

Inspection of Caroline Pauling T/A Peak Accountancy Training

Inspection dates: 28 February to 2 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	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Peak Accountancy Training Limited is an independent learning provider. It received a contract to offer apprenticeships in September 2018. It offers standards-based apprenticeships in accounting and finance between levels 2 and 4.

At the time of inspection, there were four apprentices studying the level 2 accounts or finance assistant, 69 apprentices on the level 3 assistant accountant, 19 apprentices on the level 3 payroll administrator, and 23 apprentices on the level 4 professional accounting and taxation technician. Most apprentices are located in the north-west of England.

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

Apprentices enjoy their training and feel well supported and valued by their knowledgeable tutors, work-based advisers and employers. Most apprentices are motivated and committed to their studies. They appreciate regular opportunities to reflect on what they are doing and why. This helps apprentices to be more effective at work, for example by understanding the processes required when producing confidential year-end accounts and personal tax submissions for clients.

Apprentices undertake regular on- and off-the-job training that helps them to develop the knowledge and skills they need to take on more complex tasks and greater responsibilities at work. For example, apprentices develop their understanding of accounting principles. They are meticulous when calculating figures to apply the correct tax rates.

Apprentices develop in confidence throughout their apprenticeship. Most employers recognise the difference this makes and highly value apprentices' contribution to the workplace. For example, apprentices learn how to modify the tone of written and verbal communications to clients to ensure that they fully understand accounting terms and processes. Apprentices become more prepared to make full contributions in team meetings.

Work-based advisers encourage and promote professionalism with apprentices. They reinforce high expectations for apprentices to attend their training and review sessions, and the need to communicate regularly. Where apprentices do not attend, staff diligently follow this up. As a result, apprentices' attendance is high.

Apprentices feel safe within the workplace. They can explain who to go to with a safeguarding issue and where to go for support within their workplace.

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

Leaders are experienced, knowledgeable and passionate about training in accountancy and finance. They have nurtured positive and productive relationships with key employers to devise ambitious apprenticeship curriculums.

Leaders plan and sequence the curriculum effectively and logically to meet the needs of employers and apprentices in the professional financial services sector. For example, apprentices develop their understanding of foundation-level bookkeeping skills or basic payroll calculations before moving on to more complex techniques and principles, such as applying the correct tax rates for inheritance or capital gains tax.

Leaders recruit tutors and work-based advisers who are suitably experienced and qualified. Staff use their professional expertise to support apprentices to develop their applied accountancy and finance skills. For example, apprentices complete practice questions, scenarios and reflective assessments to help them know more and remember more over time. Managers have introduced additional support to help

apprentices develop effective study skills and learn how to better manage their portfolios.

Tutors and work-based advisers check apprentices' understanding systematically. They use the results from assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses in apprentices' knowledge. Most work-based advisers adjust the content of review sessions to recap topics that apprentices are less confident in. They encourage employers to identify opportunities for apprentices to develop their skills in the workplace. As a result, most apprentices make at least the expected progress in their learning.

Apprentices demonstrate a range of professional behaviours, such as ethics and integrity. They adhere to regulations and legislation with regard to tax returns and use professional scepticism appropriately. As a result, they are alert to conditions which may indicate possible misstatement of financial information due to error or fraud.

Most apprentices are supported effectively throughout their apprenticeship to develop their understanding of fundamental British values and how to stay safe. For example, advisers use current news stories to stimulate useful discussions with apprentices about the importance and impact of topical issues on the accountancy profession.

Tutors and advisers use naturally occurring opportunities to have conversations with apprentices about career progression. Most apprentices are keen to progress into more senior roles or are aware of the prospective routes that they can take to achieve higher-level accountancy qualifications. However, there is not yet a fully developed structured curriculum for careers guidance to ensure that all apprentices receive the necessary information and advice.

Leaders have taken positive action to rectify staff performance concerns and provide every opportunity for apprentices to achieve their apprenticeship within planned timescales. Leaders have swiftly put in place a range of improvements to track the progress that apprentices make accurately. Leaders have introduced more stringent oversight and quality assurance arrangements to monitor the support that apprentices receive. As a result, appropriate arrangements are now in place to support apprentices to develop the necessary skills and behaviours that they need to achieve their apprenticeship on time.

Since the previous monitoring visit, senior leaders have strengthened their governance arrangements. Leaders ensure that experienced advisory board members are provided with the necessary information to understand the quality of provision clearly. They hold leaders to account for the improvements they strive to make.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have implemented appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty policies which provide relevant guidance on how to make safeguarding reports and referrals. Leaders have appropriate processes in place to record and monitor safeguarding concerns to ensure that apprentices' safety and well-being are maintained.

Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding through appropriate training and monthly newsletters to inform apprentices and staff about topical safeguarding and well-being issues.

Leaders have put in place suitable arrangements to monitor safer recruitment and staff training for all staff. A designated safeguarding lead is suitably trained to understand their role and responsibilities for safeguarding.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should fully embed the recently introduced management strategies to ensure that a higher proportion of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship on time.
- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices receive structured careers information to prepare them for their potential next steps.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539244
Address	Adelphi Mill Grimshaw Lane Bollington Cheshire SK10 5JB
Contact number	01625 574 856
Website	www.peakaccountancytraining.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Caroline Pauling
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

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 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

Steve Ingle, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tony Greenwood	Ofsted Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Morgan	His Majesty's Inspector

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