

Inspection of Qommunicate Ltd

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Qommunicate Ltd is an independent learning provider based in Birmingham. The company is part of the training division of the Siamo Group which provides a wide range of managed support services, including workforce recruitment, human resource management, payroll and information technology support to businesses across the United Kingdom.

At the time of the visit the company had 95 adult apprentices in learning, all of whom are studying towards standards-based programmes from level 2 through to level 7. The very large majority of the apprenticeship provision is concentrated at levels 3 and 5, encompassing vocational pathways in digital marketing, customer service, recruitment resourcing, team leader supervision and operations departmental management.

Most apprentices are based in the East and West Midlands and Northamptonshire area. They are employed by companies in the warehousing, logistics and order fulfilment sectors. The company also delivers a range of adult training courses as a subcontractor to another publicly funded training provider. These courses were not within scope for this inspection.

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

Leaders ensure that all apprentices routinely receive their entitlement to time away from work to complete their studies. The provision meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.

Trainers make good use of the available information on apprentices' prior attainment and aptitudes; they sequence learning well and make vocational learning interesting and enjoyable. Most employers contribute significantly to the planning of provision.

Trainers have high expectations for apprentices. They devise learning activities that meet their needs, improve their confidence and extend their vocational skills. They check carefully that apprentices have a secure understanding and mastery of key learning concepts before moving on to the next stage of their learning.

Apprentices are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are well motivated, their attendance is routinely high, and most make good progress in developing substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they successfully apply in the workplace and in their job roles.

Apprentices have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. They quickly develop confidence, self-awareness and respectful attitudes to the values and cultural beliefs of others.

Leaders and managers listen to, and act on, feedback from staff, apprentices and employers, taking prompt action to ensure that apprentices routinely receive a good learning experience.

Most apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications to complete their course do so at their first attempt. However, apprentices who join the programme with exemptions in either English and/or mathematics are not supported to extend their practice in these essential skills. A few workplace managers do not routinely participate fully in reviews of their apprentices' progress.

Apprentices are not provided with sufficiently comprehensive information about wider career possibilities which would help them better understand the full range of opportunities available at the end of their course.

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

Leaders and trainers teach an ambitious curriculum that provides employers' staff with the supervisory, managerial and digital marketing skills that they need for their business to thrive and grow. Managers and trainers ensure that the curriculum is both closely aligned with employers' business priorities and provides apprentices with the skills they need to be successful in their chosen careers.

Trainers skilfully use the information gathered through detailed and comprehensive initial assessment of apprentices' prior vocational skills, knowledge and behaviours in order to adapt the curriculum and provide individualised programmes of learning. Apprentices who join the programme without the pre-requisite qualifications in English and/or mathematics benefit from routine support provided by a specialist functional skills trainer; consequently, most apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications at the first attempt by the end of their training. However, leaders and trainers do not plan systematically to develop the English and mathematical skills for all apprentices beyond the minimum level required for the course.

Leaders ensure trainers routinely plan and teach the curriculum in a way that enables apprentices to build their knowledge, skills, and behaviours incrementally. For example, team leader apprentices learn about time management and management of self before moving on to learning how to complete effective staff appraisals. Digital marketer apprentices are supported well by trainers to identify target markets, and to develop their skills and confidence in using specialist social media marketing tools before they move on to devising and implementing online marketing campaigns. As a result, apprentices build their learning in meaningful steps over time and quickly become valued assets to their employers.

Trainers, who are appropriately qualified and skilled devise and teach highly effective learning sessions that are sufficiently flexible to meet apprentices' needs closely. For example, trainers adapt and teach the curriculum using group or one-to-one coaching sessions and pre-record learning materials that enable apprentices to deepen their knowledge and to revisit key learning points at times that suit their operational shift patterns.

Trainers link theory to workplace practice well and plan programmes to support workplace priorities. As a result, most apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills, and behaviours. For example, team leader supervisor apprentices successfully use a range of skills to lead and motivate their teams at work. They skilfully coach team members to enable them to take on additional responsibility during busy periods in the workplace. Apprentices on digital marketer programmes are adept at designing online videos that present induction materials to support the induction of new employees to their employers' business.

Trainers routinely build a good range of check points into the curriculum. They use video clips, discussions, questioning and quizzes well to revisit key learning points and to ensure that all apprentices have fully grasped key concepts and consolidated their learning before introducing new topics.

Trainers ensure that all apprentices complete a reflective journal that helps them to review their learning and to reinforce key theories, so that they can apply their new knowledge into practice easily at work. As a result, most apprentices know more and remember more over time. For example, apprentices on operations or departmental manager programmes are better able to empathise with team members facing personal challenges and offer helpful solutions. Team leading apprentices improve their knowledge about the merits of different coaching techniques, which they

successfully apply with their teams at work. As a result, most apprentices make a valuable contribution to their employers' business.

Most employers support apprentices well in the workplace. However, in a few isolated instances, a very small minority of line managers do not fully participate in progress reviews. As a result, on- and off-the-job training for a very few apprentices are not co-ordinated as well as they could be.

Trainers routinely ensure that apprentices are well prepared for their final assessments. They provide apprentices with highly structured practice, guidance and support that enable them to achieve very well at end-point assessments.

Apprentices benefit from the high-quality support that trainers and employers provide, consequently they quickly develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem. Their attendance at planned learning is routinely very high, they take pride in their work, demonstrate good attitudes to their studies, and are enthusiastic and keen to learn.

