Inspection of Appris Charity Limited

Inspection dates: 28 November to 1 December 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	Good

Information about this provider

Appris Charity Limited provides engineering apprenticeships across West Yorkshire. There were 486 apprentices at the time of the inspection. The vast majority were on level 3 programmes, including 159 engineer technicians, 112 engineer fitters, 61 metal fabricators and 55 maintenance and operations engineering technicians. There were six apprentices studying a level 2 general welder (arc welding) programme and 16 apprentices on two level 4 engineering programmes. Nearly two thirds of apprentices are 16 to 18 years old, with the vast majority being under 25 at the start of their programmes.

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

Apprentices benefit from industry-standard facilities that replicate a professional engineering environment. They quickly develop competent practical skills which they apply in their workplaces. For example, they use specialised computer numerical control milling machines and lathes, and learn how to carry out fault-finding.

Apprentices value being treated as individuals as part of a friendly, safe environment. Tutors and training advisors build supportive relationships with apprentices and set high expectations of professionalism. The behaviour of the vast majority of apprentices is exemplary, demonstrating courtesy and respect.

Apprentices are motivated to learn and keen to ask questions to deepen their understanding. They grow in maturity during their programmes, many being at the start of their careers when they enrol. Apprentices contribute new ideas in the workplace, which are valued by employers.

Tutors provide apprentices with opportunities to take part in projects that support the community, such as making metal lanterns for the Worth Valley Steam Railway. Apprentices are invited to speak at the secondary schools that they attended about their experience as apprentices, and a few have become STEM ambassadors. Those involved in these activities enhance their confidence and broaden their talents.

Apprentices are suitably prepared for their next steps, and most have a clear plan for what they will do immediately after their apprenticeship, including progressing to the next level of training or achieving additional accreditation such as a crane licence. However, apprentices often do not recall having received careers guidance and are, therefore, not aware of the wide range of opportunities available to them for their long-term careers.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale to specialise in engineering apprenticeships, using their skills, experience and passion. This aligns well to the local skills improvement plan and regional skills priorities. Leaders match the needs of employers carefully with the most appropriate programme for each apprentice.

Leaders build strong relationships with their employers. They work with them effectively to design a curriculum for each apprentice, often including additional knowledge and skills relevant to their job roles. Where appropriate, level 3 apprentices complete level 4 qualifications to prepare them for sustained employment and to progress in their careers.

Effective governance is provided by members of a board of trustees who bring valuable expertise in both the industry and education. Trustees are involved in

shaping the strategic direction and provide informed challenge. They value the openness of leaders and their willingness to make improvements to benefit apprentices.

Leaders inspire confidence in their staff and role model the principles which underpin the culture that they have established. Staff value the welcoming and supportive environment throughout the organisation. Leaders are considerate of staff workloads and ensure that staff have the resources they need to do their jobs efficiently.

Tutors and training advisors have considerable industry experience. They keep their subject knowledge up to date, including in advances in engineering technologies, which they use in their teaching. Tutors and training advisors have opportunities to reflect on and develop their craft of teaching. However, they do not routinely benefit from professional development around current teaching methods based on educational research.

Tutors plan the curriculum effectively so that apprentices develop the specialist skills that they need for their workplaces. Apprentices learn basic hand-tool skills and then how to safely operate machinery to measure and shape component parts, such as the threads in a screw mechanism. Tutors include real-world projects such as working with the National Physical Laboratory to optimise measurement processes during the manufacturing of ring gauges to a high degree of precision.

Most tutors use a range of teaching techniques effectively so that apprentices can commit new learning to their long-term memory and apply it in the workplace. For example, tutors set up interesting experiments to teach level 4 apprentices to calculate the velocity of water accurately. However, in a few cases, tutors do not check apprentices' learning consistently or give apprentices enough time to demonstrate their understanding.

Tutors and training advisors provide valuable support which enables apprentices to maintain the momentum of their progress. When apprentices struggle with a particular aspect of learning, they access extra help through additional workshops. Tutors and training advisors know their apprentices well and adapt their teaching to provide helpful support, including for those with additional needs such as dyslexia.

Tutors use assessment effectively, providing useful and constructive feedback to apprentices which helps them to improve. For example, level 3 metal fabricators refine their skills to translate technical drawings into fabricated products which are ready to be used in industry. Level 4 apprentices use advice from tutors to improve their accuracy and produce components in different materials to a high standard.

Training advisors carry out valuable reviews with apprentices in the workplace to monitor the progress that apprentices are making and to discuss their well-being. They keep employers up to date with their apprentices' progress. Most training advisors set useful targets to help apprentices know where to focus in their learning.

Tutors support apprentices well to continue to develop their mathematics and English skills during their apprenticeships. Skilled tutors provide expert tuition in advanced mathematics contextualised for engineering, such as completing simultaneous calculations for working with three-phase motors. Apprentices improve their writing skills and confidence to communicate their ideas. Apprentices working towards mathematics and English qualifications achieve these early in their programmes, the majority at the first attempt.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours during their programmes. They use specialist terminology confidently and carry out practical activities with decreasing amounts of supervision. For example, level 3 engineering fitters learn to interpret diagrams, select materials and develop wiring boards for lighting systems and extractor fans, working safely and with precision. Apprentices make valuable contributions in their workplaces, and many take on extra responsibilities.

Apprentices achieve very well in the qualifications that form part of their programmes. The vast majority of apprentices who complete their programmes achieve their apprenticeships. On programmes where merits and distinctions are available, a few achieve these grades. Training advisors prepare apprentices well to pass their end-point assessments. However, they do not ensure that apprentices understand precisely how they can achieve high grades where they are available.

Too many apprentices left their programmes early in recent years. This was mainly due to redundancies in large organisations and apprentices leaving the sector in the first sixth months of being full-time in the workplace. Leaders have put measures in place to try to retain more apprentices, such as understanding the realities of working in engineering, and support to find alternative placements when needed. In the last calendar year, there have been fewer early leavers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that apprentices receive effective careers advice and guidance which is specific to their aspirations and empowers them to understand their opportunities beyond their apprenticeship.
- Provide opportunities for tutors and training advisors to develop their craft of teaching, including through access to current research in teaching methods.
- Ensure that tutors consistently check apprentices' understanding effectively before they move on in their teaching.
- Ensure that apprentices understand what they need to do to achieve high grades in their end-point assessments where they are available.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50809
Address	BTAL House Laisterdyke Bradford BD4 8AT
Contact number	01274 668149
Website	appris.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	John Igoe
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	14 to 17 November 2017

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the work-based learning 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

Karen Anderson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Chris Wiley	Ofsted Inspector

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