

# Inspection of Travis Perkins PLC

Inspection dates: 21 to 24 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Apprenticeships **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

## Information about this provider

Travis Perkins PLC is a large employer training provider based in Northampton. It provides training from level 2 to level 5 for apprentices across the country in the Travis Perkins Group. At the time of the inspection, 831 apprentices were enrolled, with over half studying qualifications in operations management, team leading and trade supplies. Around 90 apprentices are on a specialist fitted furniture design technician apprenticeship, and the remainder are on courses in retail, business and customer service.

Off-the-job training is delivered online by apprenticeship coaches, supported by apprenticeship development managers. Branch managers act as mentors for apprentices. Functional skills tutors provide training in English and mathematics at levels 1 and 2 for those who need to achieve a pass in these subjects.

Most apprentices are aged over 19, and around 30 of them are receiving support for additional learning needs. The company does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices enjoy their courses and are positive about their experiences and relationships with apprenticeship coaches and branch managers. Apprentices display a desire to succeed both in their apprenticeships and at work. Many gain promotion, and a large majority achieve high grades and go on to further study.

Apprentices benefit from experienced and well-qualified staff, who guide them carefully through their learning. They develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours and remain in employment with Travis Perkins once they complete their programmes.

Apprentices value the high quality of their learning materials, training and online sessions. For example, industry professionals give presentations on the most recent developments in the construction sector. They cover current topics such as energy efficiency in new-build homes and plans to retrofit existing housing stock to meet challenging new sustainability targets.

Highly experienced staff provide apprentices with helpful advice and guidance about their careers. This helps apprentices make informed decisions about future learning and career opportunities available to them.

Apprenticeship coaches and managers create a positive culture and have a strong focus on supporting apprentices to do well. They understand the pressures that apprentices may experience at work and in their personal lives, such as financial hardships associated with the current cost-of-living crisis. As a result, apprentices develop confidence and resilience and are better able to deal with everyday challenges.

Apprentices feel safe and are aware of what they should do if they have concerns about personal or work issues throughout their course.

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

Leaders have a very good understanding of the construction sector. They are keenly aware of government plans to implement stringent new standards for energy efficiency and carbon emissions in new-build homes, as well as plans to modernise existing housing stock. To build on these challenges and to meet sector needs, the company offers an ambitious and wide curriculum in 13 different apprenticeship programmes, from level 2 to level 5.

Apprenticeship coaches ensure that the curriculums they offer contain the right content to meet the needs of apprentices. For example, the level 3 fitted furniture course supports entry-level employees to move into fitted furniture design roles. Apprentices receive talks and presentations from subject specialists on key drivers in the sector, such as sustainability and retrofitting the current housing stock to comply

with new sustainability standards. As a result, apprentices are well equipped to make a valuable contribution to the construction and building industry.

Coaches help learners, including those with additional learning needs, to understand key concepts well. Apprentices on the team leader standard at level 3 learn new topics, such as presentation skills and interpersonal skills, and describe the positive impact that these have had on them at work. Staff in the workplace support apprentices to use computer-aided design software to make complex adaptations, such as adding skylights to designs.

Apprentices studying functional skills receive high-quality and effective tutoring from specialists in English and mathematics. These tutors plan the topics logically and organise teaching well, so that apprentices progressively build up their mathematical and English language knowledge and skills. As a result, functional skills achievement rates have increased significantly.

Coaches work effectively with branch managers to support apprentices' progress. Branch managers adapt work activities to offer apprentices opportunities to practise the skills they have learned. They also provide apprentices with helpful feedback on how they can improve their performance. Apprentices value the support from their managers and coaches in keeping their learning on track.

Coaches provide individual, additional support for the small but significant minority of apprentices who have exceeded their planned end-date. As a result, the proportion of apprentices in this category has declined significantly, with those remaining making good progress towards completion.

Coaches use suitable assessment methods to help apprentices build and develop their skills and knowledge. For example, team leader apprentices carry out assessment activities that prepare them well for their final assessments. Their coaches also use helpful recap activities to help apprentices consolidate learning from previous modules. Functional skills tutors check that learners know and can apply key topics to their learning, such as ways to describe different kinds of text.

Most apprentices have a clear grasp of what they have to do to achieve well. Coaches have high ambitions for apprentices and prepare them well for end-point assessments. As a result, most apprentices, including those with additional needs, achieve merit and distinction grades in their final assessment.

In a small but significant number of cases, apprentices, such as those who study furniture fitting, are called away to the shop floor when they should be attending an online learning session. This leads to them either missing a whole session or part of a session. Managers are aware of this issue and work closely with branch managers to ensure that apprentices attend all scheduled sessions. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of this initiative.

Leaders have developed a suitable personal development curriculum. Apprentices receive sessions to develop their personal and social skills, as well as sessions

exploring British values, sexual harassment and the importance of healthy relationships. Coaches introduce topics such as the risks of radicalisation and extremism as part of induction and explain how these risks are relevant to apprentices' work and home life. However, apprentices' understanding of these topics is inconsistent, and not all can articulate clearly what they have learned.

Leaders work widely and closely with national partners, such as employers' trailblazer groups. These relationships help leaders to influence and promote training in the construction industry and to inform the curriculum offer. Their involvement in national networks provides extensive and productive links with employer groups and industry experts. Consequently, apprentices benefit from up-to-date information in their apprenticeship.

Leaders are committed to raising the profile of groups traditionally under-represented in the construction sector, such as young people, women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Company leaders' extensive recent marketing and recruitment activities have resulted in the apprentice population increasingly reflecting the diversity of the UK's workforce.

Leaders support their staff effectively. They manage staff workloads carefully, ensuring, for example, that coaches who are new in their role begin with a small cohort of apprentices while they develop their skills and ability to deal with larger numbers. Leaders provide relevant, ongoing continuing professional development opportunities to help ensure that staff remain professionally up to date with their teaching and subject-specific practices.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the provision's strengths and weaknesses. They work closely with coaches to tackle issues that arise from stakeholder feedback and take prompt actions to reduce any negative impact on apprentices' experiences. For example, leaders' recruitment of very experienced functional skills tutors has resulted in a significant increase in apprentices' achievement in these subjects. In addition, leaders acted swiftly to support learners who had exceeded their planned end-date to achieve their apprenticeship.

Very experienced and specialist governors understand their role very well. They support leaders closely and challenge them when necessary. Governors have a very secure understanding of the quality of education and are able to articulate accurately the key challenges faced by the company, such as concerns about apprentices' workplace commitments that result in them missing learning sessions.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers use effective systems to identify, record and respond quickly to any concerns reported by staff. They place a high priority on learners' safety and well-being. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL work closely and effectively with training and support staff, all of whom are suitably trained, to

support learners well. The DSL is well informed about the emerging risks to Travis Perkins employees. For example, they have recently identified apprentices reporting concerns about the current cost-of-living crisis and the impact this is having on their financial well-being and mental health.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that apprenticeship development managers and coaches impress on branch managers the importance of apprentices' regular attendance at online learning sessions.
- Reinforce apprentices' knowledge of the local risks of radicalisation and extremism and teach them how these risks can impact on their places of employment and their wider communities.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	58966
<b>Address</b>	Ryehill House Ryehill Close Lodge Farm Industrial Estate Northampton NN5 7UG
<b>Contact number</b>	07825 783483
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.tpplccareers.co.uk/apprenticeships">www.tpplccareers.co.uk/apprenticeships</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Andy Rayner
<b>Provider type</b>	Employer
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 29 April 2016
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the centre and functional skills team manager, 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 of 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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