

# Inspection of The Link Training Academy Limited

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 June 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
<hr/>	
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

The Link Training Academy Limited is an independent learning provider based in Huddersfield. It provides training to apprentices across the Yorkshire area. At the time of the inspection, there were 89 apprentices enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships, of whom 37 were on the level 2 hair professional hairdressing standard. The remainder were enrolled on programmes from level 2 to 5 in hair professional barbering, advanced and creative hair professional, business administration, team leader, coaching professional, and operations and departmental manager. Slightly fewer than half of all apprentices were aged under 19.

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

Most apprentices behave in a professional manner at work and during training sessions. Tutors set out clear expectations, which results in apprentices being polite and respectful to peers, staff, visitors, clients and service users. During training sessions and meetings, apprentices demonstrate respect for the views of their peers. They are enthusiastic about attending training sessions, where they receive support from peers and staff.

Apprentices benefit from the nurturing environment that staff have created. Tutors support apprentices well to develop the skills and behaviours they need for work and everyday life. They encourage apprentices to work interactively in groups and to deliver presentations to each other so that they grow in confidence and self-esteem. Hairdressing and barbering apprentices complete a murder mystery project, where they communicate with their peers and develop negotiation, logical thinking and research skills.

Apprentices feel safe at work, online and at the training centre. They are aware of the potential risks in Huddersfield and travel with peers to minimise risks such as knife crime. Apprentices have a good understanding of local risks, such as gang warfare and drug crime. They know to whom they should report concerns and are confident that any concerns would be dealt with swiftly.

Most apprentices have high attendance at sessions on their main programme. Tutors emphasise the importance of attending training sessions punctually. Employers are quickly notified when apprentices do not attend sessions. However, in a few instances, apprentices on the level 5 coaching professional programme do not attend for the full session due to work demands, which means that they have to catch up in their own time.

Too many apprentices do not have sufficiently high attendance at English and mathematics sessions and are frequently late. Staff follow up to deliver one-to-one training with apprentices who miss sessions to ensure that they do not fall behind. As a result, most of these apprentices achieve their English and mathematics qualifications. Leaders and managers rightly recognise that they need to improve attendance and punctuality at these sessions.

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

Leaders and managers have a thorough understanding of the local, regional and national labour market trends, which has influenced their curriculum strategy. They continue to offer apprenticeships in hairdressing and barbering but acknowledge that the number of apprentices in these areas is unlikely to grow. Leaders and managers have used their stakeholder contacts to increase the number of apprentices on leadership and management programmes. For example, they have

responded to a need from the NHS trusts to provide training to their employees to develop a skilled coaching workforce.

Leaders and managers recruit staff who are well qualified and have suitable experience. They ensure that tutors keep up to date with industry practice. In hairdressing and barbering, tutors attend training to further develop their knowledge and skills in areas such as applying hair colour and working with type 4 hair. Most tutors continue to work in hairdressing and barbering salons. A few are currently studying towards a Master of Business Administration qualification.

Leaders, managers and governors have effective oversight of the quality of the provision. They carry out a range of activities, such as observations of training and sampling apprentices' work, to ensure that apprentices benefit from high-quality training. Leaders and managers link the outcome of observations to staff training plans to enable staff to develop their teaching skills. For example, tutors attend training in managing behaviour in the classroom, planning engaging sessions and providing feedback to apprentices.

Leaders and managers have accurate oversight of apprentices' progress. Managers complete frequent checks of apprentices' portfolios, which highlights if any apprentices are at risk of falling behind. Where this is the case, they put interventions in place, such as additional one-to-one sessions.

Leaders and managers provide high-quality resources for hairdressing and barbering apprentices who attend the training academy in Huddersfield town centre. These apprentices have good access to clients, who they work with to develop their knowledge and skills. However, a few apprentices on level 2 hairdressing, who are based in the training centre in Wath upon Dearne, do not have the same access to clients and work predominantly on training heads.

Tutors accurately identify apprentices' starting points at the beginning of the programme and use this information to identify individual goals and timescales. For example, those with prior coaching experience on level 5 coaching professional have earlier end dates agreed and focus more on other aspects of the curriculum. Staff provide appropriate support for apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They arrange individual sessions with the additional learning support tutor and provide apprentices with dyslexia with coloured overlays and paper.

