

Inspection of Happy Computers

Inspection dates:

6 to 8 April 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

Happy Computers (Happy) is a training organisation based in east London specialising in information technology (IT) and leadership and management training, consultancy and coaching services. Happy Computers gained a contract to deliver apprenticeships in January 2018. At the time of this inspection, 38 apprentices studied the level 3 team leader/supervisor standard, 61 studied the level 5 operations/departmental manager standard, and 13 studied the level 4 software developer standard. Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders have started offering a L7 senior leader apprenticeship. Forty-four apprentices were working towards this standard at the time of the inspection.

All apprentices are aged 19 and over. At the time of this inspection, apprentices received all of their training online.

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

Apprentices enjoy Happy's ethos and values. They appreciate that the apprenticeship programmes help them to develop the attitudes and behaviours they need to become more effective leaders. For example, team leader apprentices have learned to adjust their behaviour in certain situations, such as being more considerate of their team members' personalities when organising projects and meetings.

Apprentices value the expertise of their facilitators. They benefit from industry leaders sharing their experiences. In online lessons, facilitators create a safe space for apprentices to challenge traditional techniques and to explore new approaches. Apprentices are supported and encouraged to learn, apply and reflect on their practice. Staff are friendly, approachable and responsive to suggestions for improvement. Staff and apprentices have a high level of respect for one another.

Apprentices are not always set clear and demanding tasks and targets. Where apprentices have fallen behind with their work, staff do not set sufficiently detailed targets with clear steps on how to catch up. When apprentices ask for clearer guidance, this does not always happen, and as a result, they remain behind.

In some instances, leaders and managers have not made clear the expectations of the apprenticeship to apprentices and their managers. A few apprentices are not in roles which enable them to put into practice enough of what they have learned through their training. As a result, too many apprentices have left the programme.

Apprentices feel safe as they trust staff take any concerns they have seriously. When apprentices face difficult challenges at work, facilitators encourage discussion to help them resolve any problems. Staff speak with apprentices frequently to check on their mental health.

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

Leaders and managers offer appropriate apprenticeship courses that meet the needs of apprentices and their employers. Leaders work closely with employers to develop programmes to support under-represented groups to develop their leadership skills and break down the barriers they may face. As a result, employers benefit from programmes that equip apprentices with valuable new tools and techniques.

Staff structure training logically. For example, courses start with apprentices reflecting on their own emotional awareness and intelligence, before moving on to techniques such as time management, managing people and conflict resolution. As a result, apprentices gain new knowledge and skills and develop the confidence to implement new management styles.

Staff promote professional behaviours well through insightful discussions in online sessions. Teaching staff help apprentices gain confidence when they face new workplace challenges. Apprentice attendance at training sessions is high.

Teaching staff do not consider sufficiently information about what apprentices already know and can do at the start of their programme. For example, when apprentices on level 5 programmes have substantial experience in topics such as project management and staff performance, facilitators do not amend training to reflect this. As a result, too many apprentices do not find the course demanding enough.

Teaching staff use suitable techniques to teach apprentices new knowledge and to help them to remember key concepts. They give apprentices useful feedback which guides them to improve their work. As a result, most apprentices produce work which is of a high quality.

Staff do not ensure that all apprentices fully understand the training they need to complete outside training sessions. In some cases, facilitators set assignments that are too vague. As a result, apprentices are not always clear on the exact requirements of work they are set and do not feel motivated to progress with their learning.

Staff give apprentices a reasonable understanding of what to expect in their final assessments. However, they do not plan sufficient opportunities for apprentices to practise individual elements of their assessment, such as the presentation, early enough in their course. For apprentices studying software development, staff do not identify gaps in their knowledge appropriately. As a result, a few apprentices nearing completion are not fully prepared for their final assessments.

Overall achievement of apprentices is too low. This year, leaders removed an additional qualification from their management programmes. Since taking this action, a higher proportion of apprentices have achieved their apprenticeship and gained high grades.

Leaders' overall management of apprentices' development in mathematics and English is not effective enough. Staff do not give apprentices sufficient support early enough in the programme. For example, staff rely on apprentices completing workbooks independently with little input from trainers. As a result, apprentices who need to complete qualifications in mathematics and English do not have a clear enough understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in these subjects.

Leaders' oversight of the quality of teaching is not robust enough. Leaders rely too heavily on feedback from apprentices alone. As a result, leaders do not understand all of the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. Leaders and managers do not have sufficient governance arrangements in place.

Staff do not provide sufficient careers advice and guidance to make apprentices aware of the opportunities available to them or to prepare them for their next steps. Level 3 and 5 leadership and management apprentices are not aware of any personal development opportunities other than their leadership training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have put in place appropriate safeguarding policies to work with adult apprentices. Leaders check that staff are safe to work with adult learners. For example, they complete Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

Leaders adequately promote a culture of safeguarding. Staff working directly with learners know how to recognise any concerns and follow suitable procedures. Leaders recognise that some learners struggle with their mental health and have trained staff to be mental health first aiders who offer suitable support to apprentices through additional check-ins and more frequent calls.

Staff are part of suitable networks, including the London 'Prevent' network, and as a result are aware of the key risks their learners may face in day-to-day life. However, safeguarding and 'Prevent' risks are not explored in-depth on a frequent basis with apprentices to ensure that they understand the range of issues that they may face in their roles.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Staff need to use the information they have about what apprentices know and can do at the start of their course to create a personalised and demanding programme that builds on apprentices' existing skills and knowledge.
- Leaders should develop a comprehensive curriculum of personal development to support all learners, which includes impartial careers advice and guidance, to help apprentices understand the opportunities available to them and to prepare for them for their next steps.
- Leaders and those who provide governance need to be more rigorous in their approach to quality assurance to improve their understanding of the provider's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Leaders need to ensure that apprentices and their managers understand the requirements and expectations of their apprenticeship. They need to ensure that all apprentices can apply their new knowledge at work and can learn effectively from valuable training outside work to achieve their programme.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58502
Address	3rd Floor Robert Dolan House 9 Alie Street London E1 8DE
Contact number	020 7375 7300
Website	www.happy.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Henry Stewart
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 Apprenticeship 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

Rebecca Jennings, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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