

Halfords

Employer

Inspection dates

19 to 22 February 2019

| Overall effectiveness | | Good |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good | Apprenticeships Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good | |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good | |
| Outcomes for learners | Good | |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and board members have established a clear and incisive vision for the apprenticeship programme. They set high expectations and are ambitious for their apprentices to achieve.
- Leaders have resolved all of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of provision and what they need to do to improve it.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that ensures apprentices attain good skills in Halfords' brand of retail customer service, which is intrinsic to the apprenticeship programme.
- Highly motivated and suitably qualified coaches use their good expertise to meet apprentices' individual needs. They link learning very effectively to workplace tasks.
- Apprentices quickly learn new workplace skills, knowledge and behaviours that prepare them well for employment and their future careers.
- Apprentices develop a secure and detailed understanding of equality of opportunity, inclusion and tolerance that prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Initial advice and guidance are good, and so apprentices join suitable programmes that meet their needs and career aspirations well.
- Most apprentices make good progress, and a majority achieve their apprenticeship. A high proportion of apprentices continue into sustained employment.
- Observations of teaching and learning are not always sufficiently precise or accurate to promote consistent improvement in coaches' performance.
- Coaches do not plan sufficiently challenging learning for the most able apprentices.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Halfords is a large retailer of motoring and cycling products. Trading since 1892, it employs approximately 8,250 employees across 426 stores in the United Kingdom. Halfords began delivering its apprenticeship programme in February 2015. Its provision spreads across nine English regions, with the largest number of apprentices based in the South East, followed by the East of England.
- At the time of the inspection, Halfords has 1,104 apprentices in learning, the great majority of whom are adults. Almost all apprentices are working towards a level 2 standards-based apprenticeship, predominantly in retailing and a few study at levels 3 and 4. A very few apprentices are working towards framework qualifications at level 2 in business management, retail and warehousing and storage.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers should ensure that observers develop a more robust approach, when evaluating and reporting on the quality of training delivered by coaches to apprentices, by:
 - implementing a more consistent approach when observing coaches' training sessions, to ensure that judgements are individualised and focus sharply on apprentices' performance, and their progress over time
 - ensuring that the results arising from observations provide coaches with a precise and well-developed understanding of what they do well, and clear action plans to support improvements where necessary.
- Managers should ensure that coaches plan learning for the most able apprentices that enables them to make progress, according to their potential, in extending their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and the board have successfully developed an open and positive culture in which staff share and own their ambitions for the apprenticeship programme. Since the previous inspection, leaders have significantly strengthened their oversight and scrutiny of the provision.
- Leaders and managers use a range of accurate and up-to-date information to review apprentices' progress closely. Coaching staff meet frequently with their managers to monitor and review the performance of their apprentices, intervening swiftly when apprentices' progress is not in line with their demanding expectations.
- Leaders have sustained improvements in teaching, learning and outcomes for apprentices. They have ensured a rapid increase in the achievement of apprenticeship qualifications. A high proportion of apprentices on standards-based apprenticeship make at least their expected progress. Leaders have improved the teaching skills of most coaches, who motivate apprentices to extend their knowledge and improve their skills.
- Leaders ensure that apprentices' customer service skills closely match the changing world of merchandising, and support Halfords' retail brand in the communities it serves. For example, level 2 apprentices develop essential retail skills in how they need to behave and interact with a diverse range of customers. At levels 3 and 4, they learn important management behaviours, such as how to delegate, manage budgets and motivate staff to do their best. Leaders ensure that British values are intrinsic to the Halfords' retail curriculum.
- Observations of training focus well on learning. Most observations of teaching and learning by internal observers are sharply focused and insightful and draw on a wide range of pertinent evidence. Most observers accurately identify the salient points observed in learning sessions and the session's impact on improving apprentices' job performance and skills development.
- Leaders have introduced clear and effective processes for the performance management of staff. All staff have half-yearly and annual appraisals to assess the effectiveness of their work. Leaders and managers take effective actions in cases of poor staff performance.
- Professional development of coaching staff is good. Managers use monthly standardisation meetings for coaches and training coordinators to support their development. These enable the sharing of good practice to improve teaching, learning and assessment for the benefit of apprentices. Coaches also benefit from termly company training days. These support their wider professional development needs well. For example, staff benefit from training provided by external speakers on a wider range of topics, including mental health, safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and end-point assessment.
- Leaders have a clear oversight of the quality of their provision. They have resolved all of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- Self-assessment is accurate and self-critical. The quality improvement plan contains an

appropriate range of actions that lead to clear improvements in quality.

