

Inspection of Astro Martin Ltd

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Astro Martin Ltd is an independent training provider based in Croydon, south London. Astro Martin Ltd gained a contract in 2019 to teach levy-funded apprenticeships. It recruited its first apprentices in February 2022. At the time of the inspection, there were five adult apprentices all on the customer service practitioner apprenticeship at level 2, all based with a single employer in Oldham.

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

Apprentices are left too much to their own devices to complete their apprenticeship. Tutors require apprentices to complete their apprenticeship through workbooks, which they check at monthly intervals. They do not do any direct in-person or online teaching of the vocational aspects of the course. They do not provide apprentices with feedback on their work. This results in apprentices not knowing what they need to do to improve, or knowing whether they are meeting the standard necessary to pass the end-point assessment.

Apprentices have monthly review meetings with their tutors, but these meetings mostly cease after the apprentice has reached their planned completion date. Most apprentices do not complete their apprenticeship in the planned timescale and therefore receive little support as they prepare for their end-point assessment. This contributes to very few apprentices passing their apprenticeship.

Tutors support apprentices well to achieve qualifications in English and mathematics. They provide apprentices with a range of study materials and practice examination papers and are available to answer questions that apprentices may have. Most apprentices pass their English and mathematics examinations on their first attempt.

Apprentices gain confidence in their customer service roles, such as in call-handling and how to manage complaints. During reviews, tutors discuss with apprentices the importance of identifying vulnerable people. Apprentices work in a property letting environment and use this knowledge to prioritise housing for those who may become vulnerable. Apprentices know about safeguarding and how to report concerns, should these arise.

Apprentices are helped by tutors to prepare for their next career step. During reviews, tutors support apprentices to write a CV and help with identifying local recruitment agencies. However, apprentices do not have access to any impartial careers guidance and are overly reliant on tutors' knowledge of possible options.

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

Leaders and managers started teaching the level 2 customer service apprenticeship without having the staffing expertise to do this effectively. Since the new provider monitoring visit, they have been slow to improve the quality of teaching. For example, they have not worked with employers to make sure that what apprentices learn in off-the-job training aligns adequately with their job roles. The actions that leaders have put in place since the monitoring visit have not had a positive enough impact on the training experience of apprentices.

Tutors do not liaise with the apprentices' employer to plan the training so that it meets the needs of the employer. They rely on workbooks that are based on the order in which the knowledge, skills, and behaviours are listed in the apprenticeship standard. They do not adjust this to suit the employer's or apprentices' needs. There

is little or no alignment of the training that apprentices complete with the activities that they do as part of their job. Apprentices have limited ability to apply what they have learned in the workplace and ensure that their knowledge is secure.

Tutors identify with apprentices what they know at the start of the course. However, they do not use this information to plan apprentices' training. Tutors require all apprentices to work through the same series of workbooks in the same order, regardless of the prior knowledge or skills they have. This contributes to apprentices making slow progress and lacking the motivation to complete their course.

Leaders and managers have started to develop a programme of personal development learning. They recognise that too much has been left to individual tutors without sufficient oversight, resulting in inconsistency in the training that apprentices receive and the knowledge they gain. Consequently, while some apprentices have developed secure knowledge about topics related to fundamental British values, radicalisation and extremism, and equality and diversity, others have not.

Staff complete a range of professional development activities to maintain currency in their knowledge of the sectors in which they work. They do not complete training to help them improve their teaching and assessment skills.

Leaders and managers do not have a good enough oversight of the quality of the provision. They have an overly positive view and are not evaluative enough in their self-assessment. Leaders do not have any external oversight of the quality of their provision to help them to have an objective view. This means that there is no challenge to leaders and managers on the quality of the apprenticeship programme. Leaders do not know what actions they need to take to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve how the curriculum is planned and taught so that apprentices are taught by tutors in order to gain the knowledge they need to pass their apprenticeship.
- Plan apprentices' on- and off-the-job training so that apprentices can apply in the workplace what they have learned on provider's course.
- Use the information on apprentices' knowledge and skills at the start of the course to plan the training and ensure that the programme is suitably demanding for all apprentices.
- Develop further the personal development curriculum so that apprentices have a firm understanding of relevant topics, including those related to fundamental British values and how these apply to their lives.

- Make sure that leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of the quality of training, and give tutors effective professional development to improve their teaching.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2691298
Address	Airport House Purley Way Croydon CR0 0XZ
Contact number	0208 781 1908
Website	www.astromartin.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Rana Quadir
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

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 monitoring visit 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

Steve Lambert, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Hillman

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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