

Inspection of Real Skills Training Ltd

Inspection dates:

2 to 4 March 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

Real Skills Training Ltd is an independent learning provider that was established in 2011. It is a specialist training provider delivering courses for the rail industry. It received its first publicly funded contract for adult education in November 2017. The new owners bought the company in summer 2020. They have diversified their provision to include apprenticeships in the childcare and early years sector.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 120 apprentices. The vast majority of apprentices are aged over 19. They are enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5. The largest numbers of apprentices follow the level 2 early years practitioner, level 3 early years educator, level 4 early years lead practitioner and level 5 children, young people and families manager programmes. There are fewer than five adults and fewer than five young people following a traineeship in rail engineering and a range of programmes in the early years and childcare sector. This provision was too small to grade on this inspection. The company also delivers safety-critical commercial training programmes for the rail industry. These programmes were out of scope for this inspection.

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

Apprentices and learners demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes that bring about self-improvement and readiness for work or progression at work. Apprentices and learners have high attendance.

Apprentices are enthusiastic about their programmes. They are committed to improving the care and services they offer to the children, their families and the staff teams they work with. Learners enjoy their programmes and the new skills they are learning. They are respectful and behave well.

Apprentices and learners develop their confidence and character because of their programmes. Apprentices build their confidence and resilience, as well as their physical and mental well-being. They discuss healthy eating, exercise, healthy lifestyles, food groups and dietary guidelines in lessons. Learners develop their resilience working in the rail industry where they work in difficult weather conditions on labour-intensive activities. They research and debate topical and controversial subjects such as 'whether COVID-19 is real'.

Apprentices and learners appreciate and value their approachable, easily accessible trainers. They feel safe and know how to report any concerns. Learners demonstrate a strong understanding of health and safety and its importance in the rail industry. They wear the correct personal protective equipment and use tools correctly. Apprentices have learned about COVID-19 safety procedures while working in nursery settings during the pandemic. Apprentices are aware of hazards in the workplace. They complete daily risk assessments and ensure children's play equipment is safe.

Apprentices and learners do not develop their English and mathematical skills quickly enough. Trainers do not plan effectively for all apprentices to develop these skills, notably those who are exempt from functional skills.

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

Leaders have a clear vision and strategy to deliver apprenticeships in the childcare and early years sector that meet the needs of apprentices and their employers. They have developed a curriculum that ensures apprentices develop the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful at work. Leaders have a clear strategy linking the traineeship part of the provision to their commercial safety-critical training for the rail industry. Most trainees move into employment on completion of their traineeship.

Apprentices gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they quickly apply in their nursery settings. For example, they participate with confidence in multi-agency safeguarding meetings. Apprentices improve the care they provide to nursery children and their families through early recognition of a child's speech and language difficulties.

Learners gain useful practical skills that prepare them for the workplace. They practise how to change a sleeper, transpose track and how to conduct track inspections on a rail line. This prepares them well for their final assessments and work.

Most apprentices produce work at the expected standard. They use their academic writing and digital skills to produce assignments on topics such as the importance of professional development and research methods in early years settings.

Leaders and trainers set high expectations of professional behaviours for apprentices and learners. Employers value the contribution apprentices make to their workplace because of their training. For example, level 5 apprentices design and deliver training to other staff on topics such as children's positive behaviours.

Leaders have recruited highly qualified and vocationally experienced trainers. They ensure trainers receive effective training to maintain and enhance their subject and vocational expertise. For example, trainers attend industry webinars on topics including promoting curiosity learning. They use this information to support apprentices to use up-to-date terminology and concepts in the workplace. However, leaders do not focus sufficiently on the development of trainers' teaching skills.

Leaders have an accurate oversight of the progress apprentices and learners make. They have monthly progress meetings to monitor, discuss and take actions to improve the progress apprentices and learners make over time. Trainers know their apprentices and learners well.

Managers and trainers do not coordinate on- and off-the-job training well enough. They do not routinely involve employers in the planning of these activities. As a result, trainers do not plan sufficiently to challenge all apprentices to reach their potential.

The quality of feedback trainers provide to apprentices is too variable. They focus too much on the achievement of units of qualification and not on the development of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. Consequently, apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

Leaders' planning for the provision of ongoing careers guidance for apprentices and learners is weak. They ensure that apprentices and learners receive useful initial advice and guidance prior to joining their programme. However, leaders do not have a well-planned careers programme in place that provides apprentices and learners with unbiased information and guidance about wider choices in a range of industries. As result, some apprentices and learners are not aware of the breadth of career opportunities available to them.

Leaders have been too slow to improve governance arrangements. They have approached people to join the company in a governance role but have yet to make this happen. This means that senior leaders do not routinely receive the support, challenge or scrutiny required to improve the quality of training apprentices and learners receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding and the safety of apprentices and learners is a high priority. The designated safeguarding lead and their team have the appropriate training and experience to carry out their roles effectively.

Staff benefit from regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. They know how to keep apprentices and learners safe and follow clear company procedures to report any concerns they may have. Trainers and learners discuss issues including e-safety, health and well-being, world immunisation, domestic violence and mental health awareness to provide the support learners need to look after themselves.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and trainers should improve the planning and coordination of on- and off-the-job training to ensure apprentices are challenged and receive aspirational targets to reach their potential.
- Leaders should ensure that trainers routinely provide useful feedback to help apprentices focus on developing their knowledge, skills and behaviours for the workplace, not just the qualifications they need to achieve their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should ensure trainers routinely plan for the development of all apprentices' English and mathematical skills.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors routinely provide apprentices and learners with independent and impartial careers advice about the full range of opportunities available to them.
- Leaders should ensure that they strengthen governance arrangements so that they receive enough support, challenge and scrutiny to improve the quality of training for apprentices and learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1270912
Address	215 Crosby Road South Liverpool L21 4LT
Contact number	0151 257 6969
Website	www.real-skills.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Jane Dando
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director, 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

Alastair Mollon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Price	Ofsted Inspector
Maria Rayworth	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Wallace	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Cameron Brandwood	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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