

Inspection of Bishop Fleming LLP

Inspection dates:

24 to 26 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Bishop Fleming LLP (BF) is an employer provider with offices in Bath, Cheltenham, Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Torquay, Truro and Worcester. BF provides a range of professional services to businesses, such as audit, taxation and accounting. At the time of the inspection, 158 apprentices were studying the accountancy and taxation professional apprenticeship at level 7. Each apprentice is assigned to a growth coach at work who provides apprentices with pastoral support and reviews the progress they are making on their apprenticeship. BF works with two subcontractors who teach apprentices the specialist content within the apprenticeship. All apprentices were aged 18 and over.

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

Apprentices' attitudes towards their studies are exceptional. Their attendance rates at work and lessons are high. They are highly motivated to succeed and they study diligently. Many apprentices use the company's modern and well-equipped offices outside of their working hours to study and revise together for examinations. This contributes to the high marks they achieve in their examinations.

Apprentices gain significant new knowledge and technical skills. They develop positive professional behaviours and relish the additional responsibilities they are given. For example, apprentices lead the implementation of new management systems and are given responsibilities for providing a professional service for clients, such as auditing. Apprentices are well-being ambassadors who organise trips to the theatre, kindness days and a range of sporting competitions that are well-attended by their peers. Apprentices build their confidence and character by contributing positively to their communities. For example, they refurbish buildings used by charities, carry out beach cleans and donate to food banks.

Apprentices adopt highly respectful behaviours towards their colleagues. They feel safe to express themselves in the workplace. For example, apprentices raise awareness about neurodiversity and are supported by their employers to be representatives for the company at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) celebrations, such as Bristol Pride.

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

Leaders have created a highly-purposeful curriculum that develops the extensive knowledge and skills apprentices need to be successful accountancy, taxation or audit professionals. Leaders plan high-quality training carefully so that it meets the needs of a wide range of apprentices, including school leavers who have just completed A levels, university graduates and adults who are changing their careers. BF's 'launchpad' programme provides younger apprentices with experience in each specialist professional pathway in the first two years of their apprenticeship. This has helped them to make well-informed choices about their next steps. Leaders ensure that adult apprentices who have children receive support and training to help them balance their parenting commitments alongside study and work.

Leaders plan and sequence the curriculum very effectively so that apprentices gain first-hand experience in working with clients throughout their apprenticeship. They learn about the core subjects of accounting, assurance, principles of taxation, technology, law and management information before moving on to professional and advanced levels of knowledge and their final examinations. Many apprentices are given responsibility for running projects, managing their quota of VAT returns, billing clients and preparing tax computations. Teaching is very effective and engaging. Teachers use a variety of methods to teach and present information.

Leaders, growth coaches and tutors ensure that apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Tutors use the information they have about apprentices' specific needs effectively to adapt teaching and the training they receive at work. For example, apprentices with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) combine working from home with office work and study, so that they do not feel overwhelmed. Apprentices who have learning needs receive extra examination time and reading software to help them check their work.

Tutors provide apprentices with exceptional feedback about the progress they are making. They identify precisely apprentices' strengths and areas for improvement and use this information well to set them challenging targets. This helps apprentices to make substantial progress from their starting points. Growth coaches and tutors support apprentices to develop their English and mathematical skills in their studies and the workplace. For example, apprentices learn how to translate numerical data into audit reports, how to write and structure detailed reports and how to summarise feedback to clients.

Leaders ensure that the BF staff who provide apprentices with their training at work are taught how to convey knowledge to apprentices effectively. They plan and pace training carefully and use case studies and work-based scenarios to enliven and make training highly relevant.

Apprentices participate in high-quality career discussions with their growth coach throughout their apprenticeship. They receive impactful career workshops led by more experienced apprentices who talk about their different roles within the company. Apprentices swiftly gain essential and helpful knowledge about the career pathways available to them.

Leaders astutely recognise the importance of apprentices developing strong interpersonal skills, alongside technical knowledge, so that they adopt professional etiquette when working with clients. Apprentices learn how to dress and present themselves when working with a range of clients, how to conduct effective telephone conversations and how to write formal communications.

Leaders use thorough and effective processes to ensure that the subcontractors they work with provide apprentices with high-quality teaching. Experts from BF visit subcontractors frequently to ensure that tutors teach apprentices the correct technical content. Leaders and technical experts from with BF work closely with tutors from the subcontractors to plan tutors' professional development. They discuss and share ideas on how best to teach complex and difficult content.

Almost all apprentices pass their examination on the first attempt and achieve their qualification. All apprentices with SEND pass their examination on the first attempt. Apprentices produce exceptionally high standards of work. They use technical vocabulary, such as accruals, prepayments and split accounting, fluently and accurately. Apprentices quickly build clients' trust in the reliability of their professional work. After completion, apprentices take on more senior roles at BF or

with other employers. A few apprentices move into finance roles in other industries, such as hospitality, retail and health services.

Governors understand their responsibilities very well and prioritise the development and quality of apprenticeships. They hold leaders to account and ensure that investments in apprenticeships are in line with the workforce development strategy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2643281
Address	2nd Floor Stratus House Emperor Way Exeter Business Park Exeter EX1 3QS
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Website	https://www.bishopfleming.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Andrew Sandiford
Provider type	Employer Provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	First Intuition Limited RELX (UK) Limited

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality 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 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

Cliff Shaw, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Bev Ramsell	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Alexander	His Majesty's Inspector

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