

Inspection of Riverside Training Limited

Inspection dates:

7 to 10 March 2023

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	Good

Information about this provider

Riverside Training Limited is an independent learning provider based in Hereford. At the time of the inspection, there were 731 apprentices in learning, of which 62 were aged 16 to 18. Apprentices are employed at sites located across most regions in England.

The provider offers 27 standards-based apprenticeships across five subject sector areas from levels 2 to 7. Just over half of apprentices study towards a level 3 qualification across a range of vocational specialisms, including business administrator, dental nurse, human resources support, assistant accountant, teaching assistant and learning, and early years educator.

A very small minority of apprentices are on level 5 apprenticeships in coaching professional, leader in adult care, human resources consultant, learning and development consultant and operations/departmental manager. Most of the learning provided to apprentices is delivered online.

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

Apprentices enjoy their training, which is highly relevant to their job roles. Learning development coaches (coaches) provide stimulating learning activities that motivate apprentices to apply themselves fully and develop their higher-level vocational and thinking skills.

Most apprentices make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for employment in their chosen careers. They develop good vocational skills that enhance their effectiveness within their workplaces. Their work is of a high standard.

Apprentices develop very good personal, social and vocational skills during their training; they are courteous, respectful of each other and their coaches, and quickly become valuable assets to their employers' businesses.

Apprentices routinely demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning; they are highly motivated to learn and make progress in their chosen careers. Most apprentices are punctual and routinely attend planned learning sessions in line with their employers' expectations.

Too many apprentices are not supported well enough to develop and extend their English and mathematical skills beyond the requirements of their programme. As a result, they make slow progress in achieving these essential skills qualifications within the planned timescales.

Not all apprentices are provided with sufficient careers education, information, advice and guidance on the broad range of career opportunities available to them to help make informed decisions about their next steps.

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

Leaders and managers use local and national labour market intelligence effectively to inform the design of an ambitious curriculum and to plan their apprenticeship offer. They carefully select the vocational areas in which they specialise and make effective use of close links with employers to ensure that the curriculums reflect local, regional and national priorities well.

Managers and coaches work closely with employers to identify, plan and where necessary adapt the sequence of the curriculum content. Training staff ensure that key components of the apprenticeship standard are taught in a logical sequence and link closely to apprentices' job roles and career aspirations.

Managers and coaches ensure that employers and apprenticeship applicants are provided with clear information about the demands and requirements of apprenticeship courses. Leaders ensure that recruitment procedures are appropriately rigorous and that employers routinely provide apprentices with

sufficient time away from their job to complete off-the-job training activities within working hours. Leaders and managers ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet all the requirements of an apprenticeship.

Coaches skilfully use accurate information about apprentices' starting points in relation to their specific job roles, existing knowledge, skills and work-related behaviours to develop ambitious and demanding training plans. Managers and coaches ensure that apprentices identified as in need of additional support receive individual tuition to help them cope with the rigour and demands of their apprenticeship.

Coaches do not consistently use results from initial assessment of English and mathematics well enough to plan and set challenging developmental targets that help apprentices extend their understanding and confidence in these essential skills. As a result, too many apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable in extending their literacy and numeracy competencies or achieve their English and mathematics qualifications on time.

Coaches plan and organise appropriately challenging learning activities that link theory with practice effectively. They set clear expectations related to apprentices' participation and engagement at online training sessions. Peer support is commonplace and enables apprentices to develop their independence and research skills well and to make good progress relevant to their job role. For example, level 3 team leading apprentices develop the techniques that enable them to set measurable targets for their teams. They reflect on and adapt their own leadership styles to allow them to be more effective in the workplace.

Apprentices value the sector-specific examples that coaches use to explain key learning concepts. They develop high levels of self-confidence and become more self-assured in their vocational skills and knowledge. Their work reflects well the level of the course and the standards expected in their industry. For example, level 3 dental care apprentices extend their vocational insight regarding dental anatomy and the importance of promoting good oral hygiene to patients to minimise plaque and tooth decay.

Coaches accurately assess and regularly check apprentices' understanding of essential learning taught through rigorous questioning and regular checking of what they have learned. Where necessary, they adjust their teaching methods appropriately to rectify any misconceptions in apprentices' understanding. For example, on the level 2 customer service practitioner apprenticeship, coaches carefully explain to apprentices the differences between public and private data and the importance of compliance with the Data Protection Act when dealing with customers' personal information.

Apprentices are well motivated, enjoy their learning and the large majority make good progress in their vocational learning. For example, level 3 early years educator apprentices organise appropriate development activities for children which meet

their individual needs and are confident in talking to parents and carers about their child's development.

