

# Inspection of Gem Partnership Limited

Inspection dates:

12 to 14 July 2022

**Overall effectiveness****Good**

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**

Gem Partnership Limited is a recruitment agency based in Peterlee. In 2017, the directors introduced Gem Training Limited to the group, which has held a contract for the delivery of apprenticeships to levy-paying employers since January 2018. Currently, 46 apprentices are on standards-based programmes and one apprentice is on a level 2 business administration framework. Of those apprentices on standards-based programmes, 13 are enrolled on level 3 team leading, nine on level 4 business administration, six on level 2 lean manufacturing, and 18 on business administration, customer service, improvement practitioner, warehouse supply chain or leadership and management programmes at levels 2 to level 5. Most apprentices are adults.

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

Apprentices enjoy their learning and benefit from calm and welcoming learning environments. They talk positively about their learning experiences and value the culture of respect that leaders and staff promote. Apprentices are engaged and motivated, and they display positive attitudes to their learning. They work quietly and focus on the activities at hand, displaying respect towards each other and their trainers.

Apprentices welcome the opportunities that they have to learn substantial new skills which help them to progress in their workplace. For example, business administration apprentices have opportunities to try different job roles to gain extra skills and experience, such as in recruitment and payroll. Level 3 team leading apprentices model the leadership attributes that they learn about, such as being calm and professional, which improves their relationships with colleagues.

Apprentices learn how to be more responsible citizens who contribute positively to society. Level 3 business administration apprentices organise successful charitable challenges in their workplace, such as a 'marathon in a month step challenge'.

Managers and trainers do not routinely provide apprentices with impartial careers advice and guidance. Too many apprentices have to seek out information about employment opportunities independently and without support.

Apprentices' attendance is too low on a few programmes, in particular team leading. While leaders and managers identify and take appropriate actions to follow up poor attendance, such as providing additional sessions when seasonal production issues prevent attendance, a few apprentices fall behind with their studies and make slower progress than their peers.

Apprentices feel safe. They receive useful and helpful information about safeguarding. They appreciate the useful safeguarding card that they are given with details of how to contact safeguarding leads and external organisations should they have concerns about issues relating to domestic violence, mental health, sexual harassment and extremist activity.

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

Leaders and managers have a clear vision to provide a range of apprenticeships relevant to local and regional priorities. They work closely with the North East and the Tees Valley local enterprise partnerships to identify job opportunities and skills gaps in the region.

Leaders and managers have successfully developed programmes with employers that are ambitious, particularly in manufacturing and production. As a result, apprentices are recruited to roles in which they can develop substantial new

knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices gain permanent employment and are successful in their workplace. Staff who have worked at an organisation for a number of years are recruited to team leading apprenticeships in recognition of the fact that they are moving to a supervisory role, where they may have to lead between 30 and 50 staff. Employers value the training that apprentices receive and the pace at which they develop new knowledge and skills.

Trainers use information about apprentices' starting points well to plan and sequence learning in a logical order. This enables apprentices, from the start of their programme, to learn and understand the key knowledge and skills that they need to be effective in their job roles. For example, apprentices on the level 2 lean manufacturing programme complete a skills scan that helps them to identify their weaknesses and areas where they have little or no knowledge about their organisation. Trainers then sequence modules so that apprentices learn about their organisation and the key operating procedures, and they deliver training on these aspects first.

Trainers successfully plan individualised learning programmes for apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. They relate English and mathematics skills and knowledge effectively to apprentices' vocational training. Apprentices make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills.

Trainers provide good support for apprentices with additional learning needs to reduce barriers to learning. They successfully use adaptations, such as providing overlays for apprentices with dyslexia, and break down information into smaller components so that apprentices can focus more easily. Apprentices with additional learning needs make similar progress to their peers.

Trainers and tutors are well qualified in their subject areas. They use their knowledge and expertise to explain concepts well. They help apprentices recall key aspects of their learning through repetition and revisiting of information, which they carefully link to apprentices' job roles. They skilfully ask questions to check learning and understanding so that apprentices successfully link experiences in their workplace to the taught content. For example, apprentices can talk knowledgeably about how the rule of law applies to following data protection regulation rules when recording documents. Apprentices on the level 3 business administration programme confidently discuss the process and policies that they work with to ensure people are eligible to work in the United Kingdom.

Trainers set high expectations for the quality of the work that apprentices present, and they check apprentices' understanding well. They carefully identify and correct apprentices' errors and misunderstandings. As a result, most apprentices improve their work to at least the expected standard, and their technical drawing skills, where applicable, are neat and clearly set out. However, trainers do not consistently set and review high-quality targets with apprentices to enable them to develop specific knowledge and skills in between training sessions.

Trainers prepare apprentices well for their end-point assessments by covering all possible scenarios for professional discussion and visual assessment. As a result, most apprentices achieve high grades. The few apprentices who are behind are well supported by trainers and are swiftly catching up.

Trainers work with apprentices and employers to agree projects that add value to the workplace, such as improving understanding of diversity and being tolerant of difference. Apprentices on the level 2 lean manufacturing operative apprenticeship select project themes that enhance the culture of the workplace, including identifying the needs of colleagues who have religious faith requirements, such as needing time to pray. As a result, apprentices' knowledge and understanding of British values increase, and they are better prepared for operating inclusively at work.

Leaders, managers and trainers provide apprentices with topical information about staying healthy and how to have a healthy lifestyle. Apprentices discuss this information in reviews with their trainers. Apprentices also learn about how to keep themselves and others safe and are provided with useful information about domestic violence and sexual abuse. They value the information that they receive.

Leaders and managers have a clear and effective oversight of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of education. They have rigorous quality assurance procedures in place, and they support trainers well to develop their subject knowledge through frequent industry updating. However, there is limited training and development to enable trainers and tutors to develop their teaching practice further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have appropriate and sensible safeguarding policies and procedures which help to keep apprentices safe. Senior leaders receive useful safeguarding reports, so they fully understand the actions that middle managers take to make sure that apprentices are safe. Leaders follow safe recruitment practices to ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices.

Safeguarding leads are suitably qualified and experienced in dealing with safeguarding concerns. Leaders, staff and apprentices take turns to write monthly 'hot topics' which are shared with everyone, including employers.

Apprentices know who to contact if they have concerns and are confident that appropriate actions will be taken. Trainers teach apprentices about legislation to protect people from risks such as modern slavery. Apprentices who work in the recruitment industry understand their responsibilities in protecting candidates from the risks of human trafficking.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that apprentices receive impartial careers advice and guidance beyond the progression opportunities in their current workplace so that they understand the wider employment options available to them.
- Ensure that trainers and tutors set consistently high expectations for attendance so that all apprentices benefit fully from the curriculum and make good progress.
- Ensure that trainers set and review high-quality targets so that apprentices know how to develop specific knowledge and skills in between their training sessions.
- Ensure that trainers' and tutors' professional development is aligned to their individual needs so that they are more able to improve teaching practice.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2510897
<b>Address</b>	2 Cook Way North West Industrial Estate Peterlee County Durham SR8 2HY
<b>Contact number</b>	0191 5872999
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.gempartnership.com/">https://www.gempartnership.com/</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Rob Dunbar
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous new provider monitoring 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

Philippa Firth, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Chloe Rendall

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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