

Inspection of KnowledgeBrief Limited

Inspection dates:

22 to 24 August 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

KnowledgeBrief Limited is an independent training provider specialising in leadership and management training. KnowledgeBrief gained a contract to teach apprenticeships in May 2017. The company is based in central London and works with levy paying employers nationally.

At the time of the inspection, there were 131 apprentices on the level 3 team leader standard, 141 apprentices on the level 5 operations/departmental manager standard, 67 apprentices on the level 7 senior leader standard, and 37 on the level 5 coaching professional standard. There were 38 apprentices with special educational needs and around 120 apprentices completing qualifications in English and/or mathematics. The vast majority of teaching is online.

KnowledgeBrief does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices are positive, motivated, and dedicated to their studies. They really appreciate the highly relevant leadership skills they gain. These skills help them apply new leadership styles and to model professional behaviours in their workplace. For example, apprentices on the level 5 operations management programme apply their learning about autocratic and democratic leadership to contribute to change management projects at work. Team leader level 3 apprentices develop the confidence to manage conflict in their teams effectively. Apprentices on the coaching programme have improved their active listening skills as a result of their learning.

Apprentices enjoy learning in a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment. This is because skills coaches develop strong and positive relationships with apprentices. Apprentices frequently told inspectors how fantastic and supportive their coaches are. Apprentices really respect the knowledge and relevance their coaches bring to their highly effective one-to-one progress reviews. As a result, apprentices are confident to discuss a range of topics with their coaches and to ask for support.

Apprentices with special educational needs receive good support. Coaches quickly identify when apprentices need extra help, and make effective adjustments. For example, apprentices who are hard of hearing have interpreters in workshops, so that they do not miss any content. Apprentices with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder have shorter and more frequent sessions. Coaches spend time to help them navigate the highly interactive online platform and resources.

Apprentices receive particularly good support to prepare them for their final assessments. Coaches have high expectations of apprentices and ensure apprentices know how to gain high grades. The majority of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship and a high proportion gain distinctions in their final assessments. Many apprentices gain promotion and a pay rise as a result of their apprenticeship.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked effectively to rectify almost all of the weaknesses identified. They ensure that apprentices enjoy good quality teaching and assessment. Skills coaches are well equipped to support apprentices online. Leaders have successfully put in place a range of activities and resources to help apprentices develop their wider skills and interests. They have ensured that the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification has increased. However, they recognise the need to improve this further.

Leaders, staff, and employers have high expectations and aspirations for their apprentices. The curriculum is challenging and meets employers' needs. Employers value the strong partnership they have with KnowledgeBrief staff. They appreciate how leaders and staff adapt the content of the curriculum to meet their needs. For example, coaches added more teaching about customer services for a particular employer. Employers recognise the benefit of the apprenticeship. They understand

their roles and responsibilities. Communication between staff and employers is frequent and productive. Consequently, staff recruit apprentices who are suited to the programme. Employers have a good understanding of the progress their apprentices make.

Skills coaches and tutors ensure that their teaching and coaching is interesting. They develop topics and concepts carefully, so that apprentices gain knowledge over time and are confident to apply what they learn at work. For example, apprentices on the level 7 strategic leadership course use the knowledge they gain in finance to scrutinise balance sheets at work. In mathematics sessions, tutors use a range of techniques, such as mnemonics, to help apprentices remember formulas and long multiplication.

Apprentices become more confident at work because of the on-the-job training they receive. Employers and coaches work together to ensure that this learning complements the off-the-job training. For example, many apprentices attend their in-company leadership course alongside their apprenticeship. Employers train apprentices on how to chair management meetings and how to conduct disciplinary investigations. Consequently, apprentices learn how to do their jobs to meet their employers' standards and expectations.

Skills coaches and tutors use assessment effectively to adapt their teaching and support. They use the assessment of apprentices' prior knowledge and skills to determine the types of projects and work they set for apprentices. Coaches use a range of effective assessment techniques to check apprentices' understanding. For example, they are skilful at encouraging apprentices to reflect on their learning during professional discussions. Coaches and tutors give apprentices helpful feedback on how to improve their assignments and aim for higher marks.

Leaders do not ensure that all apprentices who need to complete qualifications in English and mathematics get timely support. Leaders do not track apprentices' progress in these subjects closely enough. While the majority of apprentices who take their examinations pass, not all apprentices start their learning early enough. Too often, apprentices experience disruption to their learning due to staffing capacity.

Apprentices benefit from good opportunities to extend their knowledge and experience beyond their vocational learning. They attend a range of 'leaders in action' talks, including with external speakers, which informs them about topics, such as how to present themselves on social media professionally. Apprentices have access to a range of resources that promote healthy lifestyles and mental health, such as the online well-being sessions.

Skills coaches talk frequently to apprentices about their next steps. They have meaningful discussions about apprentices' career aspirations, particularly within apprentices' workplaces. However, leaders have not ensured that apprentices receive sufficient information about the leadership pathways available to them after

their apprenticeship. As a result, a minority of apprentices are not clear on the opportunities available to them.

Leaders and managers commit to developing their team. They ensure that staff attend a range of frequent and effective professional development activities. For example, coaches have training to understand different coaching models, set effective goals, and conduct effective progress reviews. As a result, they improve their practice. Staff have positive attitudes to their work and are proud to work at KnowledgeBrief.

Leaders have effective quality assurance activities in place. They are clear on their strengths and areas for improvement. For example, they recognise that while they have taken action to improve apprentices' access to the teaching of English and mathematics, this requires further improvement. Leaders have sensible and clear plans in place to rectify this.

There is an effective governance structure in place. This includes external support and challenge. The board has a range of suitable members, with the right knowledge and experience. Leaders and board members use their specialisms appropriately to scrutinise the performance and quality of the apprenticeship programme closely. Members receive a good range of information to aid them in their discussions and to prioritise actions and focus their resources.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have put in place appropriate policies and procedures, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead and safeguarding committee understand well the requirements to safeguard apprentices. They react quickly when skills coaches raise concerns about their apprentices. They ensure apprentices, who are potentially at risk, receive effective support.

Staff complete appropriate safeguarding training and frequent updates. They cover a range of topics to help them understand the risks and issues apprentices may face, such as in relation to modern day slavery, dealing with grief, the impacts of the menopause and sexual harassment. Consequently, staff supporting apprentices are well equipped to recognise changes in apprentices' behaviour and report them appropriately.

Apprentices receive information about how to keep safe, including online, during their induction and throughout their apprenticeship. They feel safe and know how to report concerns. Apprentices have a reasonable understanding about extremism and radicalisation.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders must ensure they have sufficient staff capacity and capability to give apprentices who need to complete qualifications in English and mathematics timely and effective support.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices understand the range of career pathways available to them after they complete their apprenticeship.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278615
Address	85 Great Portland Street London W1W 7LT
Contact number	07841867140
Website	https://www.knowledgebrief.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Matthew Wolstenholme
Provider type	Independent Learning Provider
Date of previous inspection	6 to 9 July 2021
Main subcontractors	n/a

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Operations and Quality 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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