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Inspection of Avado Apprenticeships Limited

Inspection dates: 20 to 23 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
The quality of education	**Requires improvement**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Requires improvement**
Adult learning programmes	**Requires improvement**
Apprenticeships	**Requires improvement**
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Avado Apprenticeships Limited (Avado), based in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, is one of several education brands owned and run by the Avado Group. Avado began teaching apprenticeships in 2012 under its former company name of BC Arch Limited. The provider offers standards-based apprenticeships from level 3 to 7 across a range of programmes in data, digital, human resources (HR), accountancy and learning and development. Avado is no longer recruiting to the accountancy and most of the HR and learning and development programmes.

The majority of apprentices work in and around London. Smaller numbers of apprentices work across the country. Avado works with two subcontractors. The University of Buckingham teaches the level 7 digital and technology solution specialist, and First Intuition provides training in accountancy on Avado's behalf.

At the time of the inspection, there were around 1,500 apprentices. There were around 480 apprentices studying the level 5 HR consultant partner, 278 on the level 3 HR support, 165 on level 4 data analyst, 156 on level 7 strategic people professional, 70 on level 4 business analyst, 64 on level 7 digital technical solution specialist, and 53 on level 3 data technician. A small number of apprentices were on a range of apprenticeships in learning and development, finance, taxation, and digital marketer.

Avado started to offer adult learning through skills bootcamp courses in October 2022. At the time of the inspection, there were 837 learners on a range of skills bootcamp courses in data and digital skills.

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

Most apprentices and learners enjoy their training. They like the opportunity to learn online and are motivated to complete their studies. They have positive attitudes to their learning. However, too many apprentices on programmes such as level 5 HR consultant partner, level 3 data technician and level 4 business analyst standards have experienced disruption to their learning. This is partly due to changes in their learning development coaches (LDCs), a lack of clear information about the requirements of the training at the start of their programme and a delay in accessing teaching sessions. As a result, a high proportion of apprentices have not completed their programme in the planned time.

Adult learners do not benefit from consistently good teaching, learning and support. Many struggle to remember the content of their digital course. This is because tutors do not always use effective techniques during online sessions to help learners retain foundation knowledge. As a result, learners are not confident to conduct key functions in data and software manipulation, nor can they explain successfully what they know about algorithms and script before they learn more complex information. Too many learners leave the course before completion.

Many apprentices gain confidence and develop the skills they need for work. For example, apprentices on level 3 HR support programmes gain the confidence to take on more responsibility. Apprentices on level 7 digital technical solutions (DTS) conduct software developer interviews successfully, using their new knowledge of programming language.

Apprentices get good support to develop their knowledge and use of English and mathematics. This includes those who do not need to take examinations in these topics. As a result, apprentices improve their use of English, particularly in their academic writing. The majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics.

Apprentices and learners benefit from learning in inclusive and supportive environments. Their LDCs care about their welfare and well-being. LDCs ensure that apprentices and learners understand the importance of equality of opportunity. They discuss frequently how British values feature in their learning and jobs. Apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have concerns.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance have correctly identified the decline in the quality of education that apprentices receive. This includes the low proportion of apprentices who achieve their programmes. Governors have taken clear and decisive action to improve this. For example, they have stopped recruitment to the HR level 3 and 5 programmes. They have paused recruitment to the business analyst programme while they review the curriculum. Governors have recruited a new chief

executive officer and quality team. The new team is committed to improving the provision. However, it is too early to see the full impact of the improvements, and there remains too much inconsistency in the quality of the apprenticeship training.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that the quality of the adult learning skills bootcamp programme is good enough. Too many learners do not complete their programme. Leaders do not ensure that those learners who complete the course receive sufficient support to help them move on to their next steps. At the time of the inspection, around half of the learners who had completed their skills bootcamp had secured a job interview. Of those who had not had an interview, most of those whom inspectors spoke with said they were not getting enough support to secure an interview.

Leaders and managers have focused the curriculum to meet local and national skills needs in the digital and technology sector. They work closely with a range of employers to design the content of their programmes. This ensures that tutors teach learners and apprentices content that reflects up-to-date trends in digital technology. Most employers appreciate the benefits the apprenticeship programme offers. For example, employers recognise how apprentices have made changes in areas such as precise cost saving forecast and improved complaints procedures.

Leaders design most apprenticeship programmes logically so that apprentices build their knowledge over time. For example, apprentices on level 4 data analyst programmes learn about analytic concepts before they cover engineering in programming language and advanced data analytics. As a result, most apprentices recall and remember essential knowledge.

Leaders and managers have not designed the adult learning programme well enough. Tutors teach the same content at the same level of complexity to all learners. Learners with prior knowledge recall their learning about data visualisation software and interactive data features well. Learners with limited knowledge when they start the programme find the content overwhelming. They do not have enough opportunities to apply and embed their knowledge and struggle to keep up with those learners who have prior experience. Tutors do not check learners' understanding thoroughly enough. They do not use the information they have about learners' prior knowledge and skills effectively to plan what they teach.

