

Inspection of TheLightbulb Ltd

Inspection dates:

27 February to 1 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

TheLightbulb Ltd (TLB) is an independent learning provider. Since the previous inspection, the provision offered by TLB has changed significantly. In 2022, TLB became part of the Get Set UK Group. Since then, leaders have gained new contracts from the Greater London Authority for adult learning programmes. They also provide Skills Bootcamps in digital subjects for the Department for Education and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

TLB provide a range of adult learning programmes, including customer service, teaching assistants, cyber security, functional skills English and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 85 adult learners in learning. There were a further 41 learners on Skills Bootcamps. There were 118 apprentices, most studying business-related subjects. Thirty-six were on level 3 business administrator, 15 on level 2 customer service practitioner and 12 on level 3 team leader or supervisor. There were also small groups on digital and adult care qualifications. Leaders do not subcontract any of their provision.

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

Too few learners and apprentices remain in learning. Too often, apprentices do not know the commitment required for the apprenticeship. Too many leave their employers before the apprenticeship has finished. Most learners and apprentices who remain on their courses to the end achieve their qualifications.

Staff do not provide sufficient careers guidance. Too few learners gain employment on completion of their course. Apprentices are well prepared for their immediate next steps. They gain the skills required to succeed, and many stay with their employer and gain promotion.

Learners and apprentices value the care and support that teachers and learning development mentors (LDMs) give them. Most grow in confidence at work or in applying for work. Learners benefit from a supportive environment, both in the classroom and online, and for many, this is their first experience of education for several years.

Learners and apprentices demonstrate the professional behaviours demanded of employers. Learners and apprentices have high levels of respect for each other, teaching staff, their colleagues in the workplace and clients. Those on the level 3 business administrator apprenticeship learn about work etiquette. They work professionally with colleagues and quickly improve their communication with clients.

Learners and apprentices are safe in learning environments, including when online, and in the workplace. They know how to report concerns. Reports of bullying or harassment are very rare and, when they occur, are dealt with swiftly and appropriately by leaders.

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

Leaders do not ensure that apprentices understand fully the requirements of apprenticeship courses. Consequently, the proportion of apprentices who remain in learning is too low. Most apprentices that remain to the end of their studies achieve. Around half of apprentices who complete their course achieve distinction grades.

Leaders have not planned Skills Bootcamps effectively. Leaders and staff do not work successfully with employers to enable learners on digital Skills Bootcamps to gain employment. Teachers do not provide sufficient support to learners to prepare for interviews or finding employment. As a result, too few learners gain interviews when they complete the course and very few are successful in securing employment.

Leaders focus the courses they offer appropriately on helping people to improve their lives. They use labour market information effectively and work with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the available courses. They work closely with Job Centre Plus to bring training to learners in their communities. Leaders offer

apprenticeships in mainly business support roles to meet an identified need in the region.

Staff plan training programmes that enable learners and apprentices to gain the skills and knowledge they require to succeed in their careers. The digital Skills Bootcamp curriculum equips learners with technical skills, such as coding and data analytics, that prepare them for jobs at an entry level or to start an apprenticeship.

Staff ensure that topics are taught in an order that helps learners and apprentices develop their knowledge and skills appropriately over the duration of the course. On teaching assistant courses, staff teach learners about working in different settings to provide the context required for the rest of the course. Apprentices on the business administrator apprenticeship first learn about what change management is, then how workplace behaviours can impact change before learning about a range of change management theories.

Teachers of adult courses and Skills Bootcamps do not use the information they gather about learners' existing skills and knowledge to inform their teaching. As a result, too often learners are taught things they already know and can do. Too often, teachers do not check what learners have learned. They do not ensure that learners secure their new knowledge effectively.

Conversely, most LDMs make appropriate use of information about apprentices' existing skills and knowledge to inform the content of one-to-one sessions and to set meaningful targets to achieve at work. LDMs and teachers of one-to-one functional skills sessions check apprentices' understanding thoroughly. LDMs hold frequent and useful reviews of apprentices' progress with apprentices. They make good use of coaching techniques to develop apprentices' understanding. Apprentices on digital marketing develop their understanding of ethical practice to better understand the pitfalls and legal ramifications of malpractice.

Most staff help learners and apprentices to develop their professional communication skills and to gain the mathematics skills they require. Learners on ESOL courses learn the mathematical terms they need to recognise value for money when shopping for food. Most learners and apprentices studying English qualifications are appropriately taught by specialist staff in useful one-to-one online lessons. Most learners and apprentices pass their exams first time.

Most learners and apprentices have a good understanding of fundamental British values and of their responsibility to uphold these. Learners work well together, thrive in the diverse groups in which they learn and apply their knowledge to workplace activities. On digital courses, learners understand the importance of inclusivity when creating visuals. They understand how protected characteristics influence marketing activities for both legal reasons and to appeal to a wide audience.

Learners understand the concepts of radicalisation and extremism and their relevance to their personal lives and work. Most apprentices have an appropriate understanding of these topics.

Staff do not provide learners and apprentices with sufficient careers guidance. While most apprentices are clear about their immediate next steps and the opportunities with their current employer, they do not know about the careers available to them in their sector.

Recent changes to governance through the Get Set UK leadership team are yet to have sufficient impact on improving the quality of education and the proportion of learners and apprentices who stay to the end of their course. The arrangements for governance are appropriate and include external representation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that teachers of adult courses and Skills Bootcamps plan courses effectively by taking account of what learners know and can do.
- Provide effective advice and guidance to apprentices before they begin their courses so that they understand the demands of apprenticeship study.
- Provide learners and apprentices with effective, ongoing careers advice and guidance.
- Ensure that teachers prepare learners on Skills Bootcamps thoroughly for interviews and help them find relevant employment on completion of their studies.

Provider details

Unique reference number	53032
Address	Edison House 2-3 Paycocke Road SS14 3DP
Contact number	01268 270648
Website	www.thelightbulbapprenticeships.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Suzanne Tilling
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 January 2016
Main subcontractors	Not applicable

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 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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