

Inspection of Firebrand Training Limited

Inspection dates: 8–11 October 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Firebrand Training Limited (Firebrand) operates from a centre at Wyboston Lakes, near St Neots. They provide residential training to apprentices of up to a week long as a part of their programme. In addition, staff provide online and face-to-face individual training to apprentices in their workplaces. Apprentices work in locations across the country. Firebrand does not use subcontractors.

At the time of the inspection 558 apprentices were studying information technology (IT) apprenticeships. All apprentices were studying standards-based apprenticeships. Of these, about one third were at level 3 and two thirds at level 4. Apprentices study a wide range of IT standards, including IT hardware and software for technicians, cyber security and data analysts.

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

Apprentices at Firebrand are exemplary learners. They are confident and articulate. Apprentices enjoy their learning and are highly motivated. They have an appetite to learn and they do so quickly. Apprentices' behaviour and conduct is impeccable.

Apprentices develop very good skills, knowledge and behaviours, which they recall clearly. For example, apprentices can discuss in detail the different categories they give clients. This depends on the applications used frequently on a client's computer and how they may vary over time.

Apprentices make a very good contribution to their workplaces. For example, apprentices improved the public-facing website of their national transport company. By making it more user friendly and efficient, they saved the company money.

Through the level 2 social skills programme, apprentices understand about treating all clients equally. They know to place a positive value on groups of people who may be different from them.

Apprentices quickly develop their English and mathematics skills, which they use effectively in the workplace. Apprentices produce good-quality IT reports and proposals, using simple but accurate written English to convey their meaning strongly.

Apprentices' attendance at training is very good. Apprentices are safe and feel safe both in training and at work. They know how to keep themselves safe online and to whom they should report concerns.

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

Staff use their significant industry experience very effectively. They help apprentices develop a detailed knowledge of working in the IT sector. Workplace learning mentors and subject experts help apprentices to cover specific disciplines, such as cyber security. Staff use their links with the British Computer Society usefully to keep up to date with the IT sector.

Instructors work closely with apprentices to ensure that they have a good knowledge of fundamental principles before going into greater depth on a topic. Instructors use questioning to great effect, to ensure that apprentices develop and retain essential IT knowledge.

Staff frequently assess apprentices' work and give them good feedback. As a result, apprentices know in detail how to improve the quality of their work. Staff use their feedback on learning to amend planned training. They ensure that apprentices build on their previous work and develop higher level skills and knowledge. Apprentices' work meets, or in many cases exceeds, the requirements of their apprenticeship.

Learning mentors link the apprenticeship standards to work tasks very effectively. For example, when learning mentors discuss updating information security procedures at work, they link this to the communication skills covered in the standard.

Firebrand is extremely well led and managed. Senior leaders use their commercial training experience effectively. Programmes meet the rapidly evolving information technology industry requirements successfully. Specific vendor qualifications offered enhance apprentices' career prospects.

Leaders and managers plan the curriculum in detail. It is clearly adapted to match apprentices' work roles. Staff prepare apprentices thoroughly in advance of their residential courses. Staff use a range of webinars, individual guidance and good online training materials. They involve employers fully in the development of the programmes. This ensures that programmes meet employers' business needs fully.

Leaders focus appropriately on raising the aspirations and attainment of people from backgrounds that are under-represented in the IT industry. In partnership with The National Autistic Society they promote careers in IT.

Apprentices are not clear enough about their career options to make informed choices about their future. Too few learning mentors discuss careers during reviews. Staff discuss progression opportunities formally at the end of apprentices' programmes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a strong focus on safeguarding apprentices. They have clear and effective processes for monitoring workplaces. They take prompt action to stop working with employers who put apprentices at risk. Designated safeguarding staff have had appropriate training. They deal with any issues promptly and effectively. Apprentices apply safe working practices in the workplace. They have a good knowledge of how to report issues.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Establish a structured approach to ensuring that apprentices receive appropriate careers advice and guidance during their apprenticeship so that they are fully aware of their options both within their companies and externally.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278573
Address	Firebrand Training Centre Wyboston Lakes Great North Road Wyboston Bedford MK44 3AL
Contact number	0844 888 1600
Website	https://firebrand.training/uk
CEO	Stefano Capaldo
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 the head of apprenticeship 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 observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

Derrick Baughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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