

Inspection of NPL Management Limited

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

NPL Management Limited (NPL) is based at the National Physical Laboratory and provides apprenticeship training in metrology at level 3. The aim of the three-year programme is to train apprentices to interpret and apply accurate measurements in a wide range of industries, for example healthcare and satellite navigation.

NPL has a contract to teach levy-funded apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit, 12 apprentices are on the level 3 metrology standard.

A third of apprentices work for NPL and the rest work in other sectors, such as the automotive and medical industries.

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

Apprentices find it fascinating to learn metrology from world-leading scientists and engineers. Scientists bring specialist equipment to lessons to demonstrate how they accurately measure temperature, electrical voltage and mass at work. Apprentices enjoy this specialised content as well as the chance to learn from apprentices in other organisations.

Apprentices value the high-quality resources and well-equipped laboratories they have access to at NPL. Apprentices learn from books and online resources that have been specifically adapted to meet their needs.

Apprentices enjoy learning in an exceptionally respectful environment. Apprentices behave impeccably because trainers ensure that apprentices respect one another's views and opinions. This helps them to develop professional attitudes. As a result, apprentices develop highly professional behaviours that enable them to be very successful in the workplace.

Apprentices appreciate that staff care about their emotional well-being. For example, apprentices are offered the opportunity to attend mental health awareness courses, such as a self-help programme. Apprentices trust that they can turn to trainers for support if they need it.

Apprentices particularly enjoy learning from practical, hands-on activities. They would like to see more of these added to their apprenticeship sessions so they can fully appreciate the application of the theory they are learning to its use in industry.

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

Leaders have clear reasons for teaching the programme. Through their extensive network of employers, they identified a gap in the number of new entrants to metrology, due to the lack of traditional routes into the profession. As a result, leaders decided to offer the apprenticeship to ensure that new entrants to metrology have a specific training route.

Trainers provide effective training to apprentices in training sessions and in reviews. Consequently, apprentices are developing new knowledge and skills. For example, they can remember about various manufacturing techniques. Apprentices also know how to interpret engineering drawings and can use this knowledge in their workplace.

Trainers use assessment well to review what apprentices know and can remember. For example, each module has opportunities for apprentices to self-assess their progress. Trainers then use these assessments to focus on areas of subject content where apprentices have gaps in their knowledge, so these are closed.

Trainers use feedback from apprentices to review the effectiveness of their training and to plan future learning. For example, apprentices experienced considerable difficulty in the mathematics module. Based on feedback, trainers revised this into smaller topics of learning, with more opportunities for ongoing assessment. As a result, apprentices now get more time to focus on this complex topic.

Trainers give apprentices constructive feedback on their work and portfolios. This helps them to improve the standard of their work. The majority of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship and progress into work or university.

Trainers do not use information from assessments at the start of the programme well enough to identify accurately what apprentices know and can do. As a result, they do not sufficiently plan learning for individual apprentices.

Trainers ensure that apprentices receive impartial careers advice. As a result, they have a good understanding of the opportunities available to them at the end of their programme. These include progression within their current organisation, or alternatives, such as progression to university.

Leaders and trainers place an unrelenting focus on apprentices' attendance and punctuality. There are clear procedures in place if apprentices miss sessions, and trainers have comprehensive catch-up plans in place for those who need to miss a session through illness or isolation. Consequently, apprentices' attendance and punctuality are exceptional.

Leaders have a reasonably good understanding of the areas of strength and areas requiring development of the provision. As a result, they develop improvement plans covering most of the areas requiring a focus, and this has enabled NPL to provide a good quality of education overall. However, there is a lack of external scrutiny on the governance board. Consequently, leaders do not receive the critical challenge they need to further improve the quality of the provision.

Leaders provide staff with excellent opportunities to undertake industry updating, and staff are technically very well-qualified. Trainers work on industry projects with current customers. As a result, they have the professional currency and subject knowledge they need to train apprentices well in metrology. They effectively draw on their experiences in training sessions.

While leaders provide good support to trainers to gain a recognised teaching qualification, they do not use the outcomes of their own evaluations of trainers' skills well enough. As a result, they do not give trainers extra training to improve areas of their practice in which they are weakest.

Leaders and trainers ensure that apprentices receive professional and personal development opportunities linked to metrology or their workplace. For example, apprentices can opt to take additional training programmes in employability skills, or specialist topics, such as using systems engineering software. Apprentices further their knowledge in specialist skills, knowledge or behaviours. However, there are too

few opportunities provided for apprentices to develop their wider talents and interests beyond the apprenticeship standard.

Leaders have developed excellent relationships with employers. Employers value the excellent communication they receive about apprentices' progress. Employers are also clear about the elements of the apprenticeship and the need to provide apprentices with a wide range of activity at work, so they can practise what they are learning in theory sessions. Consequently, employers provide very effective support to their apprentices.

Trainers ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of fundamental British values and how they apply in their work. For example, apprentices understand safety legislation, such as following protocols when working with hazardous substances in laboratories.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) provide appropriate support to apprentices who require help from the safeguarding team. For example, where apprentices have welfare issues, DSLs offer them counselling assistance programmes. They also offer them programme leave, or time off from work so they have space to recuperate.

DSLs have undertaken additional training to help them in their roles. For example, they have done training about managing incidents of suspected harmful sexual behaviour, as well as higher-level training in 'Prevent' duty awareness. As a result, DSLs have the knowledge they need to keep apprentices safe.

Trainers teach apprentices about how to keep themselves safe during induction training sessions. However, trainers do not sufficiently repeat this training. Consequently, apprentices cannot remember what they have been taught over time. For example, staff do not check that apprentices remember safeguarding themes in their progress reviews.

Apprentices feel safe at work, and when attending training sessions.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and members of the governance board should seek to develop the governance board by including those with external expertise in education so that leaders receive the challenge they need to improve further.
- Trainers need to more carefully consider what apprentices know and can do at the start of their apprenticeship, so that they can plan to meet apprentices learning needs more closely.

- Leaders need to ensure that staff training is aligned to trainers' personal development needs, so they improve specific aspects of their teaching more effectively.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539256
Address	Hampton Road Teddington Middlesex TW11 0LW
Contact number	0208 977 3222
Website	https://www.npl.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Dr Peter Thompson
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	CSR Scientific Training Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the apprenticeship 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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