Trainers use their teaching skills well to create calm and purposeful learning environments that enable apprentices to feel comfortable in asking questions that help to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Apprentices regularly mirror the high expectations of professional conduct and behaviours that trainers set for them during planned learning sessions and in the workplace. They are courteous and respectful of each other's opinions and make positive contributions to group activities and discussions.

Trainers ensure that apprentices have a secure and well-developed understanding of life in modern Britain by effectively promoting the importance of inclusion and inclusivity in learning activities. Apprentices talk eloquently about a range of topics, including their rights and responsibilities, democracy, religious and cultural differences, gender pay gaps, and equality in the United Kingdom. For example, apprentices at one employer worked with their managers to refine the company's recruitment practices, and as a result the company was able to attract a more diverse workforce that better reflected the demographics of the locality.

Most apprentices are prepared well for their next steps. Almost all apprentices remain in permanent employment, and a minority gain promotion, move on to higher level training or – in a small minority of cases – to higher education. However, while managers and trainers ensure that all apprentices receive beneficial and helpful support such as CV writing when applying for internal vacancies, they do not ensure that apprentices receive impartial advice about the broad range of career opportunities outside of their current job role.

Trainers ensure apprentices are provided with appropriate information and guidance on themes such as online safety and how to access support on matters related to staying mentally and physically healthy. Apprentices feel safe and know what to do, should they have any concerns about their own safety or that of others. They have a broad understanding of matters relating to radicalisation and extremist behaviour

and can articulate well the signs they would look out for, such as changes in colleagues' behaviour in the workplace.

Directors have developed an ambitious strategic vision for their apprenticeship provision and communicate this well to staff and external clients. Since the monitoring visit, they have strengthened management capacity and recruited additional staff to support the development and delivery of the apprenticeship programme.

Leaders make good use of labour market intelligence to develop and inform their curriculum appropriately. They have carefully shaped and expanded the apprenticeship provision with a focus on developing courses that are carefully tailored to meet the needs of employers and their workforce.

Leaders have strengthened the internal processes used to monitor the impact of equality of opportunity actions for the benefit of their apprentices and the communities they serve. For example, managers now routinely analyse the performance of different groups of apprentices; consequently, they have a secure understanding of the effectiveness of their actions to narrow performance gaps in the range of protected characteristics.

Leaders are considerate and vigilant of the workload and well-being of their staff. Directors and leaders have established effective arrangements to manage the performance of staff. Trainers routinely benefit from access to a comprehensive staff development programme that helps them to consolidate and, where necessary, improve their pedagogical practice for the benefit of apprentices. Consequently, most apprentices gain substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours that employers locally and regionally value.

Leaders and managers use data well, they monitor the quality of the apprenticeship provision thoroughly. They adeptly use information on the progress that apprentices make and the outcomes they achieve to implement improvement strategies in a timely manner. Self-assessment involves staff at all levels and the resulting report provides an accurate reflection of the provision. Leaders have dealt effectively with all of the recommendations from the monitoring visit.

The board of directors provides sound oversight of and support for the provision. They receive regular reports and review these carefully. Directors use their skills and expertise well and the key performance indicators, which they helped devise, to hold managers to secure account for the quality of provision and to drive forward improvements for apprentices.

Directors have developed suitably detailed plans to appoint independent members to a newly established training division governance board, both to strengthen the support and challenge to the senior leadership team and to extend their scrutiny and oversight of the quality of provision. However, it is too early to see the impact of this very recent initiative.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Directors and leaders have established an organisational culture that ensures the safety and well-being of apprentices is at the heart of the provision. The designated safeguarding lead is suitably qualified and trained for the role. All staff benefit from appropriate training in safeguarding, including in e-safety. As a result, they are vigilant to signs and indicators that may highlight apprentices who might be in need of help and/or protection.

Leaders and managers use safe recruitment procedures to good effect when appointing new staff. Managers check carefully right-to-work requirements and undertake enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service clearance checks to assure candidates' suitability to work with apprentices.

Safeguarding procedures provide clear guidance on a wide range of potential risks and how to identify and report any concerns staff and/or apprentices may have. Leaders, managers and trainers understand well their responsibilities to safeguard apprentices. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding respond appropriately to any concerns raised, they keep accurate records and swiftly involve external agencies when needed.

Apprentices have a secure understanding of protocols to keep them safe and the importance of routinely adopting safe working practices, including the mirroring of safe working behaviours for colleagues whom they line manage.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should improve the access that apprentices have to impartial information, advice, and guidance so that they have a good level of understanding of their transferable skills and the wider employment options available to them as they near the end of their apprenticeship.
- Managers should ensure that trainers routinely plan and support all apprentices to extend their skills and confidence in both English and mathematics, emphasising the importance of these essential skills for success in the workplace and in their personal lives.
- Leaders should work closely with employers to ensure that apprentices' line managers routinely attend planned learning reviews and contribute fully to the planning of learning for their employees.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2526599
Address	Unit 6250 Bishops Court Solihull Parkway Birmingham Business Park Birmingham B37 7YB
Contact number	07834 271659
Website	https://www.siamogroup.com
Principal/CEO	Alex Hope
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 director and head of apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous 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

Victor Reid, lead inspector

Maggie Fobister

Susan Gay

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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