

Inspection of The Apprentice Academy Limited

Inspection dates: 11 to 14 July 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	Good

Information about this provider

The Apprentice Academy Limited (TAA) is an independent learning provider based in the north west of England. TAA provides apprenticeships nationally. It provides training mainly through online sessions. Apprentices on accounting apprenticeships receive a mixture of face-to-face and online sessions.

At the time of the inspection, there were 703 apprentices on apprenticeships in the professional, business and finance sector. A fifth of apprentices are under the age of 19. Nearly half of all apprentices study at level 3, with three quarters on business administrator, assistant accountant and housing and property management apprenticeships. Over a quarter of apprentices study at level 4, with two thirds of apprentices on commercial procurement and supply and professional accounting or taxation technician apprenticeships. The remaining apprentices study level 2 finance and finance assistant apprenticeship and level 5 operations or departmental manager apprenticeship.

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

Apprentices display positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy their training and are motivated to perform well in the workplace. For example, business administrator apprentices complete projects to review the efficiency of current systems and processes. They use the information gathered to improve processes in areas such as collating invoices to increase efficiency. Employers value the contributions that apprentices make to their businesses.

Apprentices speak highly of their training and coaching sessions. Attendance is high on most apprenticeships. Apprentices benefit from the industry expertise of their trainers and coaches, who support them to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Operations or departmental manager apprentices develop their understanding of the behaviours that team members display. Consequently, they work with their team members more effectively and say that their training has transformed them into effective managers.

Apprentices benefit from learning in a calm and inclusive online environment. They demonstrate high levels of respect for the views and opinions of others. For example, finance apprentices discuss sensitive topics around the code of ethics professionally and respectfully. Apprentices understand the importance of respect in the workplace. Housing and property management apprentices learn to communicate sensitively and respectfully with anxious residents. They listen carefully and provide appropriate solutions to resolve residents' issues.

Apprentices develop their confidence and self-esteem because of their training. They learn about emotional intelligence, professionalism, and workplace etiquette. Apprentices use these skills to communicate effectively, improve their productivity and develop their resilience.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe online and in the workplace. They complete learning with their coaches, such as in sexual harassment and the appropriate use of social media. Housing and property management apprentices carefully discuss the dangers of entering the properties of residents. They learn to read body language and are mindful of how vulnerable people react in difficult situations.

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

Leaders provide apprenticeships in the professional, business and finance sectors at mainly level 3 and above to meet the demand for higher-level skilled workers. They have focused their apprenticeships to meet the levelling-up agenda and to support employers nationally to fill their skills gaps.

Leaders develop a curriculum that meets the needs of both apprentices and employers. Apprentices aged between 16 and 18 gain experience in bookkeeping at

the start of their accounts or finance assistant apprenticeship. Following this training, they swiftly develop the accounting skills required for their new roles. Leaders introduce additional resources to the data analyst apprenticeship to develop apprentices' programming language skills to an advanced level.

Leaders plan the curriculum in a logical order from which apprentices incrementally build their knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. Data analyst apprentices learn about the quality of data and data cleansing before moving on to researching artificial intelligence. Procurement and supply assistant apprentices learn about ethical procurement and supply and the risks of modern slavery in the supply chain. Following this training, they understand how to evaluate the supply chain and costings.

Most coaches use information collected about what apprentices know and can do at the start of their apprenticeships to individualise their training. Apprentices receive individual learning plans to develop their skills. Coaches revisit these plans to track and monitor apprentices' progress effectively. Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Coaches plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job training for most apprentices effectively. Professional accounting or taxation apprentices learn about internal controls and variation analysis. They apply this knowledge in the workplace to accurately complete complex analyses on variations in tax. Data analyst apprentices shadow colleagues in the control centre that oversee the operations of the business. They learn how to monitor the availability of staff and vehicles. Apprentices use this knowledge to develop dashboards with real time information to improve efficiencies in the business.

Apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills as a result of their apprenticeship. They accurately write business reports and tenders for their managers. Operational or departmental manager apprentices complete cost benefit analysis to identify how quickly they gain a return on investment on new machinery.

Trainers and coaches use assessment effectively to check apprentices' learning and identify gaps in their knowledge. Operational or departmental manager apprentices recall learning about transactional analysis and how they have changed their approach to manage discussions with staff successfully. However, trainers and coaches on business administrator apprenticeships do not sufficiently check apprentices' deeper understanding of the topics learned.

Most trainers and coaches provide effective feedback to apprentices. Apprentices know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Apprentices include technical vocabulary in their written work and develop their presentation skills. However, apprentices do not always receive sufficient feedback on what to do to achieve their highest grades. In these cases, a few apprentices do not achieve the grades of which they are capable.

Most apprentices are prepared well for their next steps. Most apprentices move into promoted posts, receive higher salaries, or progress on to higher level learning at the end of their apprenticeship. However, a few apprentices do not routinely receive ongoing careers advice and guidance on the wider employment and progression opportunities available.

Leaders use a range of information to maintain an oversight of the quality of education that apprentices receive. However, leaders do not always act swiftly enough to rectify the areas for improvement identified.

Board members are suitably qualified and experienced to carry out their roles. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. Board members provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge to hold leaders to account for their actions. However, they acknowledge that a few reports focus too much on apprentices' achievement and not enough on the impact of leaders' actions on improving the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and their deputies are appropriately trained and qualified to carry out their roles. They attend national safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty forums to keep up to date with local safeguarding concerns. The DSL uses this information to inform staff training.

The DSL and deputies record and monitor safeguarding referrals and welfare concerns carefully. Leaders put additional support in place swiftly and liaise well with external agencies when required. Apprentices continue to receive support after they complete their apprenticeship.

Apprentices receive information on safeguarding topics through the 'safe and sound' newsletter. They learn about issues local to the areas in which they work, such as the dangers of nitrous oxide, signs of gaslighting and how to use Clare's Law, known otherwise as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. Apprentices are confident that, if they raise issues, leaders will take these seriously, and they will be dealt with swiftly.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that coaches provide feedback that informs apprentices of how to improve their work so they can achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Leaders should ensure that business administrator coaches use effective strategies to check apprentices' recall of previous learning and identify gaps in their knowledge.
- Leaders should continue to strengthen the quality assurance processes so that they make swift progress to improve the few identified areas for improvement.

They should ensure that they provide useful reports to the board, including information related to the quality of training that apprentices receive, so that the board can provide effective scrutiny and challenge.

- Leaders should improve the careers information, advice and guidance that apprentices receive so that they are aware of the wider career options available to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59161
Address	4th Floor, St James Building 79 Oxford Street Manchester M1 6FQ
Contact number	0161 200 1670
Website	theapprenticeacademy.co.uk
Managing Director	Alison Bagnall
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider
Date of previous inspection	10 to 13 January 2017
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality manager, 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

Alison Humphreys, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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