

Inspection of Avant Partnership Limited

Inspection dates: 17 to 20 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Education programmes for young people	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Avant Partnership Limited is an independent learning provider based in Grimsby. At the time of the inspection, there were 164 apprenticeships on programmes, including level 3 business administration, level 2 hair professional, level 2 team leading, level 2 carpentry and joinery, level 2 bricklaying and level 2 plastering. In addition, there were 70 young learners enrolled on traineeships, of whom 50 were studying courses in construction trades and 20 studying hairdressing. Avant Partnership Limited works with one subcontractor, Orchard Training and Education Limited, based in Hull. All trainees and apprentices studying construction trades receive their training at the subcontractor.

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

Leaders do not have effective arrangements in place to ensure that all apprentices and trainees are safe when at the training provider, in their workplaces and on work experience placements. Although apprentices and trainees report that they feel safe, this is due to the support provided by tutors and not as a result of stringent or well-managed processes. Inspectors found an instance where an individual was at serious risk and leaders had not taken appropriate action.

Apprentices and trainees benefit from extensive opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and behaviours beyond the planned curriculum. For example, they undertake additional training in relation to their job roles, including courses in first aid, mental health awareness, data protection and specialist software.

Apprentices and trainees are polite and respectful in learning sessions, and they work well with their peers. They respond positively to work set by tutors and apply themselves with focus when completing activities. For example, plastering apprentices share their knowledge and expertise of working in different settings and provide examples to their peers of best practice in their workplace.

Most apprentices and trainees attend well and are punctual. They understand that by demonstrating good timekeeping and attendance, they are more likely to succeed at work.

Staff select and work with employers who they know will support and nurture apprentices and trainees. They facilitate work experience placements for trainees by identifying which employer would suit them best. As a result, trainees enjoy and benefit from their work placements and work well with team members in supportive environments.

Tutors create an inclusive learning environment in which differences are respected and equality of opportunity is promoted. Construction apprentices understand when 'banter' might cross the line and can explain how they would address inappropriate behaviour. For example, they understand that if colleagues on a building site 'wolf whistle' at people passing by, this is not acceptable, and they would report it to a supervisor.

Apprentices and trainees are supported by their tutors to develop their confidence, character and resilience, which ensures that they are well prepared for employment and their work placements. For example, tutors encourage business administration apprentices to discuss their job roles with their employers, to put themselves forward to take on new responsibilities, and to find out about progression opportunities.

Tutors have high expectations of apprentices and trainees to live healthy lifestyles and take care of their mental health. They teach them about the dangers of substance and alcohol misuse and how this can lead to injury and accidents on construction sites.

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

Leaders do not have in place suitably rigorous arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision or the progress of apprentices and trainees at the subcontractor, which delivers two thirds of the provision. They have recently put in place revised arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision at the subcontractor. However, these arrangements are not stringent enough to provide robust assurance. A quality assurance team effectively monitors the quality of the directly delivered provision, using a range of appropriate checks.

Leaders and managers provide training that meets the skills needs of the areas that they serve. For example, they have identified a need for hairdressers in Hull and Grimsby and for construction workers in Hull. Leaders target their training at the most disadvantaged people in the local area to enable them to move rapidly into apprenticeships and jobs. However, leaders have not been swift enough to provide a hairdressing training salon in Hull. The lack of a training salon is a barrier for teaching practical activities in hairdressing. As a consequence, a few apprentices on hairdressing courses are not making the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders recruit staff who have extensive technical knowledge and expertise. They ensure that staff are sufficiently qualified to carry out their role. All staff complete mandatory training on topics that include safeguarding, the risks of sexual abuse and preventing radicalisation. Staff also participate in training related to their specific sectors. For example, hairdressing tutors have been trained in current and relevant colour processes.