The quality of teaching and learning that apprentices receive varies too much. Apprenticeship tutors and LDCs have expert technical knowledge and relevant experience. However, they do not always teach content effectively. A few tutors do not give apprentices clear explanations, link theory to practice or use effective strategies to check what apprentices have learned. As a result, these tutors do not know if apprentices have understood key information.

The majority of apprenticeship LDCs use the results from the initial assessment of apprentices' prior knowledge and skills well to inform their discussions at progress reviews. LDCs identify apprentices' specific areas of strength and weakness. As a

result, they give apprentices targeted support and activities to complete at work to help them make progress.

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices with additional learning needs receive effective support. For example, they ensure that learners with hearing impairments have access to adapted resources. Consequently, apprentices participate in learning successfully with their peers.

Tutors and LDCs do not consistently provide feedback that helps apprentices and learners to improve their work. A few tutors and LDCs do not give apprentices sufficient feedback on the standard of their work or how to gain extra marks in their assignments. On adult learning programmes, learners do not receive enough feedback on their progress. As a result, not all apprentices and learners know what they need to do to improve.

The proportion of apprentices who achieve their apprenticeship is too low. This is mostly because too many apprentices withdrew from their programme early. This was partly due to the impact of the pandemic and disruption to apprentices' learning early in their apprenticeship.

Most apprentices who complete their programme achieve their final assessments. However, too few apprentices gain high grades in these assessments. A high proportion of apprentices succeed in gaining promotion or additional responsibilities at work.

LDCs and tutors give apprentices and learners effective support to develop their wider skills and resilience. For example, in adult learning programmes, tutors share their experiences of dealing with stress and give learners tips on how to take small steps towards big challenges. This helps learners to cope with anxiety and builds their confidence to move towards their next steps. Many apprentices take additional qualifications and have access to sector-specific professional bodies.

The majority of apprentices receive effective careers advice and guidance. They have a good understanding of the options available to them when they complete their studies. This includes how to progress to higher-level job roles and further education. Tutors give adult learners effective support to write their CV, their online profiles and to prepare for job interviews. However, learners do not receive sufficient, ongoing advice and guidance once they have completed their course in seeking work or further study.

Leaders and managers ensure that there are suitable governance arrangements in place. They provide governors with a comprehensive range of reports and data, which helps them to support and challenge the leadership team effectively. Governors understand the provision well and work closely with the leadership team to agree the priorities for improvement. However, they have an overly positive view of the quality of the adult learning programme and elements of the apprenticeship programme. As a result, they have not challenged the team sufficiently on these areas to action the inconsistencies across the provision.

Leaders and managers have recently put in place a suitable range of quality assurance activities. This includes activities to check the quality of their subcontractors. Leaders have sufficient oversight of the subcontracted provision. Through these activities, leaders and managers have identified many of the areas for improvement needed. They have put in place support and training for staff to help them develop their teaching and assessment skills. Staff appreciate the opportunities to engage in professional development activities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders, managers and staff promote a positive safeguarding culture. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies are suitably qualified. The DSL is very knowledgeable and committed and ensures that staff have the right information to help them safeguard apprentices and learners. For example, the DSL sends out weekly emails to staff with useful information and updates about a range of topics, such as coercive behaviour and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Staff complete up-to-date safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. They understand how to recognise potential vulnerabilities in apprentices and adult learners. They know how to refer concerns. These are followed up promptly by the safeguarding team.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They have a reasonable understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including online and from the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must improve the quality and performance of the adult bootcamp courses by:
  - ➢ ensuring that tutors use the results of the initial assessment of learners' prior knowledge and skills to adapt how they teach the content of the programmes to meet the individual needs of learners
  - ➢ ensuring that tutors have the right skills to teach and assess learners' knowledge effectively so that learners retain and apply their learning
  - ➢ ensuring that learners receive sufficient, ongoing advice and guidance to help them prepare for their next steps
  - ➢ increasing the number of learners who access the guaranteed job interview and gain jobs.
- Leaders must ensure that all tutors and LDCs use effective teaching and assessment skills to ensure that apprentices experience a consistently good quality of education across all programmes and achieve well.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices are not disadvantaged due to changes in their LDCs. They must ensure that apprentices receive clear information at the

start of their programme and know how and when to access their teaching sessions.

■ Tutors and LDCs must give apprentices and adult learners helpful feedback on their work and progress. They must ensure that apprentices know how to gain high grades in their assessments and that adult learners know how to improve their work.

Provider details

Unique reference number   1184091

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Contact number   07740307342

Website   www.avadolearning.com

Principal, CEO or equivalent   Jasper Joyce

Provider type   Independent Learning Provider

Date of previous inspection   23 to 26 February 2016

Main subcontractors   University of Buckinghamshire
First Intuition

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality and contracts 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

Jane Hughes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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