

Inspection of Skillcert Limited

Inspection dates: 23 to 26 July 2024

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	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Skillcert Limited is an independent learning provider based in Cardiff, Wales. It operates across England, offering apprenticeships in waste management, professional standards, property maintenance and financial services. At the time of inspection, there were 187 apprentices in learning. Of these, two were under the age of 18.

Most apprentices were studying the level 2 waste resource operative, level 3 business administrator, level 3 team leader or supervisor, level 4 paraplanner, level 5 operations or departmental manager and level 7 senior leader apprenticeships. Fewer than 10 apprentices were studying each of the other 13 apprenticeships. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Tutors set high expectations for apprentices' behaviour, both in the workplace and during online classes. Apprentices are respectful and polite. Tutors work flexibly with apprentices, changing times and dates of sessions to accommodate their work demands. Apprentices attend the large majority of their online classes.

Tutors build supportive relationships with apprentices. Apprentices value the knowledge and experience of their tutors, many of whom have extensive sector expertise. Tutors on the level 7 senior leader apprenticeship bring their professional expertise in coaching and neurolinguistic programming techniques to learning sessions. This helps apprentices to develop additional leadership skills to support them in the workplace.

Tutors ensure that apprentices feel safe in online lessons. Apprentices speak openly to tutors about welfare and well-being concerns and are confident that tutors would support them readily. Tutors encourage apprentices to take part in discussions about local and national risks, current safeguarding topics such as sextortion and online challenges that can pose a danger to their health. As a result, apprentices know how to keep themselves safe.

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

Leaders have a commitment to providing apprenticeships to local and national employers in key sector areas such as waste management and professional and financial services. They work closely with employers to understand the skills gaps and needs of their industries, to design their curriculums and to put together career pathways for apprentices to follow. For example, level 2 waste resource operative apprentices can move on to level 3 team leader roles as their career develops.

Tutors accurately measure apprentices' subject-specific starting points and use this information to adjust their curriculums. Apprentices studying level 7 senior leader complete analysis and scenario planning activities to identify risks to their success. Tutors use the information effectively to plan individual learning programmes. Apprentices build and develop their skills rapidly, without repeating what they already know.

Too many apprentices do not receive feedback on their work that tells them how to improve. Tutors give level 2 waste resource operative and level 3 business administration apprentices feedback that is overly positive and does not tell them how to improve their work. As a result, these apprentices are not supported to produce work at the level of which they are capable.

Leaders have not ensured that apprentices have access to careers education, information, advice and guidance other than to ensure that apprentices understand their current career pathway. Leaders have not planned careers guidance within the curriculum to ensure all apprentices understand their potential next steps. Too many

apprentices do not know the options for work and study available to them when they have completed their apprenticeship.

Leaders have not created a planned personal development curriculum that meets apprentices' individual needs. While leaders have created online resources for apprentices that give information on topics such as healthy relationships, mental health and staying physically healthy, they do not track apprentices' use of these resources. There are too few opportunities for apprentices to develop their wider skills and knowledge beyond their apprenticeship.

Leaders have designed curriculums that do not develop the essential English and mathematics skills apprentices need for their personal lives and their workplace effectively. English and mathematics curriculums are self-led, giving teachers few opportunities to address misunderstandings or provide tailored support. Where apprentices struggle or fall behind in their studies, individual teaching is offered. However, this is too late for many apprentices. On level 2 waste resource operative, many apprentices begin with limited skills in these subjects that do not significantly improve during their apprenticeship.

In most cases, tutors help apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to progress in their workplace. Level 4 paraplanner apprentices learn to compile professional suitability reports and put risk profiles into context for their clients. Level 7 senior leader apprentices use techniques to reduce workplace micro-managing and boost employee motivation. However, in a small number of cases, tutors do not teach apprentices the communication skills needed for their current or future roles. These apprentices are not prepared well for the next steps in their careers.

Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of their apprenticeships and have worked hard to resolve many of the most significant issues causing poor apprentice achievement. They have created a quality improvement plan that is frequently reviewed with governors and identifies the areas of improvement arising both from the previous inspection and observations of teaching. However, too many apprentices do not complete their studies in a timely way. A significant minority of level 2 waste resource operative apprentices are past their planned apprenticeship end date. While leaders have implemented strategies to decrease this proportion, the improvements in this area have not been quick enough.

Governors have supported leaders with directive action plans and clear priorities for improvement. They give effective challenge to leaders and mentor leaders to further develop their leadership skills. There have been many improvements in apprentices' experience and outcomes since the previous inspection. However, too many apprentices continue to withdraw before the end of their studies and too many reach the planned end of their apprenticeship without achieving their necessary functional skills qualifications. The rate of improvement in some areas has been too slow.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that apprentices have access to a planned personal development programme that includes careers education, information, advice and guidance.
- Ensure that apprentices develop their English and mathematics skills from their established starting points.
- Ensure that tutors provide feedback to apprentices that helps them develop the quality of their work.
- Reduce the number of apprentices beyond their planned end date.
- Ensure that quality improvement processes track and monitor improvements effectively.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278682
Address	Office 9 Frazer Building 126 Bute Street Cardiff CF10 5LE
Contact number	0121 271 0133
Website	www.skillcert.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Phil McGeachy
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	28 June to 1 July 2022
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality, 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

Helen Morgan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jaswant Mann	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Kinghorn	Ofsted Inspector
Joel Dalhouse	His Majesty's 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 2024