

Inspection of Avant Partnership Limited

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Information about this provider

Avant Partnership Limited is an independent learning provider based in Grimsby. At the time of the inspection, there were 171 apprenticeships on programmes that included level 2 hair professional, level 3 business administration, level 2 team leading, level 2 carpentry and joinery, level 2 bricklaying, level 2 groundworker and level 2 plastering. The majority of apprentices are under 19 years of age. In addition, there were 27 young learners enrolled on traineeships, of whom 21 were studying courses in construction trades and six studying hairdressing. Avant Partnership Limited works with one subcontractor, Orchard Training and Education Limited, based in Hull. All trainees and apprentices studying construction trades receive their training at the subcontractor.

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

Learners and apprentices demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and towards staff at the provider and fellow employees in their workplace. They are well behaved in practical and theory lessons, demonstrate positive attitudes and are keen to learn. Learners and apprentices show regard for each other's opinions and questions.

Learners and apprentices are clear about the high expectations set by staff at the provider. They are encouraged to demonstrate professional behaviours, both in the classroom and in their work environment. Learners and apprentices are enthusiastic about their learning. They value the knowledge and skills that they develop and understand that their learning helps to prepare them for work placements and their next steps.

Tutors support learners and apprentices effectively to develop their character and confidence. On the level 2 hairdressing programme, apprentices learn how to ask questions of their clients confidently when conducting consultations and completing hairdressing services. Business administration apprentices develop good communication skills and talk confidently to customers. Employers say that apprentices and traineeship learners become valuable members of their team.

Learners develop essential personal and social skills as part of the traineeship programme. Leaders and managers target effectively the hardest-to-reach learners and equip them with key attributes needed to be successful. Learners develop their ability to communicate efficiently in the workplace, turn up on time and work as effective team members. They develop the skills to manage their own stress and feelings of self-worth through effective pastoral support.

Apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and professional behaviours that help them make a positive contribution in the workplace and fulfil their career aims. They attend well, take pride in their work and conduct themselves in an orderly and professional manner. As a result, apprentices develop the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to be successful.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and demonstrate a sound understanding of safeguarding. They know who to report any concerns to and are confident that concerns will be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

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

Leaders and managers have clear intent for the courses that they offer. They have designed a sensible curriculum to meet the skills needs of the local area, which they review frequently to ensure that it continues to meet needs. They offer a range of programmes and apprenticeships to provide young people, many of whom have previously been disengaged from education, with a much-needed alternative provision where they can progress and flourish. They provide a range of curriculum

pathways, including digital and construction, in line with the priorities of the local authorities where they operate.

Leaders and managers have created an appropriate curriculum for learners and apprentices, which they sequence in a logical order. For example, learners studying bricklaying learn how to hang a line, mix and apply mortar before applying courses and racking a corner. In hairdressing, staff successfully align and sequence the curriculum to meet apprentices' individual needs so that they quickly gain the practical skills that they need to work professionally in their salons.

Tutors support learners and apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) very well. Learners and apprentices benefit from effective support to enable them to make good progress. Managers and tutors identify any support needs early in the programme and put in place individual support that includes activities to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar, and to help with time management. They also provide additional sessions to build confidence for end-point assessment. As a result, apprentices with SEND make progress in line with their peers.

Tutors use a wide variety of effective teaching strategies to extend learners' and apprentices' knowledge and understanding. They use their skills well when presenting information to learners and apprentices, and check understanding through probing questioning techniques and frequent reinforcement. Tutors help traineeship learners to retain and recall knowledge and consolidate skills through repetition of practical tasks. Tutors use helpful activities to enable apprentices to understand how theoretical knowledge applies in the workplace.

Tutors use assessment methods effectively. They use a range of formal and informal assessments to check learners' and apprentices' knowledge and understanding. These include quizzes, mock examinations and written assignments. Staff know their learners and apprentices well and use information gathered through assessment methods to inform their future learning. However, tutors on the bricklaying apprenticeship do not assess apprentices' work in line with grades available for end-point assessment; as a result, apprentices in bricklaying are unaware that they can achieve merits and distinctions and do not know how to achieve them.

