

Inspection of University Academy Holbeach

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 June 2023

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

University Academy Holbeach (UAH) is an academy secondary school with over 1,200 school-age learners. UAH offers apprenticeships as part of its sixth-form provision.

UAH typically trains around 100 apprentices a year, most of whom study engineering, electrical, or plumbing. A small number of apprentices study business, childcare, education, or construction courses.

There are currently 77 apprentices in training, 19 of whom are aged under 18. Almost all apprentices study at level 3, and 9 study at level 2.

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

Leaders promote a highly inclusive, calm and nurturing environment at UAH. This ethos cascades throughout the organisation. Apprentices rightly value the environment they study in and the way staff treat them as individuals.

Knowledgeable staff support apprentices with great care. Teachers ensure that learning is purposeful. As a result, apprentices are hardworking, attend well and appreciate the opportunities they have to excel.

Leaders work effectively with employers. Together, they ensure that courses equip apprentices with the knowledge and skills they require for local and regional jobs.

Apprentices experience good training that prepares them well for what is expected of them in the workplace. For example, motor vehicle apprentices learn how to recalibrate vehicle height sensors and diagnose rear fog light faults.

There are suitable opportunities for apprentices to undertake personal development outside of their vocational studies, for example team building, study skills, and talks on resilience and motivation.

Apprentices feel safe at work and at UAH. They readily adhere to the strict safety rules and their behaviour is always respectful. Apprentices know what to do if they have well-being or safeguarding concerns, for themselves, or for a peer.

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

Leaders have a clear vision to offer a breadth of post-16 technical routes to young people in the area. Leaders are passionate about the way apprenticeships can support apprentices' life chances, so that they continue to remain in education or employment.

In most cases, leaders and teachers organise the curriculum logically. This builds apprentices' professional standards and skills incrementally over time. Plumbing apprentices learn to work safely before they move on to complex topics such as pipework assemblies. However, apprentices' starting points are not used well enough to plan learning that takes account of prior knowledge and skills. All electrical apprentices join the course in year one, regardless of prior experience and existing skills. In plumbing and motor vehicle, the curriculum does not include activities to expand apprentices' wider skills, such as their English and mathematics.

Teachers are suitably qualified within their respective fields and most have extensive sector experience. They benefit from valuable training, such as use of retrieval practice, and industry updating. However, a small number of teachers are yet to complete their industry upskilling days.

Teachers use challenging scenarios to develop apprentices' workplace knowledge and skills well. For example, in plumbing, they compare the installation costs of a

ground source heat pump with that of an air source pump. Apprentices can describe the principles of different heating systems in detail.

Teachers check apprentices' understanding effectively and adapt their teaching appropriately. For example, motor vehicle teachers use carefully planned questions to ensure that apprentices are suitably skilled to repair tyres safely. Consequently, apprentices become more knowledgeable about the safe practices they should use.

Apprentices with additional support needs receive suitable support in lessons and during assessments. Teachers are sensitive to apprentices' needs and help them to overcome any barriers to learning.

Teachers use verbal assessment well to reinforce and extend learning. They provide apprentices with clear and direct verbal feedback on their practical work. As a result, apprentices develop these skills quickly. For example, plumbing apprentices spot faults in central heating boiler sensors with more ease.

Written assessment feedback is less helpful. Teachers do not always help apprentices develop their written work at the same pace as their vocational skills. Too often, feedback is confirmatory rather than developmental.

Leaders and staff work and communicate well with employers, in most cases. Recent new appointments to further strengthen this work are proving effective. However, employers are not consistently well informed about how their apprentices can progress and develop. Reviews are not focused enough on how apprentices can improve their skills rapidly.

Despite this, apprentices make a positive contribution to the workplace. Employers value the impact apprentices have on their businesses. Apprentices apply their new skills confidently in their daily roles. Most apprentices achieve their qualifications. Apprentices successfully develop the skills and knowledge they need to progress on to their next steps. For example, an electrical installation apprentice is now a supervisor in the workplace.

Apprentices undertake an appropriate personal development programme. They learn about topics such as fundamental British values, 'Prevent' and criminal exploitation. Apprentices can recall learning about these topics, but their understanding of the relevance to their employment is often quite limited. Guest speakers promote important matters such as first aid and driving safely.

Leaders and teachers take care to promote the ways apprentices can keep themselves healthy. Apprentices benefit from well-being resources and visits from external organisations about issues such as drugs awareness. On-site counselling is available for all learners, including apprentices. Apprentices have opportunities to develop citizenship skills through involvement in fund-raising events or work at local food banks. A small number of apprentices take part in their employers' community 'give-back day' initiative.

Apprentices benefit from a comprehensive careers programme. In individual reviews, tutors speak to them about progression and future career pathways. They help apprentices complete individual career plans. Careers leaders and advisers provide additional impartial advice. Employers such as Anglian Water and the Armed Forces, along with representatives from regional colleges and universities, attend UAH careers fairs.

In most cases, leaders have a sound understanding of the quality of provision. The quality cycle includes learner surveys, teaching observations and external audits. Leaders have an accurate knowledge of the remaining weaknesses in the quality of education. However, they do not currently monitor punctuality to lessons, nor monitor apprentices' attendance in the workplace thoroughly enough.

Leaders have ensured suitable support for the electrical department during the ongoing staffing challenges. Newly appointed staff and managers have clear plans for improving provision.

Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They know UAH well, and understand its vision and aspirations for its apprenticeship provision. They are fully conversant with the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. For example, they know about the recent staffing challenges and the steps taken to improve employer engagement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leads are highly experienced, with backgrounds in areas such as early help and hard to reach families.

Safeguarding policies are clear and comprehensive. Safer recruitment checks are thorough via a dedicated dashboard system.

Safeguarding leads, officers and staff undertake appropriate training and updating. They closely manage, monitor and support any referrals. There is extensive liaison with external partners and agencies such as the police cyber team.

Apprentices and employers are well informed about safeguarding via induction briefings and booklets.

Leaders monitor and report on safeguarding themes, which subsequently inform topics in assemblies, tutor time and staff training.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that apprentices' starting points are used to plan and design training that enables them to make swift progress.

- Leaders should ensure that teachers' feedback on apprentices' written work helps to improve standards over time.
- Leaders should ensure that progress reviews are well focused on what apprentices need to do next, so they can develop their skills rapidly.
- Leaders should introduce strategies to better monitor apprentices' punctuality to lessons and workplace attendance.
- Leaders should continue to support the implementation of improvement plans on electrical courses.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2512702
Address	Park Road Holbeach Spalding PE12 7PU
Contact number	01406423042
Website	www.universityacademyholbeach.org
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Sheila Paige
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 assistant principal, 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

Vicki Locke, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ralph Brompton

Ofsted Inspector

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