

Inspection of Ultima Skills Ltd

Inspection dates:

18 to 20 April 2023

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Adult learning programmes

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Ultima Skills Ltd (Ultima) is an independent learning provider based in St Helens, Merseyside. The provider was registered as a training company in 2011. It specialises in training for the driving industry. Ultima started to provide training for apprentices in November 2017 and had an Ofsted new provider monitoring visit in November 2018. Prior to this, Ultima trained apprentices as a subcontractor for other organisations. Since the monitoring visit, the provider has introduced skills bootcamps for adult learners in heavy goods vehicle driving.

At the time of the inspection, 20 learners were enrolled on skills bootcamp courses in heavy goods vehicle driving. Less than five apprentices were studying the level 3 learning and development standards-based apprenticeship. Apprentices are employed by Ultima. All apprentices and learners were aged 19 and above.

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

Learners and apprentices have positive attitudes and are committed to their learning and development. For example, learners see value in their learning and understand how their improved knowledge and skills contribute to their aspiration to become class 1 and class 2 large goods vehicle (LGV) drivers.

Apprentices speak highly of the support that they receive from their tutors, line managers and the directors at Ultima. They feel fortunate that leaders and managers have created a learning environment where they can flourish. As a result, apprentices swiftly develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to be successful learning and development practitioners. They benefit their employer's business and are highly valued employees.

Learners and apprentices make rapid progress in their learning. Learners and apprentices develop high levels of confidence. For example, learners master vehicle reversing techniques quickly and can manoeuvre vehicles into test bays with minimal instruction or guidance. Tutors use a series of structured activities that emulate test conditions to help learners to swiftly become 'test ready', such as using the correct sequence to couple and uncouple trailers from the cab competently and safely.

Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty including contextualised topics such as the risks of lorry hijack, lorries being used as a weapon or lorries being used to transport people or contraband.

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

Leaders have selected appropriate curriculums to support learners and apprentices to develop the skills they need to be successful in their chosen careers. For example, apprentices train to become effective learning and development practitioners, and learners help to resolve the national shortage of LGV drivers. Leaders have carefully selected the skills bootcamp pathways that align to staff expertise and experience. Leaders and managers work closely with employers to ensure that the skills bootcamp pathways meet the needs of employers and the transport industry.

Leaders have planned curriculums that extend beyond the course requirements to provide wider learning opportunities for apprentices and learners. For example, apprentices gain teaching and LGV qualifications to enhance their teaching practices.

Apprentices understand fully the final assessment requirements and aim for the highest grade. They discuss their preparations for final assessments confidently and articulately. Apprentices clearly describe how they apply their learning and how shadowing their tutor helps them to improve their own training practices. Most apprentices achieve their apprenticeships.

Tutors skilfully use training resources such as visual aids to help learners to understand more difficult concepts, for example when explaining unladen/tare

weight and the impact of fuel load and payload, kerbside and the maximum authorised mass of a vehicle. Tutors consolidate this with training on the Ministry of Transport plate that is found on every vehicle. A few learners develop their understanding further, such as when learning about axle weights. Learners are well prepared for their examinations and assessments. As a result, most learners complete their qualifications and the vast majority find employment as LGV drivers, or change job roles in the transport industry.

Tutors provide learners and apprentices with useful oral feedback following assessments. However, this is not always memorable to learners and apprentices. As a result, learners and apprentices cannot readily recall what they need to revise or what they need to do to improve their work.

Staff are well qualified and experienced for their job roles. They have a thorough understanding of apprenticeships and the requirements of LGV driving. They benefit from relevant professional development activities such as the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) part 3A examiner and refresher courses and trainer conversion courses. A few tutors have teacher qualifications or are working towards them. Most trainers are qualified as DVSA module 4 examiners or LGV reversing examiners.

Apprentices receive effective careers information, advice and guidance to help them to plan their next steps. Learners discuss their career aspirations during their induction. Leaders organise job interviews for learners and provide them with employer contacts to help them to seek employment when they have passed their LGV test.

Leaders and managers have rightly identified, through their self-assessment processes, that quality assurance requires further development. For example, managers' observations of teaching, learning and assessment are superficial and do not identify accurately enough the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. As a result, managers have not acted swiftly enough to develop tutors' development plans to support and improve their teaching skills.

External consultants currently provide informal governance. They support leaders and managers to review funding strategies and to monitor staff performance. However, they do not provide sufficient challenge or hold leaders to account for their actions. Leaders have plans in place to improve governance arrangements through the recruitment of governors with expertise in apprenticeships and adult learning. However, these plans are yet to be implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders and managers have implemented an electronic safeguarding tracking system to record and monitor safeguarding referrals. This has yet to be tested.

Leaders and managers use safer recruitment practices when appointing new staff. They ensure that prospective employees have relevant qualifications and experience for the role, and conduct identity and reference checks to ensure suitability.

Leaders and managers pay high regard to health and safety practices including DVSA regulations and legislation, and the personal safety of learners and apprentices.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that plans for improving governance arrangements are fully implemented promptly, so that the new governing body challenges leaders and managers and holds them to account for the quality of education and training that apprentices and learners receive.
- Leaders and managers need to ensure that they implement stringent quality assurance processes, so that weaknesses in the provision are identified quickly and actions put in place to effectively improve weaknesses.
- Leaders and managers should make sure that tutors provide learners and apprentices with feedback that is memorable and helps learners and apprentices improve their work and revise for their examinations.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278606
Address	Ultima Skills Ltd Washway Lane St Helens Merseyside WA10 6PE
Contact number	07808163592
Website	www.ultimahgvdrivertraining.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Tim Davies
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

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

Anita Pyrkotsch-Jones, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Wainwright	His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023