

# Inspection of Cool Blue College Limited

Inspection dates:

1 to 4 August 2023

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Apprenticeships

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

## Information about this provider

Cool Blue College Limited is an independent learning provider that delivers apprenticeships in the north east of England. The college last received a short inspection in June 2017 as Youngsave Company Limited. In January 2023, a new leadership and management team acquired the college.

At the time of the inspection, there were 77 apprentices, of whom 26 were aged under 18 years. There were 23 apprentices on the level 3 business administration standard, 17 on the level 3 motor vehicle service and maintenance technician, 14 on the level 2 customer service practitioner, six apprentices on level 3 customer service specialist and six apprentices on level 5 operations/departmental manager. There were fewer than five apprentices on the level 2 autocare technician and the level 2 supply chain warehouse operative apprenticeships.

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

Apprentices demonstrate positive and respectful behaviours. They attend their off-the-job training well and contribute positively to their workplaces. For example, level 3 business administration apprentices understand the importance of developing good business-related behaviours when representing their company, such as being professional when communicating with senior managers and clients.

Apprentices develop their confidence and resilience. They recognise that these are important qualities for success in their future careers. Apprentices are keen to progress from their apprenticeships into employment and further training.

Apprentices do not receive sufficient high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance. At the start of their apprenticeships they are provided with information about the career paths available to them. However, tutors do not ensure that the provision of careers advice continues through apprenticeship programmes. Most apprentices receive informative careers advice through conversations with their employers about the progress they can make within the business or organisations they work in.

Apprentices do not benefit from well-planned and implemented off-the-job training. Tutors deliver training using resource packs which are provided by end-point assessment organisations. They use the packs to guide apprentices to complete sections of the end-point-assessment portfolio. However, they rely too heavily on this approach as the main teaching strategy. As a result, apprentices do not benefit from a sufficiently broad curriculum based on their job roles and starting points.

Apprentices feel safe at the training centre and in the workplace. Tutors routinely check that apprentices do not experience bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment and abuse. Apprentices know how to report any concerns they have to their managers and designated safeguarding leads (DSL) should they feel unsafe or are concerned about others, including their peers.

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

Leaders and managers select and deliver apprenticeships which are relevant to the employers they work with. They have recently reduced the apprenticeship offer to focus on apprenticeships that help apprentices progress into careers in business administration, customer service and motor vehicle maintenance.

Leaders have identified weaknesses in the apprenticeship provision since acquiring the college in January 2023. They have implemented new quality assurance measures, which has helped them to understand the issues with the quality of training and the number of apprentices who leave their programme early. However, it is too soon to determine the impact of the actions that leaders have taken to tackle these weaknesses.

Most tutors have relevant experience in the subjects they teach and are appropriately qualified. However, they do not use a wide enough range of strategies in their teaching to ensure that apprentices securely commit new knowledge to their long-term memory or to help apprentices who struggle with assimilating too much new information at once. In a few instances, tutors move on too quickly for apprentices who need more time to consolidate their learning.

Tutors have a clear understanding of the progress that apprentices make towards completing their portfolios, and they report any concerns to leaders swiftly. They then take appropriate action to help apprentices who fall behind, such as arranging for apprentices to attend additional English and mathematics sessions as they approach their final assessments. Most apprentices have a clear understanding of the structure of their apprenticeship programme and know how they will be assessed at end-point-assessment.

Most apprentices receive clear and helpful feedback from tutors on their portfolio work. Tutors check grammar and punctuation and assess the quality of submitted work in line with end-point assessment requirements. For example, on the level 2 customer service practitioner programme, feedback on assessed portfolio work helps apprentices to know when they are ready to move on to the next unit.

Tutors who teach functional skills course use information from apprentices' starting points to identify the knowledge and skills gaps that apprentices have. The few apprentices studying for their functional skills examinations rightly value the English and mathematics training. In mathematics lessons, level 3 motor vehicle service and maintenance technician apprentices are taught useful calculations, supporting them to understand measurement and unit conversion. Apprentices apply what they learn to aspects of their job roles, demonstrating a secure understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, following training, apprentices accurately measure and calculate the safe limits of brake pads. They then advise customers of the need to replace pads where they are below legal limits.

Tutors use learning support strategies well to support apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Apprentices with dyslexia are supported well, with strategies in place to help them overcome barriers to learning. Tutors provide them with coloured overlays and large print text, and they allow for additional time during examinations.

Leaders and managers work well with employers to help them understand their responsibilities and commitments when employing an apprentice. Most employers attend review meetings and provide apprentices with sufficient time away from the workplace to complete their off-the-job training. They value their apprentices and are keen to help them to develop and acquire new knowledge and skills during their on-the-job training in the workplace.

Leaders have not ensured that the personal development curriculum is well implemented. They provide apprentices with the opportunity to study a wide range of short courses covering a range of personal development topics. These include

subjects such as first aid, healthy eating and lifestyles, managing money and gambling awareness, safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. These courses are made available to all apprentices on a voluntary basis. Leaders recognise that very few apprentices engage in and benefit from this useful training.

Leaders support staff well-being and welfare. Caseloads for tutors are manageable, and they have access to an employee assistance programme should they need to discuss personal concerns with professionals. Staff can approach the DSL, who is a trained mental health first aider, should they require workplace support.

Leaders have appointed new governors, who are committed to supporting them to make improvements. However, governors do not have experience in apprenticeship training. As a result, they focus too much on achievement and not enough on the quality of education. Governors recognise that, as a new governance board, they need to increase their oversight and understanding of what constitutes effective apprenticeship provision so that they can help leaders to make improvements and address weaknesses.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff undertake safeguarding training. This helps staff to know when, how and what to report should they come across safeguarding issues or concerns. Leaders provide staff with refresher training to keep their knowledge of safeguarding up to date. For example, staff study online courses to widen their awareness of risks associated with extremist behaviour, cyber security, county lines and gambling, which the provider recognises as posing threats to apprentices.

DSLs and deputies are suitably qualified to undertake their duties. They engage well with external agencies and professionals, such as the local 'Prevent' coordinator. They use the information they receive to create informative newsletters, which they then issue to apprentices and their employers about risks they and their organisations may face.

Leaders recruit staff safely into teaching and training posts. They have clear policies and procedures in place to ensure that apprentices are protected from risks of harm in their workplace and when attending the training centre.

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

- Ensure that all apprentices benefit from an ambitious and well-planned and implemented apprenticeship curriculum.
- Ensure that staff receive sufficient support and pedagogical training to plan and teach an ambitious curriculum.

- Ensure that apprentices benefit from effective careers information and guidance to understand how to achieve their long-term career goals.
- Ensure that apprentices participate in the well-planned personal development activities that leaders provide.
- Maintain sufficient oversight of the quality of education and training to take timely and appropriate improvement actions.
- Ensure that those responsible for governance provide sufficient scrutiny of the quality of the apprenticeship provision to challenge leaders to make swift improvements.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	53388
<b>Address</b>	Doxford International Business Park 3 Victory Way Sunderland SR3 3XL
<b>Contact number</b>	0191 510 0414
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.coolbluecollege.com">www.coolbluecollege.com</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Mark Clelland
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 June 2013
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	N/A

## 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

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His Majesty's Inspector

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