

Inspection of CQM Training & Consultancy Limited

Inspection dates: 17–20 September 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

CQM Training & Consultancy Ltd is a large apprentice provider with its head office in Hathersage, near Sheffield. At the time of inspection, 584 apprentices were on apprenticeship frameworks or standards programmes. Leaders offer a broad range of apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5 for employers in the food and drink, manufacturing and service sector. The majority of apprentices study for food and drink process/advanced processor operator apprenticeships at levels 2 or 3. A significant proportion study at level 2 to level 4 in operational improvement as technicians or practitioners and in food manufacturing excellence. The remainder study at levels 3 to 5 in leadership and management, including food management and customer service. Most are employed with medium to large employers throughout England. Subcontracting arrangements have recently ceased.

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

Apprentices enjoy learning. Many appreciate working among diverse workforces that broaden their understanding of other cultures and religions. They demonstrate considerable growth in their competence in the workplace and in their self-belief. In many cases, they have developed the knowledge that enables them to make business-related presentations to colleagues and managers, and the confidence to explain business benefits.

Learning sessions link theoretical concepts with apprentices' job roles well. Knowledgeable and experienced business change facilitators provide training that helps apprentices to describe and demonstrate the skills, knowledge and behaviours they develop.

Apprentices develop their knowledge and skills through well-structured learning programmes. Business change facilitators first introduce them to simple topics. These then build towards more complex themes. Apprentices understand these complex themes because they are built on what they already know and understand.

Apprentices make increasingly important contributions in their workplaces as their skills develop. As a result, their employers often give them increased responsibility and pay. For example, apprentices who completed the level 2 operator apprenticeship and are now level 3 manufacturing technicians oversee production lines with the responsibility for maintenance and breakdowns, and are earning a very much improved salary.

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

Managers with responsibility for the curriculum work well with employers to learn about their requirements. They carry out an analysis of the roles that apprentices will hold, and the tasks they are being trained to fulfil. As a result, managers develop a clear understanding of the most important knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to develop. They also identify the relevant additional qualifications that are required, such as food hygiene and manual handling.

Managers have a good understanding of the apprenticeship standards and the specifications of associated qualifications. This, coupled with their knowledge of the employer and apprentices' roles, allows them to develop programmes that make clear links between theoretical learning and the workplace. They also consider carefully how particular topics should be taught. For example, they develop project-based activities that help to reinforce the knowledge and skills that apprentices have learned about in lessons. This helps to prepare apprentices for taking on additional responsibilities at work.

Staff have developed schemes of work that identify appropriately the sequence of learning. For example, the basic principles of business improvements are scheduled first. As a result, apprentices develop the prerequisite understanding before they tackle more difficult topics. Schemes of work are varied to meet the specific needs of employers and apprentices.

Business change facilitators use their knowledge and experience to plan effective learning sessions. This helps apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours well. In too many instances, apprentices are not challenged sufficiently to strive towards achieving higher grades and do not always know how they do this. Nevertheless, of the small number who have achieved an apprenticeship standard, a significant proportion have obtained high grades.

In the better learning sessions, business change facilitators are well prepared and know their apprentices well. Assessment in these sessions is focused on the extent to which learning has taken place, what has been remembered and what needs to be reinforced. As a result, interest is aroused and deepened as links between what is known are made to new knowledge, skills and behaviours and then carefully built on. However, business change facilitators do not revisit topics often enough throughout programmes to continue to help apprentices reinforce and retain what they have studied.

Apprentices know that their apprenticeship is highly valued by their employers and have a good awareness of the various pathways and opportunities open to them for advancement. Many feel that their personal profile within the business has been raised, and they speak enthusiastically about discussing improvement techniques with managers. Others use the apprenticeship to enter a completely new career, such as moving from operations into technical support or into team leading and eventually management. However, they do not receive independent careers advice, and, consequently, they have little awareness of the opportunities open to them outside of their employer.

Business change facilitators do not do enough to help apprentices apply their English and mathematical skills sufficiently in their work roles. They do not take sufficient account of the results of initial assessments to plan learning activities or to systematically build English and mathematics activities into learning sessions. For a few apprentices, this hinders the development of these important employability skills.

Apprentices' understanding and recollection of training in British values requires improvement. Business change facilitators relate topics well to British values and link them to the workplace well, but apprentices do not always remember what they have been told or taught.

Board members and leaders have a clear oversight of the business and ensure that programmes meet apprenticeship requirements. In the few cases where attendance drops, leaders take appropriate actions.

Annual appraisals for business change facilitators do not focus sufficiently on improving the quality of education they deliver. Leaders and managers do make sure that all staff benefit from mandatory training in the 'Prevent' duty and in modern British values.

Leaders place a high priority on the well-being of staff and apprentices. They take account of case-load sizes and locations of employers when planning training. For example, business change facilitators are very happy in their work because leaders and

managers care about their welfare and help them to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors, leaders and managers make sure that apprentices are safe and work safely during training and in the workplace. Apprentices know what to do if they have any concerns and how to raise them with their employer or with CQM Training & Consultancy Ltd. The very few concerns raised to date have been dealt with appropriately.

The designated safeguarding officer is appropriately qualified. A central record is maintained that contains staff disclosure and barring service checks, as well as training and development records. Mandatory training includes safeguarding and health and safety. As a result, apprentices have a good understanding of the stringent safety regulations relating to the food industry.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Focus professional development activities more directly on improving the quality of education.
- Ensure that business change facilitators plan for the explicit inclusion of English and mathematics topics within lessons, paying attention to what apprentices already know and what they can do in these subjects.
- Make sure that business change facilitators help apprentices understand the grading criteria for their apprenticeships better. Facilitators should provide helpful guidance and support that enables apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding to the highest possible level.
- Build in frequent assessment activities to programmes so that apprentices have opportunities to recall topics and improve the storage and retrieval of their new knowledge.
- Review curriculum plans to make sure that they focus more on what learners do between lessons to practise and develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Provider details

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MD	Andy Cheshire
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by Dawn Hughes, Quality & Compliance 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 all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including observing 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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