

Inspection of SR Apprenticeships Limited

Inspection dates:

20 to 23 June 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	Good

Information about this provider

SR Apprenticeships Limited (SRA) is an independent national apprenticeship training provider, established in 2009. Leaders offer apprenticeships in team leading and management, supply chain practitioner and supply chain warehouse, international freight forwarding, human resources, learning and development, and sales and customer service.

At the time of the inspection, there were 671 apprentices in training. Most apprentices are adults, with 13 aged under 18. Apprentices study at levels 2 to 5. Most apprentices study level 3 courses in team leading or international freight forwarding.

SRA does not work with any subcontracting partners.

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

Leaders carefully consider what they are preparing apprentices for. They work closely with employers to equip apprentices with the knowledge and skills required for their futures. For example, supply chain warehouse apprentices develop their understanding of warehouse packing.

Apprentices are inquisitive. They show great interest in their course and in their job roles. Apprentices appreciate the way their training helps them to make progress. For example, HR apprentices are now more skilled in how to support and manage restructures.

Staff are supportive, friendly and approachable. Skills coaches create a calm, inclusive and supportive environment for apprentices. Coaches know their apprentices and their job roles well. Apprentices are confident to ask their coaches for help should they need it. They find their coaches to be responsive and consistent in their approach. As a result, apprentices feel valued and supported.

Apprentices grow in confidence over time. For example, international freight forwarding (IFF) apprentices communicate more decisively with senior colleagues and stakeholders. Employers report that apprentices become more proficient in their work duties.

Apprentices feel safe. They find the welfare newsletter and checks helpful and supportive. Apprentices are well informed about who they should contact should they have any concerns.

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

Leaders work effectively to build strong relationships with employers. They select suitable courses that meet the needs of the employers they work with.

In most cases, leaders ensure that the curriculum content is carefully thought out to develop the knowledge and skills apprentices need for their job roles. For example, following employer consultation, greater focus has been placed on organisational strategy within the level 3 team leader apprenticeship. However, in a small number of cases, such as the level 5 HR consultant partner, the content does not always consider the wider knowledge and skills apprentices need. For example, apprentices do not learn about how to manage meetings online.

Curriculum leaders organise the content logically, which ensures that apprentices build their knowledge over time. For example, supply chain apprentices learn sequentially about the full journey of production, from design through to distribution.

Most apprentices undertake a range of well-planned and meaningful off-the-job activities. Team leader apprentices undertake valuable workshops where they learn about topics such as emotional intelligence. This helps them to go on and use this new knowledge when chairing meetings or working with different staff. However, on level 3 business administrator, the range of planned off-the-job activities is quite narrow. Training is overly focused on one-to-one tutorials and basic revision of topics.

In most cases, online lessons are taught effectively. Skills coaches use their knowledge and expertise well to develop apprentices' understanding. They break down learning into manageable chunks and link topics clearly to the sector. For example, IFF skills coaches use real life examples to promote the importance of correctly packing hazardous goods. However, on level 3 business administrator and level 5 HR consultant partner, too much teaching lacks depth. Skills coaches do not always consider carefully enough how learning relates to apprentices' job roles. Consequently, apprentices do not always learn about topics beyond those required for their qualification.

Most skills coaches use verbal assessment well. They ask direct questions or set pre-reading with accompanying tests to check apprentices' understanding. Most skills coaches use professional discussion effectively to help apprentices recall and reinforce key topics. However, on level 3 business administrator and level 5 HR consultant partner, assessment is used less well. Skills coaches often move on to new topics too quickly without conducting thorough checks of understanding first. They do not routinely plan to revisit topics covered earlier in the course. As a result, apprentices have a basic grasp of recent topics, but they cannot always recall key concepts from earlier in their studies.

In most cases, written feedback helps apprentices to improve work standards over time. For example, HR apprentices improve their ability to analyse key models or structures within their organisations.

Leaders ensure the provision of effective individualised support for apprentices with additional learning needs. Apprentices who find it difficult to concentrate or retain information benefit from strategies such as extra time and shorter visits. This is rightly valued by these apprentices, who consequently make good progress.

Most apprentices achieve their qualifications, and almost half achieve high grades. First-time pass rates for functional skills mathematics and English are good. Apprentices develop knowledge and skills that help them to become more expert in their job roles. For example, IFF apprentices apply their new learning about international commercial terms to work out quotes and identify payment liabilities. Many apprentices go on to successfully secure promoted roles within their workplaces.

Apprentices learn about key personal development themes as part of their studies. The online platform and monthly welfare newsletters include a wide range of appropriate topics, such as fundamental British values, neurodiversity, workplace

well-being, and dealing with stress. In individual meetings, skills coaches talk to apprentices about these pertinent topics. Apprentices rightly appreciate the support SRA provides for their health and well-being.

Careers advice and guidance is appropriate for adult apprentices. Advisors establish long-term career aspirations and goals on enrolment. Skills coaches help apprentices to plan and undertake career development activities, such as courses on financial forecasting and management. Skills coaches ensure that apprentices are clear about what they need to do to achieve their next steps, which for most apprentices is to secure promotion. The small number of apprentices aged under 18 receive the same advice as adult apprentices. However, they do not yet benefit from additional impartial careers guidance.

Leaders accurately recognise that the provision requires further development. They have a firm understanding of the remaining improvements required. Leaders have initiated suitable changes, including a new teaching strategy and a new approach to observations of teaching. In doing so, they have created a culture of openness, with a strong focus on professional development. Staff rightly value the way SRA is learner centred and focuses on continuous improvement. There is a wide range of development opportunities for curriculum staff, including formal training, coaching, and job rotation. In the main, these initiatives support improvements. However, this is not yet consistent across provision.

Governors are highly experienced. They bring a wealth of knowledge, skills and challenge to the leadership team. Governors have a sound knowledge of the strengths of provision, and they are aware of where improvements are still needed. They are ambitious and active in their challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the organisation.

Safeguarding leads and deputies have appropriate and current knowledge, so they are able to carry out their roles diligently. Staff undertake frequent training and updates. Apprentices and employers learn about the importance of safeguarding at induction and throughout their course.

Record-keeping related to safer recruitment and incident monitoring is in place.

Apprentices find the monthly welfare newsletters and checks helpful. These approaches develop their knowledge about safeguarding and topics such as healthy relationships and online safety. External support, such as helplines for lone parents, domestic abuse, or debt worries, are well promoted.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should review the curriculum content on level 3 business administrator and level 5 HR consultant partner, ensuring it includes enough well-planned off-the-job activities and wider learning so that apprentices make strong progress.
- Leaders should ensure that all skills coaches teach topics in enough depth, with explicit links to apprentices' job roles, so that apprentices progress as quickly as they can.
- Leaders should ensure that all skills coaches use assessment well so that apprentices develop a firm understanding of topics and can recall their learning effectively over time.
- Leaders should ensure that the small number of apprentices aged under 18 receive impartial careers advice and guidance as part of their studies.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59184
Address	32 Mile End Road Colwick Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG4 2DW
Contact number	01949 20976
Website	sr-apprenticeships.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Nadine Hughes
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	21 to 24 March 2017
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations 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

Vicki Locke, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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