

Inspection of Leigh Academies Trust

Inspection dates: 16 to 19 May 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| 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

Leigh Academies Trust Apprenticeships (LAT Apprenticeships) is an independent learning provider based in Strood, Kent. It is part of Leigh Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust that operates 31 schools in Kent, Medway and south east London. Approximately half of apprentices are employed in schools run by the trust.

At the time of the inspection, there were 82 apprentices receiving training, including eight who were on a break in learning. All apprentices were studying standards-based apprenticeships. At level 2, four apprentices were studying the property maintenance operative apprenticeship and eight the roofer apprenticeship. At level 3, there were 12 business administrator apprentices, 26 teaching assistant apprentices, 12 information and communications technician apprentices, 16 engineering technician apprentices, and four team leader or supervisor apprentices. Approximately half of apprentices were aged 16 to 19 years. There were no apprentices in receipt of high needs funding.

LAT Apprenticeships does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices are enthusiastic about learning at LAT Apprenticeships. They have self-motivation and drive, taking on increasing ownership of their learning. Apprentices rightly appreciate the culture of high aspiration, inclusivity and friendliness that staff create. They quickly develop appropriate workplace attitudes and behaviours, such as punctuality. They are enthusiastic about their work, and they enjoy making new friends. For instance, engineering apprentices value the shared social space where they meet peers from other cohorts during breaktime. They develop strong, mutually supportive relationships, which enhances their learning well.

Apprentices develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours necessary for their apprenticeship and wider success in the workplace. For example, business administrator apprentices develop their skill and confidence in having potentially difficult conversations with colleagues. This prepares them well for the next stage in their career. Apprentices support each other's learning very effectively. They readily share their experience from the workplace, helping peers to understand how theory is put into practice well. For instance, level 3 engineering apprentices share their experience of eccentric turning, helping other apprentices understand what it is and how to apply it on a turning machine.

Apprentices benefit from the close professional relationships they enjoy with assessors, who use their strong knowledge of apprentices to support them well. For example, they arrange colour overlays for apprentices with dyslexia. As a result, all apprentices, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress during their apprenticeship.

Apprentices feel safe at LAT Apprenticeships. They understand what safeguarding is and are comfortable talking to assessors, confident that any concerns they raise will be responded to appropriately. Apprentices understand the importance of health and safety in the workplace and adopt safe working practices. For example, engineering apprentices know how to safely operate lathes and other potentially hazardous machinery.

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

Leaders have a strong commitment to apprenticeships as a gateway into fulfilling and successful careers. They work closely with employers to understand local and regional skills needs well, and they plan a curriculum that provides apprentices with substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours. For example, teaching assistant apprentices learn how to support learners with complex needs such as pathological demand avoidance and oppositional defiance disorder. Consequently, apprentices are helping to address skills needs in the region in key sectors such as education, engineering and information and communication technology.

Staff order what apprentices learn carefully, enabling them to build on what they know and therefore master increasingly complex concepts. For example, level 3 engineering apprentices learn about datum and its importance in engineering measurement, and they then apply this throughout their apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices become increasingly proficient and confident to complete challenging workplace tasks.

Most assessors are well qualified and use their vocational expertise skilfully to plan interesting teaching activities. They use demonstrations, quizzes and online resources well to motivate apprentices, who participate in discussions and learning activities readily. For instance, assessors on the level 3 teaching assistant apprenticeship successfully use real-life case studies to help apprentices understand how serious case reviews lead to changes in safeguarding practices within schools. Consequently, apprentices commit key knowledge to their long-term memory, quickly applying theoretical learning in their job roles and enhancing their contribution to their team.

Most assessors check apprentices' understanding carefully. They use assessment well to help apprentices practise their skills, recall key information and become increasingly proficient. Most assessors ensure that apprentices are well prepared for their final assessments and understand in detail what they must do. For instance, assessors on the level 3 teaching assistant apprenticeship set apprentices mock examinations frequently so that they can approach their final assessments with confidence. Consequently, all apprentices who complete their apprenticeship pass their final assessment.

Staff support apprentices to develop their use of literacy, numeracy and technical language effectively. For instance, level 3 information communications technician apprentices develop their numeracy skills while using scripting. Staff give apprentices feedback, correcting grammatical mistakes and encouraging the use of correct terminology. As a result, the standard of apprentices' work is high and often improves over time.

Staff work with employers to recruit apprentices with care and integrity. They invest time to ensuring that the apprenticeship meets the needs of the apprentice and offers the potential for a long-term future career. As a result, apprentices successfully move on to work or learning after completing their apprenticeship. However, staff do not discuss with apprentices the full range of work opportunities available to them. Consequently, a small number of apprentices are unaware of the breadth of future job roles available to them.

Leaders provide teaching assistant apprentices with opportunities to contribute to their local communities through organised voluntary work. Most staff adapt teaching and review meetings well to explore wider pastoral topics with apprentices, such as mental health. However, leaders have not formalised plans to ensure that all apprentices benefit from frequent opportunities to explore their interests, stay healthy or maintain age-appropriate relationships.

Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision well. They consider the views of stakeholders and act accordingly. For example, following requests from apprentices, they increased the proportion of face-to-face training provided to business administrator and teaching assistant apprentices. Leaders plan development activities for staff carefully, to improve the quality of training apprentices receive. For example, following observations of training sessions, leaders supported assessors successfully to better contextualise the teaching of British values. Leaders rightly recognise that too many apprentices leave their programme early without completing it. They have put in place appropriate actions to address this, but it is too early to fully assess their effectiveness.

Members of the apprenticeship board have significant, relevant skills and knowledge, which they use to support and challenge leaders to good effect. Leaders ensure that members of the board are well informed about the quality of training apprentices receive. They use this knowledge skilfully to inform the questions they ask leaders. For instance, they challenged why a small number of apprentices were not making the progress expected. Consequently, the support provided was reviewed, and the apprentices caught up quickly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders place a high priority on safeguarding. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy are appropriately trained and participate in relevant, timely updating activities, ensuring their expertise is well maintained. For example, the DSL recently attended training on the risks associated with involuntary celibate, or 'incel', ideology.

Apprentices learn about safeguarding during their induction. They know how to identify the signs of possible harm and who to raise any concerns with.

Leaders ensure that appropriate checks are conducted on staff prior to them working with apprentices.

Leaders take sensible steps to keep apprentices safe from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Assessors talk to apprentices during their induction about the risks, but they do not routinely check apprentices' recall of this information. Therefore, a small number of apprentices do not understand the relevance of the risks to their workplace.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should continue to ensure that all apprentices are supported to remain in learning and complete their programme successfully.

- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices have access to appropriate careers advice and guidance throughout their programme to help them understand their next steps.
- Leaders should formalise their plans so that all apprentices have access to opportunities to develop their interests and learn about physical and relational health and talents as part of their personal development.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 2627055 |
| Address | Apprenticeships Centre Strood Academy, Carnation Road Rochester ME2 2SX |
| Contact number | 01634 412200 |
| Website | www.leighacademiestrust.org.uk/ourservices/lat-apprenticeships/ |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Stephen Avis |
| 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 head of apprenticeships, 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

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Roland White, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Jo-Ann Henderson | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Paul Addis | Ofsted Inspector |

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