

Inspection of Gecko Programmes Limited

Inspection dates: 24 to 27 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Information about this provider

Gecko Programmes is a private training company that started trading in 2009. It operates from two centres, one in Wolverhampton and one in Birmingham. The provider has recently changed ownership. Its main aim is to provide training for adults seeking to gain full-time employment. Gecko Programmes offers courses from entry 1 to level 3. At the time of the inspection, 81 learners were enrolled on courses in health and social care at levels 2 and 3. Exactly 50 learners were enrolled on courses in security and spectator safety. A further 23 learners were enrolled on entry level ESOL courses (English for speakers of other languages), with a further 22 learners enrolled on level 1 customer service. Courses range from 14 days to 25 weeks in duration. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Learners enjoy their course. They find the environment is a pleasant and welcoming place. Many learners are returning to education after a significant period of time. They value the support they get from tutors and support staff. Learners develop their confidence over time.

Learners on programmes in health and social care and security benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Learners' interaction with employers helps them to improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours within the sector. However, learners on courses in ESOL and customer service do not experience a well-planned and well-taught curriculum.

Learners do not receive sufficiently comprehensive careers advice and guidance to ensure that they understand the full range of options available to them for their next steps.

Learners do not have enough opportunities to develop their practical skills. For example, in customer service, learners are not supported sufficiently well to apply new theoretical knowledge of how to manage conflict and challenging situations in practice. As a result, in too many cases, learners are unable to recall what they have learned and can now do.

Learners feel safe. They know where to go to report any concerns they may have. However, in too many cases, learners do not understand the localised risks to their safety and what they mean for them in their wider lives.

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

Senior leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum they offer. They offer programmes to support learners who are low-skilled in the local communities of Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Senior leaders offer courses to meet skills and employment needs. For example, courses in security and stewarding support employment needs linked to the Commonwealth Games.

Senior leaders have positive relationships with employers and key stakeholders, such as the Jobcentre Plus. Senior leaders communicate regularly with key stakeholders to reassure themselves that the curriculum that they offer is responsive to local employment needs.

In some areas, senior leaders and tutors ensure that learners benefit from a well-planned curriculum. For example, in health and social care, tutors support learners well to develop their understanding of safeguarding and care legislation, before moving on to how learners apply this to provide high-quality care to their clients. However, in too many cases, for example in customer service, the curriculum is not well planned.

Tutors teaching courses in health and social care and security have planned the curriculum carefully. They provide frequent opportunities for learners to revisit and recall their learning. As a result, learners develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, in areas such as ESOL and customer service, tutors teach topics in isolation. They do not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to revisit key topics. As a result, learners do not develop fluency in their skills and knowledge.

Tutors do not systematically use the information they have on what learners already know and can do to plan learning. For example, in customer service, too many learners who already have experience of working in this sector area are not supported well enough to develop new, more complex knowledge, skills and behaviours.

In too many cases, tutors do not support learners to apply theory in practice. For example, learners accessing courses in customer service do not benefit from any practical opportunities to apply new knowledge they have gained to dealing with customer complaints. As a result, too often learners are unable to recall what they now know and can do. In areas such as security, tutors routinely support learners to apply theory to practice. For example, tutors develop learners' understanding of physical intervention before applying this to practice. Where this is the case, learners develop fluency in their practical skills over time.

Too few learners receive well-thought-through assessment that helps them to understand gaps in their knowledge. Tutors focus their assessment at the end of units and topics to check what learners know, before immediately moving on to a new topic. Tutors do not use the result of such assessment to plan learning well enough to close any gaps in knowledge before moving on to new topics. As a result, learners do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Tutors have strong subject knowledge and extensive current experience of working in the sectors in which they teach. In areas such as health and social care and security, tutors use this knowledge to share new topics and content to learners clearly. Tutors use 'real-life' examples well in their teaching. Consequently, learners develop new, long-term understanding of current industry practices. However, in other areas, such as customer service and ESOL, tutors do not use their subject knowledge well enough to link new learning to learners' already established knowledge and skills. Tutors do not make sure learners understand new topics sufficiently well before moving on.

