

# Inspection of Pier Technology Limited

Inspection dates:

18 to 21 April 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**

Pier Technology Limited, trading as Pier Training Limited, is an independent learning provider based in Birmingham. The company offers a range of standards-based apprenticeships across four subject sector areas. At the time of the inspection, there were 192 apprentices in learning, of which most are adults. Apprentices are located across England but are predominantly concentrated in the East and West Midlands.

The majority of apprentices are enrolled on level 2 and/or level 3 healthcare case support worker apprenticeships. A smaller proportion of apprentices are working towards a range of business and professional apprenticeships, including level 5 operations/departmental manager, level 5 coaching professional, level 4 junior management consultant, level 3 business administrator and level 3 team leader apprenticeships.

Apprentices are employed across a wide variety of settings, including hospitals, children's hospices, laboratories, local authorities, and in commercial and retail industries. Learning is predominantly received online or onsite at employers' premises.

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

Apprentices benefit from the high aspirations and vocational expertise of their tutors. Most apprentices make assured progress in developing substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that are highly relevant to their respective job role.

Apprentices enjoy their learning; they develop in confidence because of the close support and guidance they receive from tutors and workplace mentors, which raises their skill levels, ambitions and aspirations. They become reliable and valued employees.

The standard of apprentices' work reflects well the level of the course they are on and the standards expected in their employment sector. Apprentices confidently apply their learning to their day-to-day practice, enabling them to carry out their job roles to a high standard and prepares them well for future employment.

Apprentices are highly motivated and keen to learn and develop good interpersonal and communication skills, enabling them to make valuable contributions to the vocational sector within which they work.

The very small minority of apprentices on the level 2 healthcare support worker apprenticeship do not benefit from a well-sequenced and challenging curriculum. Training provided by tutors is not coordinated well enough with training provided by employers. As a result, too many of these apprentices experience a disjointed learning experience.

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

Leaders have developed a clear strategy for the development of their apprenticeships. They work closely with most employers and make effective use of local and regional labour market intelligence to inform the planning for and teaching of apprenticeship programmes. They recruit apprentices with integrity and ensure that they are on the right programme. For example, on the level 3 retail team leader curriculum, leaders work closely with a national charity to adapt the sequencing and content of the course so that it provides a suitable progression route for learners who recently completed a 'Kick Start' programme. As a result, these apprentices benefit from a meaningful apprenticeship that prepares them well for working within the voluntary sector.

In most cases, leaders and managers work closely with employers to help select and plan the content of the apprenticeship. For example, on the level 3 senior healthcare support worker apprenticeship, tutors work closely with employers to develop pertinent learning resources to support apprentices working across a range of different clinical pathways.

Employers and tutors provide apprentices with challenging learning tasks related to their current and future job roles. On the level 5 coaching professional apprenticeship, tutors use online resources well to explain and reinforce the principles of different types of behavioural theory, while apprentices on the level 4 junior management consultant apprenticeship are supported well to develop their understanding of the communication skills associated with different business environments. In the workplace, managers implement a 'rotational' approach to learning activities so that apprentices gain a wide insight into the demand and expectation of their work.

In the large majority of instances, leaders and tutors plan the curriculum in a logical sequence. As a result, apprentices confidently develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Tutors routinely share new content with apprentices, which extends their learning. Apprentices can readily access recorded teaching sessions, which supports the recapping of key learning content. As a result, the large majority of apprentices make at least the expected progress during lessons and over time.

Tutors support apprentices to regularly revisit their learning and improve their understanding of related content. As a result, apprentices remember more and can recall long-term knowledge. Tutors regularly use a range of knowledge retrieval activities within their teaching to support apprentices with the embedding of essential learning required to carry out their job roles effectively. Apprentices speak highly of the value they gain from these sessions.

Tutor feedback to apprentices about the accuracy and quality of their work is generally accurate and developmental. The standard of apprentices' work reflects well the level of the apprenticeship they are on and the expectations in their employment sector. However, in a few instances, tutors concentrate on low-level tasks that apprentices need to complete rather than setting work that makes them think hard and gain a deeper awareness of what they are learning.

Apprentices are highly motivated and take their learning seriously. They value and benefit from the flexible approach to course planning and timetabling, designed to meet the needs of apprentices, the majority of whom are required to work unsociable hours. Apprentices' attendance at taught sessions and planned learning reviews are routinely high.

