusive environment in which they learn. Consequently, employers say that learners are respectful to others and they embrace diversity when working in multicultural and international teams.

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

The chief executive officer (CEO) has recently employed a new further education lead and team. The new team has an accurate understanding of most of the strengths and areas requiring development of the academy and have put in place a coherent plan of what they need to do to improve further. As a result, since the previous new provider monitoring visit, leaders have made effective improvements to numerous areas of the provision. For example, leaders have ensured that apprentices are now in suitable jobs that match closely to the apprenticeship standards they are studying. However, leaders have not yet been able to improve the provision so that it is having a consistently good impact on learners.

The arrangements for governance require improvement. Board members do not have a sufficiently accurate understanding of what leaders need to do to improve the academy. As a result, board members do not effectively challenge leaders to make improvements. The CEO recognises the need to strengthen governance arrangements and has realistic plans in place to do this.

Staff ensure that programmes are generally effective at helping unemployed young adults from the local area into work. For example, around half of trainees who have completed a traineeship have secured employment as a result of their programme. Most apprentices remain in employment and some have been promoted within their jobs.

Leaders do not focus quality assurance activities enough on what tutors and assessors need to do to improve their teaching and assessment skills. Consequently, tutors do not receive sufficiently personalised training to help them to improve the specific areas of their teaching and assessment practice that they need to develop.

Leaders ensure that tutors teach programmes in a logical order. For example, trainees are taught about work readiness, such as interview skills and searching for jobs, before they seek employment opportunities. Consequently, they learn the essential knowledge about employment before they apply for job opportunities.

Tutors do not sufficiently assess what trainees know and can do at the start of their traineeship programme. As a result, tutors do not use this information to plan programmes that develop trainees' individual employability or vocational skills. For example, tutors do not assess the practical skills or knowledge that trainees already have, so they can plan to build on this.

Employers work well with learners to develop their practical skills related to the workplace they attend. This enables trainees to develop useful skills for industry. For example, trainees learn how to use JavaScript to create a personal website from scratch. They then use this website as a web-based CV.

Tutors do not develop apprentices' knowledge and use of English effectively enough, particularly for apprentices who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, this has an impact on the standard of their written work. For example, tutors do not support apprentices on the digital marketing level 3 standard well enough to improve the written marketing content that they produce. As a result, they do not produce content at the standard expected by industry.

Leaders do not ensure that tutors provide specific and helpful feedback to learners on their work or in progress reviews. As a result, learners do not know the precise next steps that they need to take to improve their knowledge or skills.

Leaders have developed new qualification-based courses to develop learners' course-related interests. For example, learners can obtain a certified employability award. These courses help learners to develop their knowledge further, as well as making them more employable.

Leaders have taken effective steps to improve the quality of careers advice that learners receive. However, leaders have not ensured that learners receive consistently high-quality and impartial careers advice and guidance. For example, trainees do not receive enough information about the opportunities available to

them at the end of their programme. As a result, trainees are not clear about their next steps.

Leaders place a strong focus on ensuring that learners attend learning sessions and work placements. Consequently, learners attend a high proportion of their sessions, demonstrating that they can meet the demands of employers.

Learners develop good workplace behaviours and a positive attitude that helps them to be successful in the workplace. For example, employers report that trainees are punctual to work and develop the social behaviours that they need to engage well with colleagues and clients.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has developed a useful safeguarding policy that offers staff helpful guidance about what actions they should take if they have safeguarding concerns.

As a result of effective partnership working, for example with the 'Prevent' duty coordinator, the DSL has developed a comprehensive understanding of specific risks in the areas in which they operate. As a result, they are putting in place appropriate measures to help reduce the risks that learners face where they live and work.

Staff have put in place an effective monthly programme of events and speakers, which are open to staff and learners. These include topics such as understanding radicalisation. The sessions enable learners to reflect upon how they can keep themselves safe.

Leaders carry out thorough checks when recruiting new staff. For example, they carry out disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks and complete reference checks.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders need to quality assure the work of tutors and assessors more rigorously so that they can put in place focused training and development to help tutors to improve their teaching and assessment skills.
- Leaders need to ensure that tutors assess what learners know and can do at the start of their programme, so they can develop a personalised programme that effectively builds on learners' existing skills and knowledge.
- Tutors need to ensure that they support learners, including learners who speak English as an additional language, to develop their knowledge and use of English so that learners can produce written content to the standard required in industry.

- Tutors and assessors need to provide learners with specific and helpful feedback on their work and in progress reviews, so learners know exactly what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders need to ensure that staff provide high-quality and impartial careers advice and guidance to learners, so they know about the range of opportunities available to them at the end of their course.

Provider details

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Website	https://www.aba.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Pruthvi Raj Gillella
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 further education lead, 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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Her Majesty's Inspector

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