The vast majority of learners achieve their qualifications. Many learners, particularly in health and social care and security, move into employment as a result of their course. However, in areas such as customer service and ESOL, learners do not develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They do not make rapid progress from their starting points.

Learners develop positive attitudes towards their learning. They are motivated and want to achieve. Tutors support learners to develop their confidence over time.

Tutors praise and encourage learners, which further helps to motivate them. Learners' attendance is high.

Leaders and tutors ensure that learners undertaking courses in health and social care and security experience a broad curriculum. For example, learners in health and social care attend local events and exhibitions. Learners develop their understanding of current practices within this sector as a result. Learners in security benefit from additional, useful qualifications, such as first aid. This helps prepare learners well for their next steps.

In most cases, tutors help develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity. In ESOL, learners improve their understanding of different cultures and religious festivals. Tutors teach these topics sensitively.

Support staff and tutors understand well the career aims and aspirations of learners when they start their programme. The vast majority of learners want to move into employment after their course has finished. However, too many learners do not understand sufficiently well the full range of employment opportunities within the sector they are studying. Too many learners do not know the steps they need to take to achieve their career aspirations.

Senior leaders' approach to quality improvement is not sufficiently thorough. Senior leaders have in place a process of teaching observations. However, this process focuses too narrowly on the progress learners make in one lesson, as opposed to the progress learners make over time in developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, leaders do not always have an accurate view as to the quality of teaching that learners experience.

Senior leaders support tutors to access continued training and development in key areas such as safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and equality and diversity. However, senior leaders do not support tutors to complete targeted training to help improve their craft of teaching in order that learners on all courses experience a well-planned and well-taught curriculum.

Senior leaders, who recently bought the business, have taken steps to establish governance arrangements. Governors have provided some useful challenge to senior leaders to support improvements, such as improving the range of information that senior leaders use to inform judgements on the quality of teaching. However, senior leaders do not yet make sure that governors receive a wide enough range of information to enable them to challenge senior leaders as much as they could. For example, governors do not receive sufficient information on the arrangements for safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders have in place an appropriately trained designated safeguarding lead. There is a clear process for the reporting of any safeguarding concerns. Where any safeguarding concerns have been raised, these have been dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. Those responsible for safeguarding make referrals to external agencies where necessary. Staff benefit from regular training and updates in safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and sexual abuse.

Senior leaders take sufficient steps to ensure that they recruit only staff who are safe to work with learners; however, the tracking of this information is not sufficiently robust. Those responsible for recruitment do not always have access to timely and accurate information. Leaders and tutors provide information to learners on how to keep themselves safe. However, learners have only a cursory understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Learners on courses in health and social care understand safe working practices clearly. They understand key legislation, such as 'duty of care', and know how to apply this to their work.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must take urgent and swift action to improve the quality of education that learners receive, particularly in the areas of ESOL and customer service. Leaders must ensure that learners experience a broad curriculum that enables them to develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Leaders must support staff to improve their craft of teaching, so that they support learners more effectively to know, remember and do more.
- Leaders and managers need to develop their approach to quality improvement. Leaders must ensure that they reassure themselves as to the progress learners are making over time and take swift action where progress is too slow.
- Leaders should take action to strengthen the systems they use to support the safer recruitment of staff. Leaders should formalise their approach to safer recruitment within a policy, so that all staff involved in recruitment adhere to the high expectations set by senior leaders.
- Leaders must support learners to develop better their understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders must improve the arrangements for governance. Leaders must ensure that they provide a wider range of information to governors, in order that governors can hold senior leaders to account.
- Leaders must improve the quality of careers advice and guidance provided to learners, so that all learners know the full range of options available to them for their next steps.

Provider details

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Website	www.geckoprogrammes.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Jasbir Behal
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.

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