

Inspection of CILEX Law School Limited

Inspection dates: 15 to 18 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
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

CILEX Law School Limited (CLS) delivers standards-based apprenticeship programmes for the legal sector. It started receiving direct funding for teaching apprenticeship programmes in May 2017. Currently, 391 apprentices are on programmes with employers across the country. Apprentices access the curriculum remotely.

CLS offer apprenticeships in level 3 paralegal, level 6 chartered legal executive and level 3 business administration. Most apprentices are studying the paralegal and the chartered legal executive apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, there were 194 apprentices studying level 6 chartered legal executive, and 187 studying level 3 paralegal. A small proportion of apprentices who work in the legal sector, are studying the business administration apprenticeship. At the time of inspection, 24 apprentices were on a break in learning. Most apprentices are adults, and approximately 26 are aged 16-19 and studying level 3 apprenticeship programmes.

CLS does not use subcontractors for any aspect of the apprenticeship programmes. There are no apprentices in receipt of high needs funding.

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

Apprentices at CLS are highly motivated to progress their careers in the legal sector. Most apprentices have clear career pathways planned. They can articulate how to achieve their aspiration. They are confident that they are studying the right course to gain appropriate skills in their current job roles and to secure future promotion.

Apprentices benefit from inclusive and respectful working relationships they have with their employers. Apprentices develop independence and confidence in what they do. Workplace supervisors ensure that apprentices have work tasks they need to support them to complete their qualifications. Workplace supervisors help apprentices to understand and complete their assignments. Employers report that apprentices improve their time management, and communication skills. They become an asset to their workplace and gain greater responsibilities as their programme progresses.

Apprentices attend well and benefit from live webinars. They enjoy discussing new learning with their tutors and their peers. As a result, they learn about the application of knowledge in other legal practices as well as in their own workplace.

Apprentices value the support they receive from their tutors and workplace supervisors. During COVID-19 restrictions, the monitoring and support of apprentices' mental health and well-being by tutors was paramount.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns that they might have. They are clear about their rights and responsibilities in relation to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

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

Leaders have selected appropriate apprenticeship programmes to meet the different needs of the employers they work with. For example, the paralegal apprenticeship programme provides opportunities for those inexperienced in law to enter the profession. The level 6 chartered legal executive provides an appropriate progression route from level 3 programmes. Most apprentices who remain on their course successfully achieve their qualification. However, too many apprentices leave their courses early.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all apprentices receive the same high-quality curriculum. A small minority of apprentices are unable to choose the most appropriate units to meet their job role. For example, those working in immigration are unable to study immigration law. However, on level 3 paralegal, apprentices learn about court processes such as case management. As a result, they feel well prepared for their current job role.

Managers plan the business administration and paralegal curriculum effectively. Apprentices gradually build their skills and knowledge over time. Paralegal apprentices study foundation in law first. This provides them with a good understanding of the legal system before they move on to more specialist topics, such as law of tort. However, the chartered legal executive curriculum does not support apprentices to manage their workload effectively. For example, where they are required to study two units simultaneously, apprentices do not have sufficient time to complete these to a high standard.

Leaders do not have good oversight of the new skills and knowledge that apprentices gain. Staff do not capture reliable information to plan an apprentice's programme of study. Staff expect apprentices to carry out a self-assessment of their starting points. Most apprentices are unclear how to assess their own performance or interpret the findings.

Too many apprentices who need to study English and mathematics make slow progress. Leaders have not planned an effective English and mathematics curriculum. They provide English and mathematics online resources for apprentices to study independently. However, they do not check the progress that apprentices are making in developing their skills and knowledge.

Apprentices gain a good understanding of legal terminology, and they use it effectively in their workplace. Apprentices communicate confidently with colleagues. They can draft legal documents, and format letters to the court. Tutors correct apprentices' spelling and grammatical errors routinely. Paralegal apprentices can explain legal texts to clients clearly.

Tutors and learning development advisors are well qualified for the roles they have in the organisation. They use their knowledge and experience effectively to put learning into context. Apprentices and employers value the way in which tutors use their experience of the legal sector to explain new topics. In business administration, the tutor uses relevant examples of project management, such as tracking case histories or implementing changes in law and practice.

Most tutors provide apprentices with helpful feedback on their work. Apprentices know what they do well and what they need to do to improve. In a minority of cases, feedback on work is cursory and does not help apprentices to improve. On paralegal programmes, staff do not clearly communicate the improvement targets that they provide to apprentices. As a result, apprentices continue to make the same errors in subsequent work.

Leaders have not ensured that tutors know how to identify and adjust the learning for apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Tutors rely too heavily on apprentices self-declaring where they have specific needs. Tutors make appropriate adjustments in response to the requests for help made by apprentices. For example, tutors release resources early so the apprentices can read them in advance of their taught session.

Many apprentices talk confidently around the themes of British values. In reviews, they take part in discussions about human rights and choice for the COVID-19 vaccination. Where appropriate, tutors take the opportunity to reference British values within taught sessions. This contributes towards deepening apprentices' understanding. For example, they link legislation to the rule of law, but also highlight respect and tolerance for the views of others. However, tutors do not ensure that paralegal apprentices can apply these important values clearly to their work and everyday lives.

Apprentices do not have a good understanding of the broader career options available to them. Staff do not routinely provide apprentices with ongoing impartial careers advice and guidance. Apprentices are aware of the progression opportunities available to them through CLS and their workplace. They are aware of careers resources made available to them, but too few access these to gain information.

Governors have appropriate academic, business, and legal sector experiences to be able to provide sufficient support and challenge for leaders. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the apprenticeship programmes. They have worked effectively with leaders to formulate an action plan to improve the low-retention rates on programmes. However, it is too early to see the positive impact of these actions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They place a high priority on making sure apprentices are safe and well supported. They have a secure oversight of safeguarding and discuss it at every board meeting.

Managers have developed comprehensive safeguarding practices to ensure that apprentices are safe, and they know who to report concerns to. Leaders manage safeguarding referrals effectively. They analyse safeguarding records successfully to identify trends and provide further training for staff. For example, all staff have taken part in mental health and suicide awareness training. As a result, mental health and support for apprentices' well-being is effective.

Apprentices lack a detailed understanding of the importance of broader safeguarding issues in relation to their job roles or daily lives. For example, too few apprentices are clear about the local risks they face in the areas in which they live and work.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders need to ensure that staff accurately identify apprentices' existing skills and knowledge at the start of their programme. Staff need to use this information effectively to plan individual programmes of study to ensure that apprentices gain substantial new skills and knowledge and make swift progress.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices receive appropriate impartial careers information, advice and guidance, so they are fully aware of the wider career options open to them on completion of their apprenticeship.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that tutors have the skills needed to identify and support apprentices with SEND who are having difficulties in learning.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices are fully supported to make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills to successfully complete their qualifications.
- Leaders need to ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of the local risks they face in their job roles and daily life.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278567
Address	College House Manor Drive Kempston Bedford MK42 7AB
Contact number	01234 417133
Website	http://www.CILEXlawschool.ac.uk
Principal/CEO	Linda Ford
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider (National)
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Head of Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, 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 apprentices' work, seeking the views of apprentices, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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