- Managers place a high priority on developing the English and mathematical skills of apprentices. They have established a detailed and comprehensive English and mathematics strategy. This sets out clearly the importance that leaders attach to apprentices developing these essential skills. A mandatory staff training programme ensures that all coaches are competent in promoting the value of these skills. Most apprentices now achieve their functional skills qualifications in both English and mathematics.
- A few reports from teaching and learning observation lack sufficient individualisation and are too generous in their evaluation. Similarly, a small minority of the action plans that observers provide to coaches following observation do not give sufficiently clear guidance on how to reflect on, and improve, their teaching skills.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is strong. Attendance at board meetings is high. Non-executive and executive directors bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise that they use well in their oversight of the apprenticeship programme. The board ensures that the apprenticeship ethos is a priority that permeates the whole company, and that it provides apprentices with a positive learning experience and good employability skills.
- Board members provide good strategic oversight of, and challenge to, senior managers and other staff. They hold senior leaders to close account for the operational performance and standards of the apprenticeship programme, so that they sustain the pace of recent improvements. The board ensures that the apprenticeship programme continually improves and evolves to meet business needs.
- Directors receive comprehensive and detailed reports. They use these well to ask pertinent questions of leaders and managers about key aspects of the provision, including data and areas for improvement. They ensure that leaders' reports focus on the actions being taken to raise standards and improve outcomes for apprentices. Board members closely review the self-assessment report and associated quality improvement plan. They have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff in regular contact with apprentices undergo appropriate checks to ensure their suitability to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Managers maintain appropriate records of staff training and backgrounds.
- Designated staff responsible for safeguarding have suitable experience and receive appropriate training. They are assiduous in their attention to detail regarding potential safeguarding incidents, when they arise in any of their stores.
- Safeguarding officers have a good oversight and detailed understanding of safeguarding cases. They liaise closely with a range of partner agencies to ensure that apprentices are safe and well protected.
- All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training, including online training on the

dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Designated staff with responsibility for safeguarding complete in-depth training to extend their understanding of how to keep apprentices safe from extremist ideologies. Leaders ensure that relevant risk assessments and action plans are in place and that they review them frequently.

- Leaders have established comprehensive reporting processes that cover the full range of health and safety and safeguarding risks for apprentices. For example, managers have developed detailed and up-to-date policies and procedures covering the routine monitoring of accidents and 'near misses'.
- Apprentices feel safe. They are well protected from bullying and harassment. Leaders, managers and coaches have benefited from mental health awareness training. This helps them support apprentices who may display signs that they are worried or distressed about life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Apprentices enjoy their learning. Coaches and store managers work cooperatively to ensure that apprentices benefit from well-planned on- and off-the-job training, including one-to-one and small group sessions.
- Apprentices quickly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours which enhance their effectiveness in the workplace. Their store managers value these skills in contributing to improved business productivity. For example, apprentices develop valuable technical skills, such as how to assemble bicycles competently or fit a child's car seat safely to a customer's vehicle.
- Most apprentices benefit from coaches applying a range of effective teaching skills and strategies. These help them to consolidate their learning and make assured progress. Coaches are adept in structuring and sequencing the delivery of learning for apprentices. They make good use of helpful and pertinent examples to illustrate how apprentices can apply their learning and skills development to the workplace.
- Skilled and knowledgeable coaches plan engaging sessions which take a good account of apprentices' starting points and meet their individual needs. Coaches encourage apprentices to reflect deeply on the subject matter. They check learning frequently and praise success. Assessment is fair, frequent and timely. Apprentices receive good preparation for their end-point assessment.
- Coaches often personalise learning sessions to meet the needs of apprentices and, as a result, they benefit from a consistently high and positive learning experience. However, a few coaches do not plan learning that is sufficiently challenging for the small number of the most able apprentices who join the training programme with high levels of prior achievement.
- Apprentices accurately self-evaluate their level of vocational knowledge and understanding by completing a learning assessment prior to the start of each training session. They confidently identify what new knowledge, skills and behaviours they have learned following training by repeating the learning diagnostic assessment and comparing both sets of results. As a result, most apprentices have a precise understanding of their progress to date and the additional learning they need to complete.
- Coaches provide effective individual support to apprentices who have additional needs,

