

Inspection of Empentis Limited

Inspection dates:

25 to 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Empentis Limited began to deliver apprenticeships in July 2020, specialising in leadership, management and information technology. There are currently fewer than five apprentices on programmes at level 3 in team leading and digital marketing. All apprentices are aged over 19 and funded through the apprenticeship levy.

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

Apprentices are positive about their learning and the skills that they have developed. The new skills that they acquire make them better prepared to deal with challenging situations in the workplace. For example, apprentices successfully use disciplinary procedures to resolve complex human resources issues within their team.

Too many apprentices are unclear about the progress they are making in developing the skills, knowledge and behaviour required for successful completion of their apprenticeship. This means that they are not sure about what they need to do to improve further, which impedes their progress.

Apprentices receive appropriate careers advice and guidance, the quality of which has improved recently. Staff also have plans in place to improve the initial advice and guidance that apprentices receive, but it is too early to see the impact of these plans.

Staff ensure that apprentices have a good understanding of fundamental British values and equality of opportunity. Apprentices apply this understanding well in their own work settings. Those that work in male-dominated industries understand the importance of recruiting women and how the culture of organisations may need to change to enable this to happen.

Too many apprentices have withdrawn from programmes due to workload issues with their employer, and many of the remaining apprentices are making progress that is too slow. Leaders and managers are aware of this issue and have begun to respond. They have introduced a more thorough induction process to ensure that apprentices are clear about the expectations of the programme at the outset. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of these measures.

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

Leaders and managers have not put in place an appropriately sequenced or structured curriculum for the team leading programme. This programme focuses mainly on the optional diploma for managers qualification, with insufficient attention paid to what is required to complete the apprenticeship successfully. This means that apprentices' progress on this programme is limited, and apprentices are not prepared well enough for end-point assessment. Too many apprentices are unclear about when their apprenticeship will end and the arrangements for the end-point assessment process.

Managers and training officers have developed and begun to implement a new curriculum plan since the previous inspection visit. The plan takes greater account of the requirements of employers in the selection and order of content than previously. It is, though, too early in the implementation of this plan to measure the impact.

Leaders and managers have put in place an external advisory board that includes members of the senior leadership team and external members. However, this board does not provide effective enough challenge to ensure that the quality of education improves rapidly.

Leaders have recruited staff with extensive and relevant industry experience to teach on the apprenticeship programmes. However, staff do not receive sufficient training to develop their teaching skills so that the quality of education improves.

Managers do not have sufficient oversight of the progress that apprentices are making. This means that they do not intervene well enough to make any necessary improvements and enable apprentices' progress to accelerate when it is too slow. As a result, in too many instances, apprentices do not improve their skills quickly enough to achieve their qualifications in a timely manner and progress to end-point assessment.

Training officers teach the curriculum effectively, covering content that apprentices find manageable and that relates to their job roles. Apprentices apply their new learning effectively in the workplace. For instance, team leader apprentices are now more able to delegate duties to members of their team as a result of what they have learned about managing people.

Apprentices successfully develop their professional behaviour and model this well in their work as a result of their training. They are able to describe how they now approach challenging situations more calmly and professionally than they previously did to avoid confrontation. Apprentices are more conscious of how to improve staff well-being, and they recognise that this contributes to improved productivity and retention of staff.

Attendance at training sessions is not consistently high, despite training officers setting high expectations for attendance. Particularly on the team leader programme, apprentices are sometimes unable to attend training due to the demands in their workplace. Training officers demonstrate flexibility in moving sessions where attendance is difficult, and this flexibility is valued by apprentices.

Leaders and managers adapt the curriculum, where relevant, to suit apprentices' and employers' needs. For example, the curriculum has been amended to fit more closely with the business year-end for a specific employer. The finance unit was moved back a month with shortened deadlines, which made the topic more relevant and meant that the apprentices had more time to dedicate to their learning.

Leaders have introduced well-structured quality reviews that focus on specific themes to improve the quality of the provision. These include careers information, advice and guidance, curriculum planning and employer engagement. Although in its early stages, this process had enabled leaders to begin to make a few improvements.

Leaders have introduced a stringent annual performance management cycle for training staff. This includes observations of teaching at least twice a year, a review of curriculum planning, learning materials and learner work, and a plan for continuing professional development. This will be used to develop the training that staff need, but is still in its infancy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have in place a suitably qualified designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL, who have links with the local 'Prevent' duty coordinators. They ensure that the organisation receives frequent updates from external agencies.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report concerns. They are aware of who the DSL is and how to contact her. However, not all apprentices are aware of local risks in their area, such as knife crime, radicalisation and county lines.

Leaders and managers use safe recruitment practices. They carry out Disclosure and Barring Service checks before employment commences. If the check is not back in time, then delivery is monitored at all times by a member of the senior leadership team.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that apprentices are clear about the progress that they are making and are fully supported to complete their programmes in a timely manner.
- Ensure that the team leading programme is designed to prepare apprentices fully for successful completion of all elements of the apprenticeship.
- Ensure that apprentices are made fully aware of the end-point assessment requirements.
- Ensure that managers have much better oversight of apprentices' progress so they can intervene effectively when apprentices fall behind.
- Liaise with employers to ensure that apprentices are able to attend training sessions more frequently.
- Ensure that there is effective challenge at board level to check that quality improvements are having positive impact on apprentices' retention and experience, and on safeguarding.
- Ensure that all training staff have the appropriate expertise to provide high-quality teaching.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2626883
Address	38 Collingwood Street Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1JF
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Website	empentis.co.uk
CEO	Andrew White
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 quality manager, 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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Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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