

Inspection of Chartered Institution of Railway Operators

Inspection dates: 17 to 20 January 2023

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	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Chartered Institution of Railway Operators (CIRO) is an independent learning provider based in Stafford. At the time of the visit, there were 288 apprentices, all of which were on standards. Of these, 105 were on the level 5 operations or departmental manager, 92 were on the level 4 passenger transport operations manager and 71 were on the level 3 team leader or supervisor apprenticeship.

CIRO work with two sub-contractors to provide functional skills in English and mathematics.

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

Apprentices are highly motivated and take pride in their work. They quickly develop high levels of self-confidence. They are able to self-reflect and become more self-assured, taking on new responsibilities at work.

Apprentices quickly develop the skills and professional behaviours they need to be successful at work. They adapt their behaviours when presented with challenges and when meeting new colleagues across their business. As a result, they become highly effective and confident managers.

Leaders support apprentices to improve their career networks within the rail industry. Through membership of the CIRO, apprentices make long-lasting connections with industry colleagues. They attend events that enrich their personal development within the industry, such as networking events and access to professional mentors in the rail industry.

Apprentices are taught aspects of equality and diversity which are integrated into their theory sessions. However, these are not sufficiently revisited with apprentices throughout their apprenticeship. Consequently, not all apprentices develop their understanding of matters related to equality and diversity well enough, such as disability and LGBT+.

Teachers and coaches provide prospective apprentices with good-quality advice and guidance about the demands and expectations of the apprenticeship, and as a result, few apprentices leave their apprenticeship early.

Apprentices feel safe. They have a well-developed understanding of health and safety and closely follow industry-specific safe working practices within the rail industry. They know how to keep themselves and rail passengers safe.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious strategy for their apprenticeship programmes to ensure that they meet the identified regional and national skills shortages. Leaders, in collaboration with railway employers, have developed a curriculum that is designed to both extend the vocational and technical skills of current employees and support the upskilling of new entrants into the industry.

Leaders work closely with employers to ensure that they fully engage in the apprenticeship. This includes an employer induction, careful monitoring of their engagement in progress reviews and intervening, where necessary, to ensure that apprentices are supported to practise and further develop their skills at work.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the progress that apprentices make on their apprenticeship. They closely monitor apprentices who are falling behind and quickly

implement support to help them catch up. As a result, most apprentices achieve their apprenticeship on time.

The recently refreshed advisory board is effective. The board includes members with significant experience in the railway industry. They review and discuss reports generated by the operational teams, providing scrutiny and support to managers.

Leaders do not have a sufficient oversight of subcontracting arrangements. Although they completed due diligence at the start of contracts with prospective subcontractors, there is no formal process for the continued quality assurance of the quality of education that subcontractors provide to apprentices. Leaders have recently implemented new systems to improve the monitoring of subcontractors, and there is an early indication that these are starting to bring about improvements. However, it is too early to see the impact of these measures, and too many apprentices are still not progressing quickly enough with their functional skills qualifications.

Managers ensure that the planning of learning is organised in a logical sequence with particular emphasis on developing and extending apprentices' operational, analytical and problem-solving skills. Leaders work closely with employers to tailor programmes to meet individual employer needs. As a result, most apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours which allow them to make a positive contribution at work from early on in their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices learn the importance of human dynamic factors related to embedding a safety-first culture when planning and delivering railway operations.

Teachers and coaches assess apprentices' vocational starting points effectively, through a range of approaches, to plan an ambitious curriculum. Apprentices' line managers contribute to these assessments, and in collaboration with training staff, they closely monitor the ongoing development and embedding of key behaviours such as 'agility, inclusivity, professionalism and responsibility' in apprentices' day-to-day practice.

Apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their apprenticeship. They are proud of their work and talk with confidence about what they have learned and how it is improving their effectiveness in the workplace through the application of managerial techniques gained as a result of the programme. For example, apprentices on the levels 3, 4 and 5 apprenticeships use the knowledge and skills they have learned successfully to lead and motivate their teams on issues related to compliance, safety and risk management.

Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced in the areas that they teach. They use their extensive industry experience and vocational knowledge well to relate theory to practice. As a result, apprentices' training reflects current practices in the railway industry.

Apprentices benefit from timely access to a wide range of industry-specific learning resources to support their learning. This includes an extensive suite of online master

classes, coaching materials, and technical guides relating to the operational regulations applicable to the rail industry. As a result, apprentices are able to maintain participation and progress against their learning and development targets while managing challenging operational workloads.

Apprentices receive their entitlement to time away from the workplace to complete their studies, engaging in well-planned learning activities. Employers contribute to apprentices' skill development through on-the-job training, such as personal track safety and onboard train evaluation techniques. Where apprentices are line managers, they undertake specific training relating to how to conduct appraisals or lead disciplinary related investigations.

Targets set by teachers and coaches predominately focus on the completion of units by specific dates rather than on the wider development of apprentices' skills and knowledge. Similarly, while teachers' feedback to apprentices on written work is detailed and developmental, it is not always aligned with aspirational targets set out in apprentices initial training plan. As a result, most-able and experienced apprentices are not challenged to extend their learning and accelerate the progress of which they are capable.

Leaders do not ensure that all apprentices develop and extend their English and mathematical skills. Teachers use initial assessment to identify apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics accurately. However, this information is not routinely used to improve apprentices skills in these subjects.

Apprentices are suitably prepared for end-point assessment, and the proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeship and sustain employment is high. However, for the few apprentices who need to complete functional skills as part of their course, too few successfully achieve at the first attempt.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is appropriately qualified and has put in place appropriate policies and procedures for the reporting of safeguarding concerns. They are knowledgeable about how to refer to external agencies and employers where there are concerns relating to terrorism and radicalisation.

Leaders ensure that all staff who may have contact with adult learners and apprentices receive appropriate recruitment checks and maintain up-to-date records of all employees. The DSL ensures that all staff have regular refresher training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

The DSL gathers information from a range of sources and uses this to map additional learning into the curriculum to support apprentices' understanding in these areas. Teachers effectively weave these topics into theory lessons, making strong links with the rail industry. As a result, apprentices have a good

understanding of the risks of extremist behaviour and radicalisation to the rail industry. However, apprentices are less well informed about the potential risks posed to them in the areas in which they live, such as risks posed by county lines and knife crime.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that teachers and coaches set challenging targets throughout the apprenticeship that align with those set out in the initial training plan, enabling apprentices to extend their learning and make progress at the rate at which they are capable.
- Leaders should ensure that they monitor the subcontracted provision carefully so that apprentices studying functional skills English and mathematics develop the relevant knowledge to achieve the qualification within the planned time.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices' understanding of life in modern Britain and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism are more widely developed throughout their apprenticeship, so that they can apply it beyond the workplace and into their daily lives.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539247
Address	Beacon Building 2nd Floor Stafford Enterprise Park West Weston Road Stafford ST18 0BF
Contact number	03333 440523
Website	www.ciro.org
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Fiona Tordoff
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Runway Training Total People

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships, 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

Sharon Dowling, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Beth Selwood	Ofsted Inspector
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