

Inspection of Heritage Skills Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

12 to 14 April 2022

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Heritage Skills Academy Limited (HSA) is an independent training provider established in 2016. HSA started teaching apprenticeships in 2017, initially as a subcontractor, and has been directly funded since 2019. HSA offers the standards-based apprenticeship in heritage engineering technician at level 3. Apprentices have the option of studying for the vehicle mechanical technician or the vehicle coach building and trim technician options.

At the time of the inspection there were 112 apprentices studying the mechanical technician option. The remaining 29 apprentices were studying the vehicle coach building option. There were 28 apprentices who needed to achieve English or mathematics functional skills qualifications at level 2. Most apprentices are under 25 years old, with 48 apprentices being aged 16 to 18.

Apprentices work for over 100 different employers across the country. They attend week-long training sessions on block release every five to six weeks throughout the year for periods of up to four years. Training takes place at either HSA's headquarters in Bicester or at its new site at Brooklands Museum. HSA does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices are exceptionally motivated and display very positive attitudes to both their training and their job roles. They respond well to the high expectations that training staff and employers have of them. They have very high rates of attendance at their block training sessions and many arrive early for them and eager to learn. Apprentices are extremely respectful of each other and staff in lessons. They have empathy when talking with car owners, explaining the work they have done on their cars and making them aware of potential future concerns.

Apprentices rightly appreciate the new skills, knowledge and behaviours that they develop through their training and how they quickly increase their confidence of working on vehicles and talking to customers at work. Employers are extremely positive about the skills that apprentices develop, and entrust them with complex and detailed roles in rebuilding classic cars worth thousands of pounds on completion. For example, an apprentice on his second year of training worked on stripping and rebuilding a Jaguar XK140 for a customer.

Apprentices benefit from an extensive range of external speakers and visits that widen their views and experience of the heritage car industry beyond the content of their training programme. For example, guest speakers from the tank museum discussed restoration over preservation. Coach apprentices visited the factory that produced the door panels for a restoration project they are working on and received training from British Motor Heritage representatives on how to fit them.

Apprentices proudly represent HSA at shows, exhibitions and rallies where they showcase their high levels of skills and knowledge. Apprentices attended the Goodwood Revival, where they refurbished a 1927 Humber and returned it to a running vehicle by the end of the event. Staff introduce apprentices to industry figures and experts who can help them develop their careers. A classic car owner invited an apprentice to navigate for him in the three-day Flying Scotsman rally around Scotland. Apprentices and employers have won awards in recognition of their work, such as Apprentice of the Year at the 2021 Historic Motoring Awards.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear and purposeful rationale for the apprenticeship they offer, which is to provide high-quality training to replace the ageing workforce in the classic, vintage and heritage vehicle industry. They have established strong links with employers and organisations in the industry to plan and teach a curriculum which is relevant to their needs. The specialist employers that apprentices work for value highly the training that apprentices receive, which many describe as vital to the continuation of their businesses.

The location of HSA's training centres allows apprentices excellent opportunities to see and work on a wide range of classic, vintage and heritage vehicles and discuss them with staff and other enthusiasts. For example, a group of apprentices at the

Bicester site discussed the oil drop gauges with the owner of a 1906 Bianchi 28/40. Leaders and managers have purposefully resourced both their training centres with vehicles and equipment that enable apprentices to develop the skills they need to work on vintage and heritage vehicles. Leaders and managers have taken into account the differences in equipment and facilities at the employers that apprentices work for. For example, the welding bays enable apprentices to practise welding in a range of different positions.

Passionate and highly experienced tutors have carefully planned a logical training programme. Apprentices start learning basic hand tool skills and then move on to the more complex tooling and milling skills they need to produce replacement parts from scratch. Apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need to understand new topics well before moving on to more-complex work. For example, when working on transmissions for the first time, apprentices learn about the principles of the gear box before disassembling and reassembling the transmission system.

Tutors ensure that they revisit previous topics and extend apprentices' knowledge. They use questioning effectively in lessons to test apprentices' understanding of concepts. Where appropriate, tutors test apprentices' mathematics, for example by asking apprentices to calculate the impact of different gear ratios in a transmission.

Tutors use the assignments apprentices complete at the end of their training weeks to check the skills and knowledge that apprentices have developed. They provide apprentices with useful feedback on what they have done well. However, tutors do not ensure apprentices are clear about what they could have done better. In progress reviews, development coaches do not follow up on the apprentices' areas for development. Consequently, apprentices do not know where there are gaps in their knowledge or what they could do to improve.

Staff support apprentices well to make informed decisions about their next steps. In lessons, apprentices learn about different types of businesses and job roles. Staff help shape apprentices' views of what a good business looks like when considering their future work options. Staff support and guide apprentices who want to set up their own businesses.

Leaders and managers have strengthened further their processes for selecting the apprentices and employers that they work with. They set high expectations of prospective candidates, checking their practical, organisational and problem-solving skills as well as their motivation for wanting to become an apprentice. They have introduced more-thorough checks on employers to ensure that they can provide the type of work and support that the apprenticeship requires. As a result, a higher proportion of apprentices are continuing with their studies than at the time of the new provider monitoring visit.

Leaders and managers have encountered a succession of challenges that have resulted in them being too slow to improve the English and mathematics skills needs of the few apprentices who need to achieve these qualifications as part of their apprenticeship. As a result, a small proportion of apprentices who should have

achieved their functional skills qualifications by now have not received sufficient training to allow them to do so.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the quality of the training that apprentices receive in their training centres. They frequently visit lessons to observe training and collect feedback from apprentices and their employers. They provide effective support for staff who need to improve their teaching.

Leaders and managers do not observe the review sessions that development coaches carry out with apprentices. As a result, leaders and managers do not have an accurate view of the quality of these review sessions and how, when development coaches do not carry them out effectively, this slows the progress of a few apprentices. Development coaches do not have sufficient questioning and exploration skills and in-depth knowledge on topics such as bullying, mental health, fundamental British values and extremism and radicalisation to allow them to have meaningful conversations with apprentices and help them develop their understanding of these topics further in reviews.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel safe at work, in training and when staying overnight for their training. Leaders and managers have suitable checks in place to ensure that all staff who work with apprentices and the families who host younger apprentices are safe to do so. Apprentices know how and who to report welfare or safeguarding concerns to if they have any.

Apprentices follow safe working practices at work, for example they consider the possibility of asbestos when removing brakes and brake shoes from older vehicles. They wear appropriate personal protection equipment at all times.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that the feedback that apprentices receive helps them and their employers understand what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English or mathematics receive well-planned and structured training that helps them master the skills they need to go on and achieve these qualifications.
- Leaders and managers should strengthen their staff's coaching skills and knowledge of the topics discussed in reviews so that they are able to test and explore apprentices' understanding of these topics in greater depth.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2577253
Address	Building 90 Buckingham Rd, Launton Bicester OX27 8AL
Contact number	01438 718224
Website	www.heritageskillsacademy.co.uk
Managing Director	John Pitchforth
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the development director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the new provider monitoring visit 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

Montserrat Pérez-Parent, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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