Tutors plan and deliver the curriculum in a logical order to support apprentices to develop the knowledge and skills they need. Apprentices on level 2 hairdressing focus initially on health and safety and client consultation before moving on to more complex tasks, such as colouring and cutting.

Most tutors use a wide range of effective teaching methods to engage apprentices. For example, on level 2 hairdressing, tutors provide practical demonstrations, videos and interactive quizzes to help apprentices remember what they have learned. Tutors who teach on level 5 coaching professional record taught sessions, which enables apprentices to review the information later in their programme.

Tutors use effective assessment methods to check apprentices' understanding. They observe hairdressing apprentices in practical sessions and ask questions to check their knowledge. On the level 5 coaching professional programme, apprentices use online voting systems to demonstrate their knowledge. Tutors provide helpful and constructive feedback on apprentices' assignments, which helps apprentices to improve the quality of their work when they resubmit.

Most apprentices make at least expected progress. They develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours on the level 2 hairdressing and the level 5 coaching professional programmes. Hairdressing apprentices learn how to do creative curling and apply hair colours, and they learn about weaving techniques and contraindications, such as adverse skin conditions. Apprentices on the professional coaching programme learn how to have productive and purposeful conversations with patients and colleagues.

Tutors support apprentices effectively to improve their English and mathematics skills. For example, apprentices on the level 2 hairdressing programme write reflective accounts of the services they provide to clients. Tutors highlight any errors in these reports to help apprentices improve their writing skills. Apprentices further improve their mathematical skills by measuring chemicals using ratios and cutting angles in hair.

Tutors prepare apprentices well for end-point assessment. They prepare mock examinations and presentations for apprentices to complete and give clear feedback about how to improve. However, tutors do not make hairdressing and barbering apprentices aware of what they need to do to achieve a distinction grade early enough in the programme. As a result, a low proportion of apprentices on these programmes achieve distinction grades.

Staff teach hairdressing apprentices well about British values in personal development sessions. Apprentices understand the diverse and multicultural society in which they live and work. They know how to adapt to the needs of their clients, including in relation to religious and cultural requirements. Tutors on the level 5 coaching professional programme include topics in the personal development curriculum that are relevant to the working and personal lives of adult apprentices. For example, they discuss values in the NHS and cover topics such as employment law and disciplinary meetings. However, too often, tutors do not take sufficient account of the high-level job roles that these apprentices have, and they do not teach these topics at an appropriate level.

Staff provide useful careers information, advice and guidance to apprentices to enable them to decide on their next steps. They provide information to hair and barbering apprentices about opportunities such as becoming self-employed, working on cruise ships and teaching. They provide good support to apprentices who want to change career direction. Apprentices who have decided that they do not want to stay in the hairdressing or barbering industry, but are unsure what they want to do instead, are referred to an external careers provider.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead and designated safeguarding officers attend useful training to be effective in their roles.

Leaders and managers have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures in place to keep apprentices safe. They successfully implement safe recruitment practices to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults.

The designated safeguarding lead works closely with external partners to keep up to date with local and national safeguarding information. For example, she is a member of the West Yorkshire and Kirklees safeguarding forums and liaises frequently with the regional 'Prevent' coordinator for the Department for Education.

Apprentices have a good understanding of sexual harassment and violence. They learn about these topics in personal development sessions and know what to do if they ever experience this. A few adult apprentices say that the training made them think about what they have experienced in the past in the community and whether this constituted sexual harassment.

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

- Ensure that staff deliver a personal development curriculum at the appropriate level for adult apprentices working in senior positions with responsibility for areas such as safeguarding and mental health, to motivate and engage them.
- Ensure that all apprentices are made aware early in the programme of what they need to do to achieve a distinction grade.
- Ensure that level 2 hairdressing apprentices at the Wath upon Dearne centre have increased access to clients to practise and develop their skills.
- Ensure that all apprentices who are enrolled on functional skills English and mathematics courses attend sessions and are on time.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2556365
<b>Address</b>	19 Brook Street Huddersfield HD1 1EB
<b>Contact number</b>	01484 425500
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.thelinktrainingacademy.org">https://www.thelinktrainingacademy.org</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Amanda Lodge-Stewart
<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 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

Jacque Brown, lead inspector

Alison Gray

His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted 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](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023