

# Inspection of Sparshatt Truck and Van Limited

Inspection dates:

8 to 10 August 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**

Sparshatt Truck and Van Limited (Sparshatt) are a Mercedes-Benz-approved commercial vehicle dealership in Kent. The company has four depots in Sittingbourne, Dartford, Tonbridge and Ashford. Apprentices complete their training at the 'academy' based at the Dartford site one day per week. They work day-to-day at one of the four company sites.

At the time of inspection, nine apprentices were studying towards the level 3 heavy goods vehicle maintenance technician standards-based apprenticeship.

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

Apprentices thrive in the workshop environment where they learn to understand how to work with multiple vehicles, tools and technical equipment. They learn from highly skilled technicians. Apprentices quickly become part of the professional team and confidently use correct terminology so that they can take part in technical conversations.

Apprentices gain valuable insight from a team of professionals around them, including their tutor, their pastoral coach, their mentor and their manager. They are well prepared for the next stage of their careers. All apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship are offered jobs at Sparshatt. They continue their professional development on the manufacturer's technical training pathway.

During reviews of apprentices' progress, staff do not sufficiently reflect on the progress apprentices make in their technical knowledge and skills. Staff do not set clear enough milestones or sufficiently ambitious targets for apprentices. As a result, apprentices complete additional tasks but do not sufficiently recognise the knowledge and skills they develop and what they need to learn and master next.

Apprentices take part in activities that increase their motivation to work in the motor vehicle industry. For example, they attend sports events sponsored by Sparshatt, such as rally motorcross races. Staff enter apprentices for the Institute of the Motor Industry technical skills competition and the East Kent Apprenticeship awards, where apprentices have been successful.

Apprentices feel safe and the culture of safe working is prevalent across all aspects of Sparshatt's work with apprentices. Apprentices attend well, and staff set high expectations about professional conduct, which apprentices adhere to.

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

Leaders and managers have designed a good curriculum to teach apprentices to become highly skilled heavy goods vehicle technicians. Trainers first teach apprentices the necessary tooling and procedures to work safely on vehicles. They move on to the properties and functions of each component and how to perform key calculations such as measuring brake tolerances. Apprentices later study secure practical inspection, maintenance inspection repair and diagnostic skills.

Trainers use their industry expertise extremely well to teach apprentices so that they have a deep understanding of the fundamental principles of vehicle systems. Trainers expertly use components and parts to illustrate theoretical principles and concepts. For example, they explain how compound gear formulas are used to calculate and confirm transmission ratios and how gear changes impact force in different driving conditions. As a result, apprentices gain a clear understanding of the impact of their work on vehicles and drivers. They successfully apply this knowledge to a range of different vehicle systems.

Academy managers make sure that line managers and mentors know what apprentices will learn and when they will learn it. They plan opportunities for apprentices to apply their new knowledge at work. As a result, apprentices develop particularly good practical skills. Nearly all apprentices achieve their practical assessments at their first attempt.

Workplace mentors who work alongside apprentices provide effective on-the-job training. They demonstrate tasks clearly for apprentices. They check that apprentices use accurate calculations, for example to select the correct hoists for the weight of a vehicle being lifted. Mentors check apprentices' work and give them highly valuable feedback throughout each job. As a result, apprentices learn quickly how to work to a high standard.

Trainers check apprentices' understanding frequently. For example, they hold effective discussions in lessons to identify any misconceptions. They set mock tests to make sure apprentices' knowledge is secure before moving on to new topics. However, in a few instances, staff do not fully prepare apprentices for their online assessments. Therefore, a few apprentices take multiple times to achieve their online examinations.

Trainers and pastoral staff check apprentices' work thoroughly to make sure it is of a professional standard. They provide helpful feedback on apprentices' written work. For example, they help apprentices improve their accuracy and writing skills in job sheets. Over time, apprentices complete more complex jobs and professional documentation.

Leaders and managers provide appropriate resources for apprentices who have dyslexia. They also assess apprentices for additional learning support needs and identify and use suitable strategies to help apprentices learn. Staff know apprentices extremely well. They monitor apprentices' performance and well-being closely and give each apprentice highly individualised support. As a result, apprentices with additional support needs achieve in line with their peers.

Managers advise apprentices clearly about the future technical pathways available to them. They have recently invited staff from different departments at Sparshatt to explain to apprentices the different career routes they can take. However, staff do not provide sufficient advice to apprentices about career opportunities or further study outside the organisation.

Recently established governance arrangements are effective. Managers have appointed technical and apprenticeship experts who have made a positive impact on the quality of training. Managers are aware of the strengths and the areas for improvement of the provision. They have suitable quality assurance procedures in place and ensure that training is of consistently high quality.

At the start of the course, staff suitably check apprentices' ability to perform basic practical tasks and check they have the English and mathematics skills to learn the

complex elements of the course. Apprentices take part in a valuable work experience placement to help them decide if the role is right for them. Managers shorten apprentices' programmes where they have high levels of knowledge. However, staff do not check the gaps in apprentices' knowledge thoroughly enough against the content of the apprenticeship to individualise apprentices' training from the start of the course. This, and disruption due to COVID-19, has contributed to few apprentices completing their course over the past two years. For more recently recruited apprentices, this has improved and current apprentices make good progress.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers place a high priority on the health, safety and well-being of apprentices. They provide access to counselling and additional support as apprentices need it. Managers set apprentices online safeguarding training and take care to discuss and revisit topics with apprentices about issues that may affect them, such as consent, drug abuse and risks of radicalisation.

The well-trained designated safeguarding lead and deputy have clear reporting procedures. Managers keep accurate records of any concerns and follow them up promptly.

Managers suitably check that staff are safe to work with adult apprentices and provide helpful training to mentors working with apprentices to help keep them safe.

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

- Staff should check more thoroughly what apprentices know and can do at the start of their course to identify specific gaps in apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours relative to the apprenticeship standard.
- During reviews of apprentices' progress, apprentices, managers and training staff should reflect on and record the progress apprentices make in gaining the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be successful. They should set ambitious targets to help apprentices to achieve their assessments at the first attempt.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices receive a suitably wide range of careers information, advice and guidance.

## Provider details

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<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Joanne Jackson
<b>Provider type</b>	Employer provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of aftersales, 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

Rebecca Jennings, lead inspector  
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His Majesty's Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector

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