

Inspection of Althaus Digital Limited

Inspection dates: 27 to 30 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Adult learning programmes	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Althaus Digital Limited (Althaus Digital) is an independent learning provider based in Derby. It specialises in digital marketing, cybersecurity and information technology (IT) courses for apprentices and adult learners. Most apprentices and learners are based in the Midlands. At the time of the inspection, Althaus Digital had 57 apprentices following standards-based apprenticeships at level 3. The large majority study either IT solutions or digital marketing.

Leaders recently tendered for 'skills bootcamp' funding to train adult learners in essential IT skills. Althaus Digital offers these 12-week bootcamp courses in social media, software development, cybersecurity and IT. The company has enrolled 211 adult learners on these courses.

Trainers deliver adult courses and apprenticeship training through online sessions for individuals or small groups. A functional skills tutor provides online training in English and mathematics for those who need to achieve a pass in these subjects. Most learners and apprentices are aged over 18. A small number receive support for additional learning needs. The company does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Adult learners and apprentices thoroughly enjoy their courses. They attend well and display exemplary attitudes to learning. All develop valuable new knowledge, skills and behaviours that prepare them well for careers in the IT and digital marketing sectors.

Most apprentices remain with their employer at the end of their studies. Many go on to promoted roles. All apprentices who complete their course achieve, and a high proportion gain a distinction grade.

Trainers have extensive experience in the IT and digital sectors. They are passionate about helping apprentices and learners to become future leaders in IT and digital marketing. Learners and apprentices receive high-quality, structured and organised online training. This quickly equips them with technical skills they can deploy in the workplace.

Apprentices and adult learners attend excellent online seminars. Trainers prepare sessions well using a wide range of activities, exercises, group work and quizzes. Learners and apprentices rightly comment on the high quality of online learning sessions.

Trainers provide helpful advice and information for adult learners about careers in IT and digital marketing, which they value. As a result, they say that they feel well prepared for their next steps. However, apprentices do not always receive enough information about how they can advance their careers. As a result, a few apprentices do not have a clear or well-defined career pathway.

Trainers and mentors provide high-quality guidance and support to help learners and apprentices progress and achieve. They do this regardless of any potential barrier to learning. As a result, learners and apprentices develop confidence and resilience. They become better able to deal with the demands of their studies.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They are aware of who to contact if they have any safeguarding concerns.

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

Leaders, including governors, have very high expectations and ambitions for staff, learners and apprentices. They strive relentlessly to nurture a collegial ethos where all staff are equally valued and empowered. As a result, staff feel able to challenge and participate in all aspects of the company's endeavours. Feedback from staff suggests that all are proud to work for the company.

Since its inception, leaders have managed the curriculum judiciously. They rightly decided to focus on specialisms in which staff have excellent industry experience and credibility. Leaders have recruited highly experienced trainers who design

bespoke and specialist online learning resources. As a result, the company's key stakeholders hold the company in high regard. They see Althaus Digital's leaders and trainers as industry professionals with a genuine passion for training future digital leaders.

Leaders' engagement with employers is outstanding. They have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the digital skills sector. They deploy this well to generate traction for the company's apprenticeship and adult learning provision. At the time of the inspection, around 50 small and medium-sized employers were engaged in this way. Employers were exceptionally positive about the impact that Althaus Digital's leaders had on their business.

Leaders and managers use their extensive links with employers effectively. They plan and teach courses that contribute to closing local and regional skills gaps. For example, leaders identified a need for companies to recruit staff trained in cybersecurity skills. As a result, they decided to offer level 3 courses in this area for apprentices. Adult learners study IT courses selected specifically to help them apply for jobs in regional skills shortage areas.

The apprenticeship curriculum is very well planned and sequenced logically. Topics are organised sensibly within learning blocks. For example, on the digital marketer course, apprentices first begin their studies with social media. They then move on to marketing strategies, followed by modules on web development. This ensures that apprentices build their skills incrementally throughout the course.

Apprentices receive meaningful and high-quality off-the-job training. They benefit from well-planned and structured activities such as live workshops, on-demand learning and workplace projects. Employers are highly supportive and readily ensure apprentices have opportunities to apply and practise their new learning.