Coaches assess apprentices' assignments thoroughly. They provide detailed and helpful feedback to apprentices, so they know what they have done correctly and what they need to do to improve. Most apprentices produce work of a good standard. Where apprentices struggle with subject-specific content, coaches provide additional support to help them develop a better understanding of key concepts or methodologies, enabling them to catch up with their learning.

Coaches do not always tell apprentices early enough in their apprenticeships whether they are working towards achievement at pass, merit or distinction level, where they feature in the relevant apprenticeship standard. As a result, a small minority of apprentices do not receive enough challenge to improve their work and aspire to achieve grades of which they are capable.

Coaches do not use consistently well the feedback provided by employers during reviews of apprentices' progress. As a result, the actions set for a small minority of apprentices are insufficiently precise to set out the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop by their next review.

Leaders and managers create a very welcoming environment for apprentices to grow in confidence and to consistently behave with integrity. Coaches ensure that apprentices benefit from a culture of tolerance and mutual respect. As a result, they develop a secure understanding of the wide range of social and ethical issues they may face, both in their work and personal lives. However, too many apprentices cannot remember the signs of radicalisation or how to keep themselves safe from extremist views and ideologies.

Training staff create a positive and supportive culture where apprentices feel able to seek help when they are experiencing difficulties. Coaches help apprentices to develop a good awareness of the importance of mental health and how to seek help and assistance at times of need. Apprentices benefit from good levels of guidance on the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit physically, particularly when working unsocial hours.

Leaders and coaches ensure that apprentices are provided with useful guidance and instruction that extends their understanding of the importance of healthy and inclusive behaviours at work and in their personal lives. Managers and coaches ensure that younger apprentices have an age-appropriate understanding regarding matters such as consent, which is developed and extended as an integral part of the curriculum.

Apprentices receive clear advice and guidance at the start of their apprenticeship which ensures that they are on courses that are appropriate to their ability and career aspirations. However, staff do not always provide apprentices with comprehensive guidance regarding the career options available to them. As a result,

too many apprentices do not have sufficient information to make informed choices as they near the end of their apprenticeship.

Directors and governors are ambitious for their apprentices and have created a positive and purposeful culture which permeates the whole organisation. Leaders and managers are considerate of the workload and well-being of their employees. Staff have pride in their work, understand their responsibilities and work effectively towards the strategic aims of the organisation.

Managers ensure that coaches benefit from good access to well-considered staff training and continuing professional development activities that enable them to focus and reflect on refining their teaching practices for the benefit of apprentices.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the relative strengths and areas for improvement across the organisation. Self-assessment is suitably judgemental and appropriately self-critical. However, leaders do not focus sufficiently on evaluating the implementation of their English and mathematics strategy or routinely analyse destination data to inform their understanding as to the impact of the curriculums that they provide.

Board members have relevant knowledge and bring a valuable range of skills and knowledge that they use effectively to support the strategic aims of the organisation and its apprentices. Governors support leaders well to develop a curriculum strategy that is focused on the entire experience of apprentices and to ensure that they develop high-quality skills and knowledge. However, while governors receive detailed reports from leaders and managers, they do not always use the information sufficiently well to challenge leaders relating to curriculum delivery and performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders give high priority to the welfare of apprentices and staff. Safeguarding measures are designed well to meet the characteristics of provision for apprentices who are geographically dispersed and who learn online.

The safeguarding team makes effective use of links with local safeguarding agencies to continually review the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. They benefit from ongoing professional development that informs their insight and understanding of current safeguarding practices.

Apprentices report feeling safe and have an appropriate understanding of how to access help and support at times of need. Managers take swift action when safeguarding-related issues arise. A few aspects of safeguarding-related policies need further development to ensure that they are fully reflective of current legislation.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should implement a thorough English and mathematics strategy that focuses on delivering specific learning activities that target the further development of apprentices' skills in these subjects.
- Leaders should ensure that coaches routinely use the contribution of employers in the setting of demanding objectives for apprentices which are precise and enable them to make the progress towards end-point assessment targets of which they are capable.
- Leaders should reinforce the safeguarding training delivered to apprentices and measure its impact to ensure that they develop a thorough understanding of the risks posed by extremism and radicalisation and how these issues could affect their personal lives and work.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices benefit from impartial careers information, advice and guidance throughout their learning programme to enable them to understand all the further study and employment choices available to them.
- Governors should ensure that they receive sufficiently detailed information to enable them to provide robust challenge to leaders relating to the curriculum delivery and performance.
- Leaders should ensure that managers undertake a detailed review of all safeguarding-related policies to ensure that they are reflective of current legislative guidance.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54137
Address	4–6 St Martins Street Hereford HR2 7RE
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Website	https://riverside-training.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Paul Workman
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	9 to 12 August 2016
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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

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