such as dyslexia, and low levels of self-confidence. Apprentices consistently evaluate their learning sessions by recording their feedback digitally and saving this to their personal learning record. This helps them to reflect on those aspects that they do well, and those that they need to improve.

- Coaches provide clear and accurate verbal and written feedback to apprentices. This targets the areas they need to improve and helps to extend their English and mathematical skills. Apprentices adapt their language and communication skills when interacting with a diverse range of customers, or when liaising with internal colleagues. They quickly grow in confidence and become self-assured in using their mathematical skills, such as in their close monitoring of sales trends of products and services in their retail stores.
- Apprentices make skilful and effective use of high-quality workbooks and online learning resources to consolidate and extend their learning. Learning materials used by apprentices include the systematic use of icons. These highlight key themes such as English, mathematics, information technology, safeguarding, equal opportunity and health and safety. Coaches signpost and embed these important topics in their lessons. They give good encouragement to apprentices to practise and gain competence and confidence in these essential topics.
- Apprentices have a well-developed understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity and how they apply to the communities in which they live and work. They treat colleagues and customers with high levels of respect. Apprentices receive relevant training to recognise how to respond to a range of potential dangers. For example, apprentices challenge younger customers who seek to purchase age-restricted products, such as knives and portable gas containers. Apprentices know whom to contact if customers' intended store purchases give rise to any concerns.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices are highly professional. They soon learn to represent Halfords' corporate values well. They wear their company's uniforms with pride. Most apprentices are proud of the new retail knowledge and skills they gain as part of the programme, and of how these aid their employability.
- Apprentices quickly become highly skilled in their job roles, leading to their improved performance in the workplace. They confidently advise customers on the most suitable products to suit their needs, such as 'dash cams', satellite navigation systems and in-car music systems. They develop good digital skills using in-store electronic ordering systems and computerised tills. They quickly become valuable members of the store team.
- Most apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills well during their training and apply these essential skills in their everyday life and in their careers. Apprentices improve their communication skills by contributing to the daily 'pit stop' briefings held in each retail store. They apply their mathematical skills confidently when calculating discounts for customers. However, in a few cases, more able apprentices receive insufficient support to develop their English and mathematical skills.
- Apprentices' attendance during all parts of their programmes is high. Coaches and store managers monitor attendance and punctuality carefully, and they quickly report and

resolve any concerns. Most apprentices benefit from undertaking additional training, such as a first aid course, cycle technician and an auto technician programme.