Tutors design and sequence the content of programmes well to ensure that apprentices and trainees develop key knowledge, skills and behaviours. They carefully link topics so that apprentices and trainees understand theoretical concepts before moving on to practical tasks. For example, plastering apprentices demonstrate an ability to work safely, to measure effectively and to understand tools and equipment before applying their knowledge and skills in the workshop.

Tutors provide many opportunities for apprentices and trainees to consolidate their learning through repeated practice that supports them to develop their practical skills. They plan opportunities for apprentices and trainees to practise their skills in training and at work. For example, hairdressing apprentices become increasingly competent in applying their knowledge and using their skills in the role of a professional hairdresser. Apprentices talk knowledgeably about underpinning theory, such as that relating to the skin and strand tests that they need to conduct prior to and during the colouring of their clients' hair.

Apprentices successfully develop new vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours, and they make useful contributions to their workplace. Employers are positive about how quickly apprentices develop new skills and knowledge and apply them at work. They comment on the value that apprentices are adding to their business. For

example, apprentices in a social enterprise company take on new roles, leading in areas such as social media, marketing and data protection.

Most trainees make good progress during their traineeships. They acquire the basic skills and knowledge that they need to be able to undertake work experience placements with confidence and aptitude. As a result, a significant proportion progress to an apprenticeship after a few weeks on placement. Employers value the fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviours that former trainees bring with them as they commence their apprenticeship. They state that former trainees are ready for employment and prepared for the demands of an apprenticeship.

Tutors prepare apprentices and trainees appropriately for external examinations. They provide opportunities to practise examination questions and become familiar with examination techniques, such as working within a limited time. As a result, apprentices and trainees feel confident when taking examinations, and most go on to pass first time. Most construction apprentices are successful at their end-point assessment and gain their construction skills certification scheme cards.

Apprentices receive useful careers advice and guidance that helps them to plan their next steps. Most continue to work for their employer on completion of the apprenticeship. Staff provide most trainees with helpful information about progression to an apprenticeship. However, in a few instances, staff at the subcontractor do not provide further information to support trainees to reach their aspirational goals beyond an apprenticeship, such as self-employment.

Tutors provide appropriate support to apprentices and trainees with additional learning needs. They consider how to help the individual and what adjustments need to be made. For example, apprentices with dyslexia have access to a reader and are provided with extra training sessions, which help them to perform well in examinations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders do not promote an effective culture of safeguarding. They do not have effective arrangements in place to ensure that all apprentices and trainees are safe. Designated safeguarding staff do not carry out their roles with sufficient rigour. In addition, poor communication between leaders and staff has meant that there is insufficient monitoring of the management of safeguarding concerns.

In response to the recent Ofsted safeguarding monitoring visit, leaders have ensured that staff at the subcontractor have taken the necessary steps to ensure the health, safety and well-being of their apprentices and trainees. Staff at the subcontractor have high expectations of construction apprentices and trainees to come prepared to workshop sessions with personal protective equipment.

Leaders and managers recruit people who are safe to work with young people and vulnerable adults. They use effective recruitment strategies, such as Disclosure and Barring Service checks and taking references from previous employers.

Staff ensure that apprentices understand the risks associated with their workplace. Employers in high-risk environments, such as a chemical manufacturing company, ensure that apprentices are involved in all aspects of health and safety, including induction and training, risk assessments, regular briefings and reviews of any incidents.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and that all apprentices and trainees are safe.
- Monitor the provision at the subcontractor and ensure that the quality of the provision is maintained at all times.
- Ensure that practical facilities for hairdressing are provided in the Hull area.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58550
Address	Pearl Assurance House George Street Grimsby DN31 1HB
Contact number	01472 426624
Website	www.avant.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Steve Roe
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 April 2016
Main subcontractor	Orchard Training and Education Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive, 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

Glenise Burrell, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Lonsdale	His Majesty's Inspector
Philippa Firth	His Majesty's Inspector
Chloe Rendall	His Majesty's Inspector
Anne Tyrell	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022