

Inspection of Wildes Education

Inspection dates: 13 to 16 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Wildes Education was awarded an apprenticeship contract in January 2018, having previously worked as a subcontractor for other providers. It currently trains just under 200 apprentices across a range of subjects, most notably in adult care, hospitality and catering, hairdressing and administration. Apprentices are mostly located in the Midlands and South Yorkshire, although a small number are spread throughout the country. Training is given through a combination of face-to-face and online sessions.

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

The vast majority of apprentices enjoy their experiences and are satisfied with the limited amount of training that they receive. They are very happy with the care and support that they receive from skills development coaches (SDCs), who they say communicate well and give help when they need it.

Apprentices develop their knowledge and skills mostly because of their experiences in the workplace rather than through the training that they receive. However, many make slow progress and the quality of work that they produce is often not good enough. As a result, they are not always well prepared for their next steps.

Managers and SDCs do not work well enough with employers. As a result, courses do not always focus on the specific knowledge and skills that apprentices need for their roles. Employers often fail to participate in reviews of their apprentices' progress, and as a result, they are not able to provide the right opportunities for apprentices to practise their skills.

Staff support apprentices to develop their confidence and resilience. Apprentices can join online sessions that provide useful information about maintaining their mental well-being, and SDCs discuss relevant topics during review meetings.

Apprentices receive appropriate guidance on safeguarding, including themes related to radicalisation and extremism. They feel safe and know to whom they can report concerns.

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

Apprentices do not receive enough well-planned training. SDCs spend too little time with apprentices, and they do not plan what apprentices will do between training sessions. As a result, apprentices learn mostly through their own research. The lack of tuition contributes to the slow progress of many.

Too many apprentices do not receive enough time at work to complete their studies. As a result, they study in their own time, balancing their personal commitments with the completion of their apprenticeship. This makes it difficult for apprentices to complete their apprenticeship as quickly as they ought to.

Staff do not take sufficient account of employers' requirements when planning courses. Although staff select appropriate apprenticeship standards that broadly meet the needs of the sectors they work in, they do not identify the wider range of skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices need for their own jobs. As a result, courses do not fully prepare apprentices for their roles.

SDCs do not involve employers sufficiently in the training process. Employers are often not involved in their apprentices' progress reviews or in conversations to coordinate on-the-job activity with off-the-job learning. As a result, apprentices do

not have enough opportunities to practise in the workplace the things that they study.

Most apprentices make slower than expected progress, and a minority of current apprentices are well behind schedule. Most apprentices produce work of the required standard, but a very small number of apprentices produce written work that is too brief to demonstrate the required level of knowledge.

SDCs are suitably qualified and have relevant occupational experience. During the limited time that they spend with apprentices, they use their expertise well to provide clear explanations that they illustrate using real-world examples.

SDCs identify apprentices' additional learning needs and provide appropriate support where necessary. However, on occasion, managers and staff are too slow to provide this support and this makes studying more difficult for a few apprentices.

SDCs set clear expectations for apprentices' behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Most apprentices attend well, and when they do not, SDCs take action that often results in improvements. However, managers do not have any mechanism for monitoring attendance across all courses. As a result, they are unable to identify patterns of poor attendance or intervene effectively when problems arise.

SDCs include wider themes, such as British values and equality and diversity, in their teaching. Managers support them to do this through a monthly newsletter that contains a range of topics to promote discussions. They have added a series of short videos to their website that explain extremism and how and why different groups reject British values.

SDCs take time during initial advice and guidance and in taught sessions to help apprentices who are anxious about their learning to become more relaxed. During their courses, apprentices develop the confidence to do things in their jobs that they could not do before, such as dealing with challenging customers.

Staff help apprentices to maintain their physical and mental well-being. Managers have introduced a series of online sessions that help apprentices with a variety of issues. Skills coaches take care to ask apprentices about their well-being when they visit them and discuss with them a range of relevant topics. However, although apprentices receive useful guidance on sexual consent, staff do not provide them with any other guidance on healthy relationships.

Managers do not provide apprentices with a structured careers education programme. Staff provide initial advice and guidance when apprentices enrol and SDCs provide some careers guidance. However, apprentices do not have access to specialist, impartial careers guidance and there are no opportunities for them to benefit from contact with employers other than their own. As a result, apprentices are often only aware of the opportunities available to them with their existing employer.

The recently appointed senior managers are ambitious and have high expectations of the quality of education. However, they have inherited provision that suffers from several significant weaknesses. They have discussed these weaknesses with staff and have identified a range of sensible areas for development. However, their actions have not yet led to sufficient improvement. In some cases, for example when drawing up off-the-job training plans, the work they have done is not good enough and this means that SDCs still do not provide enough high-quality training.

Managers have increased the amount of training available for staff to help them to develop their subject and teaching skills. However, the impact of this is mixed. Staff benefit from useful subject updating and training in how to discuss challenging topics with apprentices. However, training designed to improve teaching skills is less well developed.

Leaders and managers have implemented a range of suitable quality assurance processes, but the impact of these has been limited. Observations of lessons provide useful information, but the resulting action plans focus too much on processes and compliance, and not enough on teaching. Systems to ensure that staff complete improvement actions are not clear. Managers use deep dives to evaluate broader themes, but there has been little impact from the actions arising from these reviews.

There is no clear separation between management and governance, and this means that leaders do not benefit from impartial scrutiny and advice. Senior leadership meetings, which incorporate input from the owner of the business, do not focus enough on the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers have developed appropriate policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, staff conduct, and health and safety. These are understood by staff and consistently applied. There are clear procedures that managers follow when recruiting staff. All staff are subject to appropriate pre-employment checks, although a few employment references miss some minor details. Staff undertake appropriate training when they join the company, and this is updated on a frequent basis. They report safeguarding concerns diligently, and the designated safeguarding lead and deputy ensure that these are dealt with appropriately and that clear records are kept.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should work with staff to revise training plans so that they identify the precise skills and knowledge that apprentices should learn and the standards of performance that they should achieve. Leaders should ensure that all courses include a suitable amount of well-planned training activity.

- Leaders and managers should work with employers and apprentices to ensure that all parties understand apprentices' entitlement to time during working hours for completion of off-the-job training so that apprentices have enough time to study while at work.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that employers participate fully in apprentices' progress reviews and work with SDCs to plan on-the-job activity that complements off-the-job training.
- Leaders and managers should develop systems for recording apprentices' attendance at training sessions so that they can monitor this and intervene appropriately when problems arise.
- Leaders and managers should devise a well-structured careers education programme for apprentices.
- Leaders and managers should improve arrangements for SDCs to develop their teaching expertise. These arrangements should include appropriate processes to ensure that SDCs complete post-observation actions.
- Leaders and managers should establish suitable arrangements for governance that allow for a clear separation between managers and board members so that board members can provide a greater degree of impartial support and challenge to managers. Board meetings should have a clear focus on the quality of education.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 1280337 |
| Address | Worksop Road Clowne Chesterfield S43 4TD |
| Contact number | 01142 288588 |
| Website | www.wildeseducation.co.uk |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Paul Wildes |
| Provider type | Independent learning provider |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Main subcontractors | Not applicable |

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 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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