Adult learners study introductory modules that cover core IT and digital marketing skills. They then move on to increasingly complex and sophisticated topics in specialist areas. These include cybersecurity and software development. Learners on the IT solutions course cover systems, data, cybersecurity and programming, sequenced in a logical order.

Leaders ensure the curriculum is inclusive. Apprentices and adult learners who require additional support benefit from a range of appropriate strategies. These help them to progress and achieve as well as their peers.

Training staff and mentors use well-planned activities that help learners and apprentices readily acquire new learning. They use real-world examples very well to help learners and apprentices fully grasp new technical skills. For example, they become proficient in web design, diagnosing computer cabling faults and troubleshooting complex computer server issues. Digital media apprentices learn how to manage digital marketing and branding campaigns.

Training staff and mentors check understanding very well and very frequently. They use useful and relevant strategies such as recapping, quick-fire quizzes and mock exams. These help learners and apprentices commit their learning to long-term memory. Most trainers are skilled at using questioning to check learners' and apprentices' understanding. They tackle misconceptions sensitively.

Training staff and mentors help learners and apprentices well and often. This helps them to develop an understanding of key terminology and improves their use of English. All sessions include knowledge checks of technical vocabulary, and trainers swiftly address any errors in English.

Apprentices and adult learners become more confident, knowledgeable and skilled as a result of their training. Training staff and mentors help apprentices very well to apply what they learn in their workplaces. Apprentices reflect on key learning points after every session. They then plan how they will apply this learning in their job roles. Consequently, apprentices become more proficient and confident over time.

The standard of apprentices' and adult learners' work is high. In most cases, their work improves over the course of their studies. Apprentices' project work is of very high quality, professional and well written and researched. They complete complex and detailed project work for their company. They describe how projects contribute, for example, to their company's corporate digital marketing campaign and what skills they learned as a result.

Trainers provide learners and apprentices with additional learning that is over and above course requirements. This includes training on the use of specific website development software that trainers do not otherwise cover. Many apprentices take up Althaus Digital's offer of a leadership development programme, which they can complete alongside their apprenticeship. Those who complete this course often achieve a distinction in their apprenticeship. Many go on to leadership positions in their company.

Trainers promote fundamental British values well. Learners and apprentices talk confidently about these values. They can confidently articulate how they relate to their work and home lives. Learners and apprentices have a suitable understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Coaches discuss specific local risks such as knife crime and county lines. They also discussed the impact locally of a recent tragic, and widely reported, incident in Nottingham.

Staff benefit from the company's ethos of promoting personal and professional development for all. Newly appointed training staff without experience in teaching receive support and guidance. Leaders also enrol them on a suitable teaching qualification. This equips them with essential teaching skills, which they go on to deploy enthusiastically.

Staff report that they feel very well supported, both professionally and personally. As a result, they are proud to work for the company. Learners and apprentices work hard to rise to the challenges that their course provides.

Quality improvement arrangements are very effective in promoting high-quality provision. Leaders ensure that the standard of education enjoyed by learners and apprentices is of exceptional quality. All new staff receive comprehensive support to develop their skills as trainers and coaches. Coaches receive helpful and constructive feedback and guidance on how they can develop and improve their practice. Coaches routinely engage in discussions about the effective use of online learning resources and share best practice. Learners and apprentices rightly comment on the very high quality of training they receive.

Governance is effective. The governance team comprises Althaus Digital's chief executive officer and operations director and two external partners. Governors are knowledgeable of the small and medium-sized enterprises that make up the regional IT landscape. They share a passion for the industry. Most have many years experience at senior levels in the sector.

Governors have an accurate understanding of Althaus Digital's strengths and areas for improvement. They consider a range of key company performance and quality measures during well-attended quarterly meetings. They provide clear strategic oversight for the business.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have appropriate safeguarding policies in place. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has received suitable training for the role. They ensure they keep detailed safeguarding case records and report these to the governing body. The DSL takes prompt actions following a disclosure to ensure the safety of learners and apprentices.

All staff receive an enhanced check from the Disclosure and Barring Service to ensure their suitability for work. During regular reviews, coaches helpfully remind learners and apprentices about safeguarding procedures. As a result, learners and apprentices know whom to go to and how to report any concerns.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2654165
Address	Commerce House 2 Victoria Way Derby DE24 8AN
Contact number	020 364 99000
Website	www.althausdigital.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Peter Buller
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 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

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