

Inspection of S & B Automotive Academy Limited

Inspection dates:

30 July to 2 August 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

S & B Automotive Academy (S & B) is a work-based learning provider located in southwest England. S & B has a training centre located in Bristol. It provides training to apprentices from across England who attend training on a block of released time from work. Around half of the apprentices stay away from home to attend training at the Bristol centre.

S & B provides training for 470 apprentices in 14 standards-based apprenticeships from levels 2 to 4. Just over half of apprentices study the heavy vehicle service and maintenance technician at level 3, the bus and coach engineering technician at level 3 and the autocare technician at level 2. S & B also provides apprenticeships in business administration at level 3 and customer service at level 3. Approximately a third of the apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Around a quarter of apprentices have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Apprentices have highly positive attitudes towards training and work. Teachers are excellent role models and use their expert knowledge well to inspire apprentices to be successful. Leaders and teachers set high expectations for apprentices' behaviour. This includes being polite and courteous and not using bad language. Apprentices respond positively to these expectations. They are mature and sensible and demonstrate consistently high levels of respect for each other and their teachers.

Apprentices are punctual and have high rates of attendance at training. They are highly motivated to develop new wider skills and behaviours. Teachers set apprentices tasks that help to improve their public speaking and presentation skills. This helps apprentices improve significantly their communication skills.

Apprentices enjoy their training, building resilience, confidence and independence. This is because teachers support them well to improve the quality of their work. When apprentices need help, leaders and teachers take prompt action to assist them, including making referrals to the well-being team. Apprentices develop significant new knowledge and skills. They are prepared well for their next steps after completion of the apprenticeship.

Apprentices feel safe at work, at the training centre and when staying away from home to attend training. Apprentices, including a small number of female learners, have not experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination at work or in training.

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

Leaders and teachers have carefully designed an ambitious and relevant curriculum. Apprentices study content that meets the skill needs of the automotive industry, from small local garages to large national companies. Leaders develop strong links with employers and coordinate effectively the training that takes place at S & B and at work. Consequently, almost all apprentices receive high-quality training and become valued employees. For example, apprentices studying motor vehicle service and maintenance technician quickly become experts at fitting timing chains, clutch and gearbox replacements.

Leaders and teachers plan and sequence the curriculum well. This enables apprentices to deepen their knowledge and master their skills over time. Apprentices begin learning fundamental concepts before progressing to more complex tasks. For example, apprentices studying heavy vehicle service and maintenance technician at level 3 learn essential safety practices, such as how to prevent a vehicle from rolling forward and causing harm when releasing the handbrake, before learning how to diagnose and rectify faults in heavy goods vehicles.

Teachers gather appropriate information about what apprentices know and can do at the start of their training. They use this information well to plan a personalised curriculum and learning activities that build on apprentices' prior knowledge and

skills. For example, apprentices with significant knowledge and experience do not repeat learning and only attend the training sessions they need.

Teachers provide apprentices who have SEND with effective support. For example, apprentices receive additional time to complete assessments and teachers visit them more frequently at work. Senior leaders ensure that all written communications and teaching materials are presented in a way that is accessible and easily understood by staff and apprentices who present neurodivergent needs. Apprentices with SEND are supported well and make expected progress in line with their peers.

Almost all apprentices who complete their training achieve the apprenticeship, and a few achieve a merit or distinction grade. Many apprentices secure employment in the automotive industry. Almost all apprentices who study English and mathematics achieve the qualification, with around half passing at the first attempt. However, around one-third of apprentices left the apprenticeship before completing the final exam. Leaders have taken swift and effective action to enable apprentices who are experiencing difficulties to continue their studies and complete the apprenticeship, for example negotiating with employers to provide apprentices with additional training at work or with S & B. This action has led to a decrease in the number of apprentices leaving early, and those that leave do so for reasons beyond S & B's control.

Most teaching uses a variety of teaching and assessment methods well to help apprentices learn and remember information. For example, many teachers use direct questions and set regular tests to assess apprentices' knowledge and understanding. They encourage apprentices to take detailed notes during sessions so that they can revisit learning later. However, a few teachers do not provide apprentices with developmental feedback on their written work. This means that apprentices do not know what or how to improve.

Leaders have developed an effective personal development programme that teachers use to teach apprentices about living in modern Britain. For example, how to build and maintain healthy relationships. Most apprentices understand fundamental British values and can explain the importance of the rule of law and how it affects them in the workplace. However, teachers do not routinely revisit all topics, such as how apprentices can protect themselves against radicalisation and extremist views, so that they understand fully the impact of these in their lives and at work.

Teachers provide apprentices with helpful career information, advice and guidance about the opportunities available to them within the automotive industry. However, apprentices do not receive sufficient information on other employment options such as working in related sectors or being self-employed.

Leaders have appointed a board of directors who are responsible for governance. Board members have expertise in the automotive and finance sectors. Members support and hold senior leaders to account for the company's strategic vision and finances. However, board members recognise rightly that they lack the educational

expertise needed to help senior leaders improve the quality of apprentices' training. Leaders have recently appointed a director with educational expertise, but it is too early to assess the impact of this new appointment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices receive developmental feedback so that they know what and how to improve their work.
- Ensure that apprentices stay until the end of the programme and are encouraged to achieve the apprenticeship with a merit or distinction grade.

Provider details

Unique reference number	54235
Address	Unit A Princess Street Bedminster Bristol BS3 4AG
Contact number	0117 953 3001
Website	www.sandbacademy.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Phil Marsh
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	24 February 2014
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 provisions 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

Steve Battersby, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Rachel Clark	His Majesty's Inspector
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