- Apprentices participate well in a range of charitable and enrichment activities, which help to broaden their outlook and help them to recognise differences in society. They contribute to a range of charitable activities. These include a bicycle recycling scheme in which they repair and send old bicycles, traded in by customers, to Africa in order to benefit disadvantaged communities.
- Apprentices benefit from an extensive employee assistance programme. The programme provides a good range of support services to assist employees in areas such as drug and alcohol misuse, counselling and mental health support. Apprentices gain encouragement to take responsibility for their health and well-being, and a small minority participate in Halfords' cycle-to-work programme.
- Apprentices adopt safe working practices in the workplace. They keep storage areas clean and store stock appropriately. They have a good awareness of customer safety. They conduct appropriate customer checks when selling age-restricted products such as aerosol paints and fast-acting adhesives. Apprentices feel safe and know how to stay safe when using social media.
- Most apprentices have an appropriate understanding of the dangers posed by radicalisation, and they can identify the signs of extremist behaviour in the context of their job roles. However, in a few cases, apprentices are not fully aware of the risks associated with these issues in their everyday lives.
- Apprentices receive useful careers advice at the start of the programme. The recruitment and selection process provides apprentices with a detailed understanding of the demands and expectations of both the job and the training programme. Store managers provide good support to develop their teams, and they advise apprentices on the opportunities for progression to higher-level qualifications, such as the 'Aspire' programme for trainee managers. However, too many apprentices are not fully aware of the transferable skills they develop, or how these relate to the wider retail and business sector.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Outcomes for apprentices have rapidly improved and are now good. Following the previous inspection, the apprenticeship team implemented a range of well-considered and targeted improvement actions that significantly increased apprentices' achievement. A high and increasing proportion of apprentices complete their programmes successfully and do so within the expected timescales.
- There are no significant gaps in the performance of different groups of apprentices. Achievement for the very few apprentices who have specific individual needs, and the small number of apprentices aged 16 to 18, have increased over time. However, they remain too low when compared with those of their peers nationally. Managers analyse data and have identified these differences, but they have yet to ascertain the reason for these lower achievements.
- Apprentices develop good English and mathematical skills, which they use productively at work and in their personal lives. For example, they communicate well with other store colleagues regarding point-of-sale merchandising and know how to manage personal

finance. A high and increasing proportion of apprentices complete their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics within the planned time and at the first attempt.

- Apprentices, almost all of whom are on standards-based apprenticeships in retail and retail management, make good progress from their starting points, towards achieving their apprenticeships goals. Similarly, the very few apprentices on framework qualifications in retail and warehousing make more assured progress in their learning and skills development than was formerly the case.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning and gain skills that aid their employability and support their career ambitions. Apprentices quickly demonstrate high levels of job-related skills. They apply their improved levels of self-confidence and motivation to their day-to-day work.
- Most apprentices develop high levels of vocational and employability skills that lead to tangible benefits for them and for Halfords. For example, warehouse apprentices use shelf space efficiently and pick and pack orders accurately. Retail apprentices use their improved analytical and organisational skills to deliver consistently high levels of customer service and increase sales. Employers are right to speak highly of the improved range of skills and commitment that apprentices demonstrate as a result of their learning and skill development.
- Apprentices gain a good range of personal and social skills through participating in, and contributing towards, an extensive range of community activities, charity fund-raising initiatives and volunteering. For example, apprentices contribute to the 'bikeability' scheme, which promotes cycling proficiency skills to very young children.
- Almost all apprentices move on to sustained employment on completion of their training, and a few apprentices progress to the next apprenticeship level.

Provider details

| | |
|---|--|
| Unique reference number | 59232 |
| Type of provider | Employer |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 554 |
| Principal/CEO | Graham Stapleton |
| Telephone number | 0845 057 9000 |
| Website | www.halfords.com |

Provider information at the time of the inspection

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|------------------|-----|
| Main course or learning programme level | Level 1 or below | | Level 2 | | Level 3 | | Level 4 or above | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ |
| | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |
| Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships) | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | 16–18 | 19+ | | |
| | 32 | 909 | – | 123 | – | 38 | | |
| Number of apprenticeships | 16–19 | | 19+ | | Total | | | |
| | – | | – | | – | | | |
| Number of learners aged 14 to 16 | – | | | | | | | |
| Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding | – | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | – | | | | | | | |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of colleague training and apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and of the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers. These views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Victor Reid, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Steve Stanley | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Dominic Whittaker | Ofsted Inspector |
| Maggie Fobister | Ofsted Inspector |
| Stephen Masterson | Ofsted Inspector |
| Claire Beaman | Ofsted Inspector |
| Barbara Hughes | Ofsted Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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