

# Severn Trent Plc

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 2674172

**Name of lead inspector:** Victor Reid, Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Employer

**Address:** Severn Trent Academy  
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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Seven Trent Plc is one of the largest of the 11 regulated water and sewerage companies that operate in England and Wales. The company provides a wide range of water-related services to residential and commercial customers across central England and from the outskirts of Bristol to the Sheffield City Region.

The company has held a contract as a levy-funded employer provider to run standards-based apprenticeships since January 2021.

At the time of the visit, 39 apprentices were in learning. Of these, 20 were studying standards for level 2 water process operatives and a further 19 were completing their training with the company towards a level 3 standard for water process technicians.

### Themes

#### **How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?**

#### **Reasonable progress**

Senior leaders and managers have established a clear vision for the apprenticeship programme so that it meets industry needs for trained personnel to reduce water wastage caused by leakages. Leaders, with the support of external partners, have developed an ambitious curriculum, underpinned by a highly supportive ethos, to support the upskilling of existing and new entrants into the water leakage and water treatment sectors.

Since gaining a directly funded contract, leaders have invested in purpose-built learning facilities so that apprentices are taught in well-equipped classrooms and practical skills training areas. In addition, leaders have established an appropriate management structure and recruited sufficient trainers/assessors to support the delivery of the apprenticeship programmes.

Leaders and managers ensure that trainers/assessors benefit from access to a range of professional development and support that enables them to provide apprentices with impactful learning. Managers ensure that apprentices benefit from routine time away from the workplace to undertake training at the academy. As a result, apprentices develop valuable knowledge and industry skills that enhance their effectiveness in the workplace and improve their self-confidence.

Leaders ensure that apprentices benefit from access to a positive learning culture and an ethos of inclusion, tolerance and respect. Managers place a high priority on supporting all members of their diverse organisational community to feel valued and their differences openly welcomed and celebrated.

Leaders have established an appropriate governance structure. Board members are suitably experienced and clear about their role to support and challenge leaders regarding the operational effectiveness of the provision to meet the needs of apprentices.

Leaders and managers have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship programme. However, a few of the targets and performance indicators in the improvement plan are not always measurable and/or time-constrained. As a result, leaders are not able to evaluate fully whether some actions have been achieved or what the impact has been for apprentices. In addition, quality assurance arrangements do not extend to include routine oversight of the subcontractor.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress**

Trainers/assessors undertake a vocational skills scan with apprentices when they start their apprenticeship to find out what they already know and can do. Trainers use the information gathered through the initial assessment to plan and sequence the curriculum so that it builds on apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours in a logical way over time.

Apprentices benefit from effective guidance and support provided by trainers/assessors, who use their extensive industry knowledge well to facilitate the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours related to the provision of water-related services. For example, apprentices on the level 2 water process operative standard develop their confidence and vocational skills in how to treat water using ferric to remove phosphates and harmful bacteria and then test its quality to ensure it is safe to drink. Apprentices receive clear guidance and instruction from workplace mentors and supervisors on the protocols to be followed for the delivery and storage of such chemicals used to treat the water.

Trainers/assessors provide frequent opportunities for apprentices to revisit and recall their learning. Apprentices receive routine challenge from trainers/assessors and workplace mentors to demonstrate their understanding of key concepts before moving on to more complex and challenging topics, such as the transportation of water waste, system fault-finding and water leakage detection. For example, apprentices on the level 2 standard learn how to thicken up sludge to support its transportation to another site. Apprentices on the level 3 water process technician standard develop their knowledge of how to identify and trace localised water losses within a zoned distribution system, enabling localised repairs to be undertaken.

Managers and trainers/assessors do not routinely track or report on the progress that all apprentices are making in extending their skills and knowledge in English and/or mathematics or the extent to which apprentices are making the vocational progress expected of them from their individual starting points.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress**

Leaders ensure that the safety of and support for apprentices is at the heart of the provision. For example, managers ensure that apprentices complete training in waste safety, manual handling and working at height early on in their programme, in order for them to be able to access sites.

A team of two trained designated safeguarding leads maintain appropriate records of any safeguarding concerns, with a focus on the provision of help and protection for apprentices. In addition, two designated governors maintain a watchful level of vigilance regarding the effectiveness of the company's safeguarding arrangements.

Managers ensure that risk assessments relating to apprentices who require transport and/or overnight accommodation to attend planned training at the academy are appropriately detailed and thorough.

Leaders ensure that appropriate employment and suitability checks are carried out on all staff in the academy who directly work with or support apprentices. All academy staff and governors complete relevant and regular online safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training to ensure their knowledge is up to date. Trainers/assessors provide apprentices with useful information about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and how to stay safe online, including when using social media both at work and in their personal lives. However, leaders' and managers' understanding of local risks is not sufficiently evaluative or detailed, as they have yet to establish effective relationships with local safeguarding partners and regional 'Prevent' duty coordinators.

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