

Inspection of Watertrain Limited

Inspection dates: 12 to 15 July 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	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Watertrain Limited (Watertrain) specialises in apprenticeships for the water industry. In July 2017, Watertrain started training apprentices, funded through the apprenticeship levy, for a large water company. Watertrain now works with several large employers based in Yorkshire, the North East, the West Midlands, the South West, the South East and the East of England. Currently, Watertrain has 128 apprentices, of which 13 are on the level 2 water network operative standard, and 115 are on the level 3 water process technician standard. Ten apprentices are aged 16 to 18.

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

Most apprentices develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours because tutors and learning development coaches (LDCs) provide challenging tasks for them.

Apprentices have an excellent understanding of the safety-critical nature of the water industry. They have a very good understanding of personal protection, such as wearing the correct personal and protective equipment. Apprentices know how to keep themselves and the public safe, for example how to minimise water borne diseases and pathogens. As a result, apprentices work safely and proficiently.

Apprentices are highly valued in the workplace and move on to more complex work as soon as they are competent. Employers are ambitious for what apprentices need to know and can do. Frequently, apprentices are promoted, for example to field service technicians as a result of the new skills and knowledge they have learned on their apprenticeship.

Apprentices have a very positive attitude to learning. They are excited to learn and see the benefit of the apprenticeship and how it helps with their career progression in the water treatment industry. Apprentices are respectful and courteous. They demonstrate high levels of professionalism with peers, tutors, LDCs, colleagues and customers.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear and successful rationale for providing apprenticeships that prepare apprentices for their next steps in the water industry. Leaders and managers work with a small number of specialist employers to provide a pipeline of skilled water network operative and water process technicians. Almost all apprentices move into full-time sustained employment. The majority of apprentices are promoted or gain additional responsibilities.

Leaders have planned a curriculum that effectively develops the skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices need in the different roles in the water industry. Leaders and managers adapt training programmes effectively in order to meet apprentices' and employers' needs. For example, tutors and LDCs teach the key mathematical and scientific principles at the start of the apprenticeship. This provides apprentices with important foundations for further learning, such as when they move on to learn about flow and heat transfer in water systems. As a result, most apprentices develop their knowledge and skills rapidly.

Tutors and LDCs plan teaching skilfully and use an effective range of techniques, including workplace scenarios and problem-solving tasks. For example, working collaboratively in teams, apprentices use the scenario of a road collapse caused by heavy traffic. Apprentices use search tables to determine the combination of pipe size, depth of

trench and safety factors to determine the correct stress loads for the installation of new pipework. Apprentices carry out tasks adeptly and to a high standard.

Leaders and managers rightly identify the need for improvements to the teaching of English and mathematics for those apprentices who need to gain these skills and pass English and mathematics examinations. A small minority of apprentices have exceeded the planned timescale on their apprenticeship because they have yet to pass their English and mathematics examinations. The majority of these apprentices are unsuccessful even after several attempts.

Tutors and LDCs check apprentices' learning frequently. They revisit new knowledge and skills to contextualise new learning and commit this to long-term memory. Tutors and LDCs develop and deepen apprentices' learning by gradually increasing the complexity of topics. Consequently, most apprentices make good progress because they have a secure understanding of each topic before they are taught new ones.

A few level 3 water process technician apprentices have previous knowledge and experience of the water industry. Tutors and LDCs do not challenge these apprentices well enough to extend their knowledge and skills. As a result, these apprentices do not always make swift enough or sufficient progress.

Apprentices benefit from a rich variety of personal development opportunities. For example, apprentices plant trees in steep valleys to slow the water flow in flood prone areas. A few apprentices are involved in conservation projects in their communities, such as working with the public to provide intelligent water butts to catch rainwater for watering gardens. Consequently, apprentices have a heightened awareness of the effects of global warming on the environment and the importance of water conservation.

The setting of targets by tutors and LDCs for and with apprentices and employers are focused on the submission of assignments. Targets are not always specific enough to ensure that apprentices know how to develop further their skills or what they need to do to achieve distinction grades, for example in the examination elements of their final assessments. As a result, only a few apprentices receive distinction grades in their final assessments.

Apprentices benefit from a curriculum that provides them with additional skills that complement their apprenticeship training effectively, makes apprentices more employable and benefits their employers. For example, apprentices complete a range of courses, including jetting training, working at height, street work qualifications and driving courses.

Most apprentices receive useful career guidance and are aware of career opportunities in water industry operations.

Board members have suitable experience and expertise in the further education sector. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and the challenges leaders and managers faced following the previous monitoring visit. They receive detailed monthly reports to challenge leaders and managers and hold them to

account for their actions. For example, the apprentices' progress review process was judged to be making insufficient progress at the previous monitoring visit. As a result, the 'on-boarding' process for apprentices was reviewed by leaders and board members and new processes implemented. As a result, employers are now contractually obliged to attend apprentices' reviews.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers foster a culture of safeguarding and protection. Leaders have put in place appropriate policies and processes to ensure that staff know how to keep apprentices safe. Checks during recruitment ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices. Apprentices feel safe.

Leaders ensure national safeguarding issues are shared appropriately with staff and apprentices. Apprentices benefit from safeguarding training on topics such as gambling, knife crime and sexual harassment.

Minor administrative errors in safeguarding documentation were rectified during the inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers need to make sure that the teaching of English and mathematics is introduced early in the apprenticeship so that apprentices develop their skills quickly, are well prepared to sit their English and mathematics examinations and pass on the first attempt.
- Tutors and LDCs need to ensure that targets set for and with apprentices and their employers are specific and based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop further so that apprentices know what they need to do to achieve distinction grades in their final assessments.
- Tutors should ensure that apprentices identified as having previous knowledge and experience of the water industry are challenged to extend further their knowledge and skills to make swift progress and reach their full potential.

Provider details

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Website	www.watertrain.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Keri Davies
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	14 to 16 January 2019

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality assurance and compliance 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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