Tutors develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematical skills well in vocational lessons and off-the-job training. They provide good support for apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications.

Apprentices and trainees benefit from opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and behaviours beyond their planned curriculum. Tutors cover topics at induction such as sexting, dealing with sexual harassment at work, domestic violence and sexual abuse. Apprentices and learners are taught how to notice signs and changes in the behaviour of others and who to report to if they are concerned.

Most tutors provide learners and apprentices with effective careers advice and guidance. Staff working on traineeship programmes are clear about learners'

potential next steps. As a result, learners know what their progression opportunities are and how to be successful in further study or employment. Apprentices are ambitious, and most are keen to progress within their employer. However, in a few instances, staff do not provide further information to support construction apprentices to reach their aspirational goals. As a result, a few apprentices have little understanding of wider careers in the construction industry.

Leaders and managers have appointed staff who are suitably experienced and qualified to carry out their roles. Where staff are new to teaching, leaders and managers support them in their development through a reduced caseload of learners, reduced class contact and opportunities to team teach and shadow as part of their working week. Staff value this approach, which enables them to develop confidence and competence in their teaching abilities.

Leaders and managers have effective oversight of the quality of the provision, including programmes delivered by the subcontractor. They complete a range of activities, including visits to sessions and reviews of learners' and apprentices' work, and gather feedback from learners, apprentices and employers to review and improve the quality of the programmes that they provide. Leaders hold frequent meetings with tutors from each subject area to scrutinise and evaluate the quality of the provision as part of their annual quality cycle. However, leaders and managers do not have a sufficiently thorough awareness of the quality of assessment and feedback arrangements in hairdressing, and so are unable to take action to improve this.

Leaders and managers invest appropriately in their staff. They support teaching staff to achieve necessary qualifications, such as a certificate in education, and provide staff, including those working at the subcontractor, with frequent opportunities for professional development that is relevant to their sector. Training sessions are provided when new policies and processes are required to be implemented, and tutors attend pedagogical workshops to enable them to reflect on and adapt teaching strategies.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Since the last inspection, leaders have put safeguarding to the forefront of their work and invested additional resources to ensure that safeguarding is effective. They have implemented a new online management system and provided full staff training so that the system is used effectively. They have restructured the senior leadership team and introduced a dedicated full-time designated safeguarding lead (DSL) role, the purpose of which focuses solely on safeguarding across the provider and subcontractor. Leaders have also introduced six deputy designated safeguarding leads (DDSLs) to ensure coverage across both sites.

Leaders have implemented a series of changes to support improvements in safeguarding. They have implemented rigorous procedures to raise, deal with and

monitor all safeguarding concerns, including health and well-being concerns that could lead to safeguarding issues. Leaders have also introduced additional roles to support the full team with safeguarding. For example, they have implemented a head of centre who oversees all tutors and carries out monthly meetings where safeguarding concerns are raised and monitored.

Leaders have implemented a series of processes to monitor all safeguarding concerns across the provider and the subcontractor. They now hold frequent and useful meetings which focus exclusively on safeguarding. At these meetings, staff from the provider and subcontractor come together to discuss any issues or concerns, and to monitor the progress in responding to concerns and levels of support. The DSL has introduced a monthly safeguarding newsletter that is sent to all staff. This provides staff with updates on local and national risks, safeguarding updates and information about relevant terminology that staff need to be aware of.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices are given suitable careers advice and guidance which supports them in relation to their long-term careers.
- Ensure that all apprentices understand the grade outcomes they can achieve as part of their programme.
- Ensure that leaders and managers have oversight of all aspects of the quality of provision, in particular the quality of assessment and feedback in all areas of the curriculum.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58550
Address	Pearl Assurance House George Street Grimsby DN31 1HB
Contact number	01472 426624
Website	www.avant.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Steve Roe
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	17 to 20 October 2022
Main subcontractors	Orchard Training and Education Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, 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

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