Tutors quickly identify apprentices with additional learning needs. Managers ensure that any necessary interventions are swiftly provided so that apprentices benefit from early help and support.

Most tutors make good use of the information gathered at the start of the course about apprentices' starting points and their skills in English and mathematics. They use this information effectively to plan and implement further learning, which helps apprentices to improve these skills further. However, a few tutors are not sufficiently effective in using the results of apprentices' diagnostic assessments to plan challenging learning. Moreover, some tutors are not effective in extending

apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills where they have already achieved level 2 qualifications in these essential skills subjects.

The small minority of apprentices on the level 2 healthcare support worker apprenticeship do not routinely benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Tutors' planning of learning for these apprentices is predominantly organised around key sector topics rather than the full range of knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to be successful. For example, knowledge on physiological measurements is not taught early enough in the apprenticeship. Consequently, these apprentices make slow progress.

Most apprentices have a precise line of sight of the career opportunities available to them in terms of further study or new roles and promotions upon completion of their apprenticeship. However, a small minority of apprentices are unclear of wider opportunities available to them beyond their workplace context.

Apprentices are confident, enthusiastic and self-assured. They quickly develop the skills and professional behaviours they need to be successful at work and in their personal lives. Apprentices take pride in the vocational skills they develop and work well with workplace colleagues. Apprentices quickly make a valuable contribution to their employers' businesses through collaborative working and adhering to organisational protocols and procedures.

Apprentices feel safe at work and when learning online, and they have a good understanding of how they can raise concerns regarding their mental and/or personal well-being. Tutors ensure that younger apprentices have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy sexual relationships and the importance of maintaining professional boundaries, both in their personal lives and while at work.

Apprentices are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They develop a sound understanding of their rights as citizens, and they demonstrate respect towards others and know how fundamental British values apply to them. However, not all apprentices have a secure knowledge of the localised risks associated with the geographical areas where they live and work.

Leaders have developed an inclusive culture, which ensures that apprentices benefit from an ethos of equality, where the values of inclusion and diversity are valued and celebrated. Leaders are considerate of the work-life balance of staff, implementing family friendly policies and working practices.

Leaders and managers have introduced a well-considered coaching and mentoring programme to support tutors in extending their craft of teaching. This is used effectively to enrich and enliven learning for the benefit of apprentices.

Leaders have taken effective action to enhance the independent scrutiny and oversight of the leadership team. Governance has been strengthened through the appointment of additional 'critical friends', who draw upon their sector-specific

expertise, including in education and training, to hold leaders to account for the overall performance of the apprenticeship programme.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices benefit from detailed safeguarding training provided at induction, which is reinforced during regular progress reviews with their tutors and refreshed through a termly safeguarding newsletter.

Staff with responsibility for safeguarding have received training at an appropriate level and benefit from ongoing professional development to keep their knowledge and practice up to date.

Managers carry out appropriate pre-employment checks on all staff and ensure that they are suitable to work with apprentices. These checks are recorded in sufficient detail.

A few aspects of the provider's safeguarding policies are not fully reflective of current legislative guidance.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should ensure that the curriculum, particularly for the small minority of apprentices on the level 2 healthcare support worker apprenticeship, is more closely aligned with and sequenced to training delivered by employers.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors make more effective and systematic use of information gathered at the start of the course regarding apprentices' pre-existing knowledge and skills and use this information to plan challenging learning that enables all to reach their full potential.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices are routinely provided with appropriate careers advice and guidance throughout their apprenticeship so that they have a precise understanding of the full range of career opportunities available to them.
- Leaders should ensure that where apprentices join their apprenticeship with exemptions in English and/or mathematics, tutors plan and provide challenging activities that extend apprentices' literacy and numeracy skills further.
- Leaders should ensure that managers undertake a detailed review of the 'Prevent' duty action plan, ensuring that all known risks are fully considered and that apprentices have a secure insight of how to protect themselves from localised risks associated with where they live and work.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2510865
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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Mohammed Syed
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality assurance manager, 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

Victor Reid, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Joel Dalhouse	His Majesty's Inspector
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Rachel Clark	His Majesty's Inspector

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