

Inspection of Severn Trent PLC

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
<hr/>	
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Severn Trent PLC (Severn Trent) is one of the largest of the 11 regulated water and sewerage companies that operate in England and Wales. The company provides a wide range of water-related services to residential and commercial customers across central England, from the outskirts of Bristol to the Sheffield City Region.

The company offers two standards-based apprenticeships: a level 2 apprenticeship in water process operative, and a level 3 apprenticeship in water industry network technician. At the time of inspection, there were 132 apprentices in learning, most of whom were adults. Most apprentices work towards the level 2 apprenticeship. Fifty-four of these apprentices are studying towards a vocationally specific pathway in wastewater treatment, and a further 38 are following an alternative pathway in water treatment. Forty apprentices are undertaking training on the level 3 water industry network technician apprenticeship. All provision is taught by Severn Trent staff.

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

Apprentices routinely benefit from access to expert training and coaching taught by experienced trainer/assessors. They enjoy putting what they have learned into practice and ensuring that the quality of their work reflects the standards expected within the water industry.

Apprentices accelerate their learning by working alongside highly committed workplace mentors. Mentors support apprentices to successfully develop the high-level employability skills that improve their effectiveness in the utilities-related sector.

Apprentices develop a wide range of vocational and technical skills associated with the maintenance of the water supply network and ensure that incidences of water leakage and/or pollution are promptly responded to as and when they arise.

Apprentices are overwhelmingly positive about the support and guidance they receive. Apprentices talk with confidence and pride about what they have learned, including valuable personal skills such as self-confidence and working as part of a team, providing an essential public service.

Apprentices enjoy their learning. Their conduct and behaviour, at the academy and in the workplace, closely mirror the standards set for them by leaders. Apprentices are highly motivated to learn and make progress in their careers. They are aware of, and inspired by, the extensive training and development opportunities available to them, including attendance at high-profile guest speaker events and industry panels. However, apprentices' attendance at the academy is too low.

Apprentices consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to their training, exhibit high levels of respect for others and have an uncompromising focus on diligently following health and safety practices. They routinely act in a manner that is safe to themselves and others when working in a range of potentially hazardous environments.

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

Leaders and academy managers have a clear rationale for their apprenticeship. They have developed a well-considered vision for the development and embedding of apprenticeships as a key element of an ambitious organisation workforce and talent development strategy.

Leaders and governors have high expectations of apprentices and have created a positive and purposeful culture which permeates the whole organisation. They use management information effectively to inform their understanding and oversight of curriculums. However, a few of the key performance indicators set by leaders for the apprenticeships are not sufficiently challenging to reflect the ambitious vision set by governors.

Trainer/assessors use a range of appropriate strategies to identify the starting points of apprentices and then use this information to diligently plan and sequence learning that increases in complexity over time. However, academy staff do not ensure that the curriculums for apprentices who are exempt from taking English and mathematics qualifications are consistently informed by apprentices' starting points in these essential skills.

Apprentices routinely benefit from curriculums that are both technically demanding and logically sequenced. Trainer/assessors who are experienced and suitably qualified make good use of their extensive industrial knowledge and expertise to develop, challenge and extend apprentices' technical knowledge and vocational skills over time. Most apprentices, including the few who have identified additional learning needs and/or disabilities, make assured progress in their learning, achieve their potential and become highly valued members of their teams. A high proportion of apprentices gain high grades in their end-point assessment. However, too many apprentices on the level 3 apprenticeship do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Academy staff and apprentices' workplace mentors work well with each other to ensure that apprentices gain appropriate operational experience encompassing all aspects of regulated water supply, distribution and treatment. As a result, most apprentices rapidly develop proficiency in their vocational abilities and technical skills that are closely aligned to the technical standards associated with working in the water industry. For example, level 2 apprentices confidently learn how to maintain the water supply network by the correct installation and fitment of assets such as pipes and valves or undertaking maintenance activities such as pressure water jetting and desludging operations on wastewater outlets and/or storm drains. Level 3 apprentices quickly develop the technical skills in how to assure water quality and supply by undertaking pressure and flow measurement monitoring to detect for the presence of any water leakages.

Trainer/assessors routinely provide constructive and detailed feedback to apprentices on what they need to do to improve their skills and the standard of their work, so that it is reflective of industry standards. In addition, apprentices benefit from an extensive range of additional skills training that they gain at the academy and in the workplace. For example, apprentices complete additional water industry competency accreditations, including undertaking confined space and emergency first-aid training, that contribute to and support their effectiveness at work.

Apprentices benefit from access to exceptional high-quality training and skills development facilities that enable them to safely practise and refine their technical skills. For example, apprentices make excellent use of virtual reality technology to understand and practise the safe delivery and storage of chemical disinfectants used to treat water so that it is safe to drink. Apprentices also benefit from using industry-standard training simulators that challenge them to identify and pinpoint water leakages on a wider range of water mains supply pipework.

Leaders ensure that apprentices are supported exceptionally well to develop a comprehensive and outstanding understanding of themselves as employees and citizens. This includes supporting them to develop their character and confidence through participation in a wide and beneficial range of volunteering and social enterprise initiatives; for example, acting as guides for residents with sight impairment who attend jobs fairs, delivering science technology engineering and mathematics awareness events for young children and underrepresented groups. They also contribute to several community-based project and charity initiatives for those experiencing hardship or social disadvantage.

Apprentices benefit from detailed careers education, information, advice and guidance. They have a precise understanding of both the demands and the benefits of the apprenticeship. They are, as a result, able to make well-informed choices about their future careers in the company or the broader utilities-related sector. All apprentices progress to permanent roles in the organisation following the completion of their training and a few are promoted early to more senior posts.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Set demanding and ambitious performance targets for all aspects of the apprenticeship and review these regularly to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the provision.
- Ensure that trainer/assessors closely monitor the progress and performance of level 3 apprentices and intervene quickly where internal monitoring systems highlight that individual progress is not in line with leaders' high expectations.
- Use the information gathered from apprentices with exemptions in English and/or mathematics so that they are provided with opportunities to further develop their skills and confidence in these subjects.
- Swiftly improve apprentices' attendance at planned training sessions taught at the academy so that it is at least in line with the high target set by leaders.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2674172
Address	2 St John's Street Coventry CV1 2LZ
Contact number	02477 716634
Website	www.severntrent.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Sarah Harris, Head of Academy
Provider type	Employer provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the learning lead operations, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring 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

Victor Reid, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Breheny

Ofsted Inspector

Jaswant Mann

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023