

Inspection of Venture Forward Limited

Inspection dates:

7 to 9 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Venture Forward Limited (Venture Forward) is a national independent learning provider that specialises in training and developing animal technicians in the biotechnology, academic and pharmaceutical industries.

Venture Forward offers two standards-based apprenticeships: level 2 animal care and welfare assistant and level 3 animal technologist. At the time of the inspection, 15 apprentices were studying at level 3 and seven at level 2. Five apprentices studying at level 2 were 16 to 18 years old.

Apprentices are geographically spread across England with a range of employers. Venture Forward conducts its business remotely using online platforms.

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

Apprentices value their apprenticeship and particularly the additional industry-specific qualifications they gain. This helps prepare them well for future careers in the industry. However, apprentices do not receive comprehensive careers guidance. Most are not aware of the range of options open to them when they complete their studies, and not all have secure employment at the end of their apprenticeship.

Apprentices are taught by tutors who too often lack the teaching skills required to teach online learning sessions well. Tutors do not check learners' understanding of the content they teach effectively. They do not use this time appropriately to check for misunderstandings or to develop apprentices' knowledge and skills.

Apprentices access a virtual learning environment which has comprehensive information and relevant up-to-date learning resources. They use these helpful resources to help them to complete assignments. Apprentices enjoy the flexibility that this offers them and have a positive attitude to learning. They develop their study skills and independence through the personalised guidance they receive from tutors.

Apprentices improve their research skills and confidence over time. They improve their knowledge of laws and regulations that affect their work with animals. However, a significant minority of apprentices do not gain substantial new technical skills, as they have been working in their roles for some time prior to starting an apprenticeship and are unclear about how studying the apprenticeship improves their performance at work.

Apprentices take part in frequent conversations with their tutors about the progress they are making in learning new knowledge and skills. However, too many employers are not routinely involved in these discussions. As a result, they have limited understanding of the progress their apprentices are making.

Apprentices are highly respectful to their peers and work colleagues. This is because tutors and employers have high expectations of their behaviour and conduct which reflects the highly regulated industry they work in. Apprentices work mainly in higher education institutions and public sector organisations where their employers have developed a culture of mutual respect and openness.

Most apprentices are taught about the potential risks from extremist groups. However, not all apprentices are aware of how to protect themselves from radicalisation.

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

Leaders have ensured that the education and training they provide meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.

Leaders have a clear intention for their apprentices to develop their knowledge and skills to become more effective animal technicians. They have designed the curriculum well to meet both local and national needs of this specialist industry. Leaders and tutors have extensive experience within the sector and high-level industry qualifications. They use their knowledge of the industry to work with employers to sequence the curriculum for individual apprentices effectively. For example, apprentices study biosecurity before they work in laboratory environments and learn about animal legislation before undertaking courses at work to gain a Home Office licence.

All staff share the inclusive ethos set by the provider. They provide apprentices from a wide variety of backgrounds with effective support which enables them to succeed in their studies. Tutors work closely with employers to support apprentices who are falling behind, including those with additional learning needs. Tutors know their apprentices well and provide individual support to apprentices. They are responsive when apprentices ask for additional help, including for welfare needs. They put suitable actions in place to support apprentices. For example, staff involve employer occupational health teams who help to make suitable adaptations for apprentices within the workplace.

Leaders do not evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their apprenticeships effectively. They lack the expertise needed to assess accurately the quality of teaching, training and assessment strategies used by staff. Consequently, apprentices' taught sessions are not sufficiently engaging or interactive and do not help apprentices to learn effectively. Therefore, apprentices take part in a large amount of self-study in order to understand better the curriculum content and learn new knowledge.

Employers are not involved sufficiently in reviewing the progress apprentices make in learning the content of the curriculum. Most are not aware of how well their apprentices are progressing or what they need to do to improve. As a result, employers cannot help apprentices to practise and develop further their learning through well-coordinated workplace training and coaching.

Tutors do not prepare apprentices early enough for their end-of-apprenticeship assessments. Too many apprentices and employers do not know what the assessments will involve, how to prepare, or what they need to do to gain higher and more aspirational grades. Consequently, although most apprentices do achieve their apprenticeship, they do not always reach their full potential.

Apprentices are supported well by their tutors to complete their apprenticeship work. Tutors provide apprentices with useful developmental feedback on written assignments. They provide clear areas for improvement, and apprentices develop their theoretical knowledge and literacy skills well over time. Apprentices use this knowledge, such as cell biology and genetics, to help them to understand the projects that they are involved in at work. Apprentices develop digital skills through using the virtual learning environment, but tutors do not plan for, or provide, opportunities for apprentices to develop further their mathematical skills.

Leaders do not focus well enough on providing apprentices with a broad and deep knowledge-based curriculum beyond the apprenticeship standard. As a result, apprentices do not benefit from studying a full and rich curriculum which considers their wider personal development. For example, apprentices do not have access to impartial careers advice and guidance and do not know where or how to find this information. In addition, they are not taught about wider aspects of life in modern Britain such as the dangers of being radicalised or wider safety risks within their local area.

Leaders do not benefit from governance arrangements which provide them with oversight, scrutiny and challenge. Leaders are aware of their statutory responsibilities, but there are no checks in place to ensure that these are being met. Leaders are not challenged effectively to make improvements rapidly. As a result, the majority of the areas for improvement identified at the previous monitoring visit still remain. For example, apprentices who require qualifications in English and mathematics are still not taught these skills in a timely way which has led to delays in them completing their apprenticeship.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

At the time of inspection, leaders updated their policies and procedures to reflect the statutory responsibilities for safeguarding the few apprentices who are aged 16 to 18. This included updating their safer recruitment policy. Leaders produced a risk assessment and action plan to help them undertake changes to further improve the safeguarding arrangements.

Most apprentices work in highly regulated environments that involve risks, such as bites, allergens and infection. They are aware of the risks and how to reduce them. For example, apprentices follow strict rules for the use of personal protective equipment, including appropriate respiratory equipment. Apprentices follow precise procedures to stay safe from infection. They understand the importance of this to keep themselves and others safe.

Tutors teach apprentices how to stay safe online and in their communities. For example, apprentices do not discuss their work outside of their workplaces and do not post information about their work on social media. They take appropriate safety measures when entering and leaving their workplaces. Apprentices know how, and to whom, to report any safeguarding concerns. They are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and take appropriate action.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the quality assurance and self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship with an increased focus on the quality of teaching, training and assessment and the content of the wider personal

development curriculum.

- Improve the quality of teaching that apprentices receive in their taught sessions and ensure that tutors check apprentices' understanding of content and support them to build their knowledge and skills over time.
- Ensure all employers take part in the meetings with apprentices and tutors to review the progress apprentices make in learning the curriculum and use the information to plan well-coordinated on- and off-the-job training for apprentices.
- Provide apprentices with impartial careers advice and guidance and support them to explore career options and plan for their next steps.
- Ensure that all apprentices are well prepared for their final assessments and ensure that apprentices who need to achieve qualifications in English and mathematics receive high-quality teaching so that they develop their knowledge and skills over time.
- Increase apprentices' understanding of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism and its relevance to their job roles and employment location.
- Ensure governance arrangements provide leaders with effective oversight and challenge so that they take appropriate actions and make rapid improvements to the quality of education and training.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539231
Address	5 School Road Hythe Southampton SO45 6BJ
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Website	elearning.venture4ward.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Brian Lowe
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

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

Lowenna Bradley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Alexander	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Hunter	Ofsted Inspector

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