

Inspection of Linden Management (UK) Limited

Inspection dates:

19–22 October 2021

Overall effectiveness**Requires improvement**

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Linden Management (UK) Limited is a Nottinghamshire-based large national independent learning provider that focuses on apprenticeships. Historically, it provided training in supply chain operations and logistics but has gradually branched out into other subject areas. Most current training is for level 2 customer service practitioners, level 3 team leaders/supervisors, level 5 operations/departamental managers, level 3 early years educators, and level 2 supply chain warehouse operatives.

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

Apprentices do not receive enough well-planned training. Although they are introduced to topics during lessons, and through the use of study materials, this is often superficial, and apprentices have to complete too much further study on their own.

Most apprentices are positive about their experiences at work and in learning. They are attentive and participate well in lessons. Well-motivated level 3 early years educators who fell behind during pandemic restrictions have caught up on their work and other apprentices are working hard to do likewise, with support from their trainers. However, level 2 supply chain warehousing operatives are less happy with their experiences at work and struggle to understand the purpose of their training.

A high proportion of apprentices complete their studies and many gain high grades in their final assessments. However, this is largely because trainers focus on preparing them for these assessments rather than helping them to develop the skills and knowledge that they need for their next steps.

Apprentices feel safe in their workplaces and in lessons. If they have concerns, they know whom they should report them to and are confident that they will be dealt with appropriately. They do not experience any bullying or harassment.

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

Apprentices receive too little well-planned training. They participate in a short lesson each month and receive a small amount of one-to-one support. Although trainers expect apprentices to undertake further study between lessons, they do not provide enough guidance about what they should do. Many study resources, including presentations, textbooks and workbooks only explore content at a superficial level, leaving apprentices to fill in the gaps themselves. A few apprentices receive too little time at work to complete their studies.

Trainers do not organise vocational training in a sufficiently coherent sequence. They do not do enough to specify the precise content of courses and are therefore unable to consider the relationships between different topics. They focus too much on meeting the requirements of final assessments and not enough on developing apprentices' skills and knowledge. Although managers work with employers to understand their training needs, this results in only superficial amendments to curriculum plans. Managers and trainers have begun to address these deficiencies and the most recently recruited apprentices benefit from improved planning.

Trainers do not do enough to help apprentices to improve their English and mathematical skills. Although they ascertain apprentices' starting points, they often fail to plan a curriculum that helps apprentices to develop their skills. In some cases,

this means that apprentices find it more difficult to complete study and assessment activities. Trainers do not routinely address weaknesses in apprentices' writing.

Managers and trainers do not give enough thought to the standards of work that they expect apprentices to produce. As a result, activities do not always challenge apprentices enough. On some courses, trainers accept work that is not good enough and then praise apprentices for their efforts.

Trainers are supportive of the small number of apprentices who have learning difficulties. Trainers spend extra time with them and give additional help. However, they are not always clear about the precise nature of apprentices' learning difficulties. This means that they cannot always give appropriate specialist help.

Trainers have appropriate vocational knowledge and experience that they use to inform their teaching. In lessons and coaching sessions, they provide clear explanations of topics and answer questions well. This helps apprentices to develop their understanding.

Teachers check that apprentices understand material through the suitable use of interactive quizzes, questioning and the completion of workbooks. In a few cases, trainers have clear plans to identify and tackle misconceptions.

During lessons, teachers revisit previous topics to reinforce learning. However, not all apprentices benefit from frequent well-planned opportunities to practise what they have been taught. Level 2 supply chain warehouse operatives do not have access to the range of work roles they need to practise a full range of skills. Nevertheless, many apprentices improve their practical skills in the workplace.

Historically, most apprentices have completed their qualifications, with many gaining high grades. Although pandemic restrictions have had an impact on apprentices' completion, managers and trainers support them to finish their studies.

Staff set out clear expectations of apprentices' behaviour during initial interviews, induction sessions and during progress reviews. Apprentices behave well and adhere to these expectations. Trainers conduct themselves in a calm and respectful way and apprentices follow suit.

Apprentices feel safe and know whom they should report any concerns to. They are highly safety conscious and have a good understanding of safeguarding themes. They do not have any concerns around harassment or discrimination in the workplace or during their studies.

Managers make available a range of resources to support apprentices' understanding of a broad range of themes, such as online safety, and physical and mental health. However, managers do not know the extent to which apprentices use these resources and not all trainers are sufficiently confident in discussing them.

Trainers and employers prepare apprentices well to take on additional

responsibilities at work and many take on supervisory roles as they complete their training. Trainers explore apprentices' future careers with them but they do not do enough to explore opportunities for apprentices outside of their current workplaces. Managers are aware of this and are making plans to provide more wide-ranging careers advice and guidance.

Managers provide trainers with appropriate pedagogical training on topics such as questioning techniques and providing feedback. The success of this training is mixed. For example, teachers use questioning effectively, but their feedback on apprentices' written work is not yet good enough.

Quality assurance activities, which include gathering the views of apprentices, audits of assessment, and observations of lessons, do not have enough impact on apprentices' experiences. Self-assessment is overly positive and only identifies a few areas for improvement. Action plans are not specific enough.

Leaders and managers have established a governing body that includes suitably experienced external representatives. Although this group provides some challenge to senior leaders, they do not fully understand the provision's strengths and weaknesses, and this limits their effectiveness.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have established an appropriate range of policies and procedures to help to safeguard apprentices. The designated safeguarding lead and two deputies deal with safeguarding incidents in a timely and appropriate manner. Where appropriate, they make referrals to external agencies.

Trainers receive annual safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training to help them to recognise signs of harm and refer apprentices to additional support. Apprentices have access to a range of appropriate safeguarding resources on an online platform.

When appointing new staff, managers undertake appropriate recruitment checks.

Managers work closely with employers to check the arrangements for health and safety in the workplace. Trainers also discuss safety at work with apprentices and report any concerns that they may have.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Managers and trainers should clearly identify the precise content that apprentices should study, and they should describe and exemplify the standards that they expect them to achieve.
- Trainers should use this information to plan a coherent sequence of learning activities that provides enough well-structured and explicit training for all apprentices. Where apprentices are expected to study independently, trainers should have clear plans that describe what it is that they expect apprentices to do.
- Where apprentices need to develop their English and mathematical skills, trainers should develop and implement a clear curriculum for them to follow, in much the same way that they should for the vocational elements of their programmes.
- Managers should implement processes for establishing the precise nature of any learning difficulties experienced by apprentices. They should ensure that staff who work with these apprentices have the skills that they need to employ specific and appropriate support strategies.
- Trainers should, in conjunction with employers, develop opportunities for apprentices to frequently practise skills and rehearse knowledge so that they develop fluency and consistency.
- Managers should develop arrangements for careers information, advice and guidance that helps apprentices to understand the whole range of opportunities available to them.
- Managers should revisit quality assurance processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose and provide them with accurate information about areas for improvement.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278590
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Website	https://www.lindenmanagement.org.uk/
Principal/CEO	Ryan Bell
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	

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.

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