

Inspection of Thames Marine Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

11–13 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| The quality of education | Inadequate |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Requires improvement |
| Personal development | Requires improvement |
| Leadership and management | Inadequate |
| Apprenticeships | Inadequate |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this provider

Thames Marine Academy Limited (TMA) is a marine training company based on the banks of the River Medway in Kent. TMA became an approved apprenticeship provider in October 2019 and started training apprentices in January 2020.

TMA offers standards-based apprenticeships in boatmaster and workboat crewmember, at level three. Currently, there are 12 apprentices on the boatmaster apprenticeship and five apprentices are studying the workboat crewmember apprenticeship. 14 apprentices are aged 19 to 44 and three apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Apprentices work for four different employers.

At the time of the visit, training was a blend of face-to-face group lessons and one-to-one tutorials through live video conferencing software and independent distance learning.

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

Apprentices make very slow progress in their apprenticeships. Too many of the apprentices are behind with their studies. They do not benefit from regular progress reviews with their trainer and employers and rarely receive useful feedback to enable them to improve their work.

All apprentices face delays to the completion of their apprenticeship as a result of leaders failing to ensure that arrangements are in place for their formal examinations and external assessment. Apprentices studying the workboat crewmember (WBCM) standard have received very little training despite being on programme for over a year. Most are losing interest in the apprenticeship and others are restricted in their career progression plans.

Apprentices do not all benefit from development of their wider skills and behaviours. The younger apprentices studying the boatmaster license (BML) standard do value the life experiences that the trainer shares with them and the positive behaviours that he models. However, as a result of the delays to their training, apprentices following the WBCM standard, who have been on programme for a year, do not benefit from these experiences in order to develop their wider skills and behaviours.

Younger apprentices studying the BML standard are highly motivated to learn and are rightly proud when they complete assessment questions correctly.

The trainer creates a calm and welcoming environment in which to learn for apprentices studying the BML standard. He builds good relationships with these apprentices, which enables them to ask for support when they need it.

Apprentices feel safe. They know who to report any concerns to at work or while in training.

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

Leaders have not ensured that they are meeting all the requirements of a successful apprenticeship provision. WBCM apprentices do not have the time to attend their off-the-job training. Most employers, skippers and masters of apprentices do not know what apprentices are studying. They do not attend progress reviews and are not aware of what apprentices need to do to achieve. As a result, skippers and masters cannot plan for apprentices to practise the skills they are learning in the workplace.

Leaders have been too slow to identify an awarding body for functional skills qualifications, and this has caused delays in the apprentices taking the tests. In addition, leaders do not place enough emphasis on developing apprentices' English and mathematics skills, and, as a result, most apprentices fail when they sit these tests.

Leaders do not have effective systems in place to ensure that their training is of high quality. As a result, they are not aware of their weaknesses and cannot make improvements. Additionally, leaders do not plan professional development activities for staff to improve the quality of training.

Leaders have not ensured that apprentices on the WBCM standard are studying the intended curriculum. Apprentices have had very little training since they started. Employers and apprentices do not know when apprentices will complete their training, and they feel that the programme is on hold. As a result, these apprentices do not know when or how they will achieve their goals, and so they cannot move on to their next steps.

Although the trainer is very knowledgeable in the subject and has a wealth of experience and expertise, he does not ensure that the pace for the BML standard is appropriate for some apprentices to understand the topic being studied. The trainer does not provide enough opportunities for apprentices to benefit from guided practice, for example to calculate the tide at different times of the day. The trainer is too quick to provide the answers to the questions he asks, not allowing apprentices time to think about their answers. This results in the same apprentices answering almost all of the time and most apprentices being excluded.

The trainer does not identify or record what apprentices need to do to improve their skills, knowledge or behaviours or by when. As a result, apprentices are not aware of the standard that they are working at, what they would need to do to achieve high grades or what is involved in their final assessment.

Governance is in its infancy and has had no impact on the quality of the training. Governors understand their roles and how they could contribute but have yet to do so. Leaders have chosen an appropriate mix of governors who have skills and experience in regulated and non-regulated education, and specific industry and subject knowledge.

Leaders have a clear intent for the two apprenticeship standards which they teach. They aim to provide much-needed training to professionalise the crew members of the workboat industry. Employers of BML apprentices highly value the training that apprentices receive and how this is helping modernise the workboat industry.

Apprentices benefit from useful careers information, advice and guidance. For example, apprentices know what the training will prepare them for. They understand which additional qualifications and experience they will need to become captain, and BML apprentices are well aware that, although they are currently working on rivers, the apprenticeship qualifies them to work in coastal waters.

Apprentices studying the BML apprenticeship gain useful new skills, knowledge and behaviours as a result of their training, which makes them more useful on the workboats. For example, apprentices know about the impact of wind and tide on their barges, and can describe how to navigate in foggy conditions. A few apprentices have been given increased responsibility at work as a result of their growing confidence and skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty policies and procedures are followed. Staff are suitably trained and there are plans to update this training annually.

Apprentices know how to keep safe at work and carefully follow their health and safety training. The trainer discusses relevant safeguarding topics with apprentices as part of their training. For example, BML apprentices have recently discussed county lines, and they know how to keep themselves safe from 'grooming' into such activities.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices have a comprehensive plan of when they will attend their training. They need to identify when apprentices will complete the milestones, including functional skills assessments, and the expectations of the end-point assessment.
- Leaders must support all apprentices to develop wider skills appropriate to their age and previous knowledge and experience.
- Leaders should identify the strengths and weaknesses of their training so that they can make improvements and plan staff development activities.
- Leaders and trainers should identify and record for apprentices what progress they have made and the steps they need to take to improve their work and ultimately finish the apprenticeship. This should include plans for progress reviews with apprentices and their line managers.
- The trainer should ensure that all apprentices know what grades are available to them, what grade they are currently working at and how they can achieve higher grades.

Provider details

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Unique reference number | 2626871 |
| Address | GPS Marine House Upnor Road Lower Upnor Rochester Kent ME2 4UY |
| Contact number | 01634 892 010 |
| Website | www.thamesmarineacademy.co.uk |
| Principal/CEO | Edmund Hadnett |
| 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 principal, 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

Emma Leavey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Montserrat Perez-Parent

Her Majesty's Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2022