

Inspection of Apprenticeship Recruitment Service Ltd

Inspection dates: 17 to 20 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Information about this provider

Apprenticeship Recruitment Service Limited (ARS) received a contract to deliver apprenticeships in March 2018. Currently, 183 apprentices are on apprenticeship standards from level 2 to level 5. Of these, 139 apprentices are levy funded and 44 are non-levy funded. Most apprentices study at level 3 or above. They follow: level 3 courses in human resources (HR) support, and team leader or supervisor; level 4 in associate project manager; level 5 in HR development consultant partner, and learning and development consultant business partner. There are fewer than five apprentices who study accounts, finance, business administration or improvement practitioner programmes. ARS currently subcontracts the teaching of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to another provider. ARS has recently gained CIPD accreditation and will now train apprentices directly.

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

Apprentices enjoy their learning and the respectful, cooperative relationships they have with their tutors. They display positive attitudes towards their work and study. Tutors provide apprentices with effective training and support through individual and group sessions. Apprentices appreciate the clear, logical structure of their courses.

Managers recruit apprentices to the most appropriate programmes at the correct level. As a result, apprentices develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Most apprentices put these to good use in the workplace. However, managers and tutors do not plan on- and off-the-job training well enough so that apprentices make more rapid progress. On some courses, tutors do not link apprentices' new learning well enough to their job roles.

Tutors and managers create a supportive and welcoming environment. They encourage debate, openness and understanding in lessons. Tutors encourage apprentices to reflect on their learning and progress. As a result, they develop apprentices' confidence and aptitude. Leaders and managers provide limited opportunities for apprentices to develop their interests outside the formal curriculum. Managers provide little in the way of impartial careers advice and guidance. Despite this, apprentices are ambitious to progress in their careers.

Apprentices feel safe and know whom to report any concerns to at work and on their training course.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for their curriculum. They aim to provide training that enhances apprentices' career opportunities. They work closely with employers to devise training to meet their needs. This supports employers to develop future leaders. Leaders are aware of the needs of the local, regional and national economies. For example, they understand the need for CIPD programmes in the North West region.

Tutors sequence courses in a logical order. Level 5 HR apprentices start by analysing organisational business culture. This helps them to understand the context of their HR work. As the programme progresses, tutors introduce more complex topics. These include performance management and employment law. As a result, apprentices build their knowledge and understanding over time.

Tutors present information in a clear, coherent manner. They explain concepts well. Most apprentices develop a sound understanding of business principles. They learn about different analytical models. They use these in the workplace when they manage change and restructure teams.

In functional skills mathematics, tutors break down problems into a series of steps. They explain how to tackle each step using worked examples. Apprentices develop

good problem-solving skills. Tutors intervene if apprentices struggle to recall topics or use imprecise mathematical language.

A few tutors do not coordinate apprentices' on- and off-the-job training effectively. They do not plan how to develop apprentices' skills in the workplace with the employer. As a result, a few employers do not know what they need to do to help apprentices practise their skills.

Tutors do not use information on apprentices' prior learning to plan an individualised curriculum. At the start of the apprenticeship, tutors complete checks on apprentices' prior learning. However, they do not set challenging enough targets for apprentices to help them make more rapid progress.

A small minority of tutors do not revisit topics often enough. This means that a few apprentices are not given the opportunity to recall prior learning. A few tutors do not use effective questioning. They do not fully check apprentices' understanding or help apprentices to develop their ideas.

Most tutors use ongoing assessment effectively to check what apprentices know and can do. Apprentices receive useful feedback from tutors to help them improve. For example, tutors advise apprentices to include references to secondary sources in their writing. Apprentices' work improves over time and is of a high standard.

Tutors prepare apprentices well for their final assessment. They do this through workshops on report writing, one-to-one meetings and professional discussions. Coaches share examples of high-quality work so that apprentices can understand the standards required. Apprentices achieve high results in their external assessments.

Managers have appropriate arrangements in place to support apprentices with additional learning needs. They track their progress monthly and intervene to put support in place, for example by supporting apprentices with dyslexia using documents in easy-to-read typefaces. These apprentices make at least the expected progress.

A small number of apprentices have not completed their studies within the planned timescale. This is due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pharmaceutical employers. Managers intervene to support apprentices to get them back on track. Approximately three quarters of apprentices achieve high grades in their final assessments. Many progress to a higher level apprenticeship or gain a promotion.

Tutors discuss important topical issues with apprentices on an informal basis. These topics include British values, equality and diversity, and the dangers of radicalisation. These discussions are not well planned or managed. This means that apprentices have a limited recall and understanding of these topics.

Leaders and managers do not provide impartial careers advice and guidance. Although a few apprentices receive limited informal advice from tutors, this is too

inconsistent. Apprentices are not informed about their potential career development and are unaware of opportunities for further study.

Leaders have established a culture of high expectations. Apprentices are aware of the high standards expected in training. Tutors are suitably qualified to carry out their roles. They attend a range of useful specialist courses and 'back-to-industry' days. Managers recognise that they need to further support tutors to develop their teaching practice.

Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This includes the work of subcontractors. They take a reflective, self-critical approach to self-assessment. They recognise with clarity what they need to do to improve and put actions in place swiftly.

Governors focus their energy on improving the quality of training. They have extensive experience in education. They use their knowledge to support and challenge leaders. Despite this, formal governance arrangements remain underdeveloped. Leaders are aware that they need to recruit more experienced governors from the business and finance sectors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding has a high priority. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have received appropriate training. They have well-developed links with external agencies. As a result, they maintain up-to-date knowledge of issues related to safeguarding and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Tutors benefit from annual update training. This includes training on sexual harassment, peer-on-peer abuse and mental health. Staff know how to keep apprentices safe and follow clear company procedures to report any concerns they have to the DSL.

Leaders and managers follow safe recruitment practices. They carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work in education and training.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that tutors' professional development includes a focus on developing their teaching and learning skills, for example on how to use apprentices' prior learning more effectively and on questioning and recall techniques.
- Managers and tutors should make sure that apprentices' understanding of life in modern Britain is continually developed throughout their apprenticeship so that they can apply this to their personal and professional lives.

- Leaders and managers should ensure that all apprentices have access to impartial careers advice and guidance so that apprentices understand the full range of next steps and career options available to them.
- Leaders and managers should continue to improve governance arrangements. They should recruit more governors with financial and business experience to provide scrutiny and hold leaders to account.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2510880
Address	1 Clock Tower Park New Hall Liverpool L10 1LD
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Website	www.appsrecruitment.co.uk
CEO	Myrtle Northage
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Acacia Learning Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality and compliance, 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

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