

Inspection of Raise the Bar Limited

Inspection dates:

10 to 13 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Raise the Bar Limited (RtB) became an approved training provider to deliver levy-funded apprenticeship programmes in 2017. It began recruiting apprentices in September 2018. At the time of the inspection, there were 575 apprentices studying standards-based apprenticeships. There were 238 apprentices on the level 3 team leader or supervisor standard (team leader), 213 apprentices on the level 5 operational or departmental manager standard (operational manager) and 124 apprentices on the level 5 coaching professional standard. RtB operates across England with a range of employers. The provider delivers all provision online.

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

Apprentices on all programmes who attend their online workshops enjoy their training. They have access to a range of high-quality online resources. Level 5 operational manager apprentices learn about managing difficult conversations and apply this knowledge in their workplaces. However, tutors do not set apprentices ambitious targets for attendance at workshops and coaches do not consistently check that apprentices access or understand the online resources provided to them.

Apprentices value their trainers' subject knowledge and expertise of leadership and management. Trainers have up-to-date knowledge of mentoring skills for coaching. Apprentices value the feedback they receive from trainers and know how to improve their work. As a result, apprentices produce work to a high standard. Level 5 coaching professional apprentices produce detailed assignments that incorporate Harvard referencing.

Apprentices are supported well by their trainers and coaches. Level 5 coaching professional apprentices are provided with additional visual resources to aid their understanding of written coaching content. Level 3 team leader apprentices and level 5 operational manager apprentices are prepared well by their coaches for their final assessments, and many achieve high grades.

Leaders and managers have recently made improvements to the initial advice and guidance provided for new apprentices. The majority of new apprentices are now aware of the time and study requirements to complete their apprenticeship. However, a few apprentices still feel overwhelmed by the volume of academic work that is required.

Apprentices develop their wider English and mathematical skills as a result of their apprenticeship. This results in apprentices being able to make an effective contribution to their employers' businesses and their own personal lives. For example, level 3 team leader apprentices develop their report-writing skills, and level 5 operational manager apprentices improve their knowledge of budgeting. Leaders have recently recruited new tutors for English and mathematics and have developed functional skills workshops for apprentices. This has improved the support that apprentices receive to prepare them for their English and mathematics assessments.

Apprentices feel safe. They demonstrate positive attitudes and are motivated to learn. They are respectful and supportive of each other in online group workshops. Apprentices who attend arrive on time and are prepared well for their workshops. For example, they ensure that they complete preparation work for their sessions.

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

Senior leaders have a clear strategy for the curriculum they offer. They offer leadership and management apprenticeships to small- and medium-sized and national organisations. Leaders work closely with employers to identify their needs and to develop an appropriate curriculum to support their businesses and their apprentices. For example, they develop bespoke courses, such as on women in leadership, to upskill employers' workforces. A new level 5 coaching professional apprenticeship has been developed in direct response to a shortage of effective coaching professionals locally and nationally.

Coaches do not use information on apprentices' prior knowledge and experience at the beginning of their programme to plan and sequence an individualised curriculum. As a result, all apprentices complete the same training irrespective of what they already know and can do. Level 5 coaching professional apprentices learn about new coaching methods, such as the OSCAR model, to help improve apprentices' teamworking skills. However, too many apprentices on the level 3 team leader and the level 5 operational manager apprenticeships already have prior experience in their job roles. Trainers and coaches do not set these apprentices sufficiently challenging targets to enable them to develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Leaders have been too slow to improve the quality of education that apprentices receive. They have not successfully rectified all the weaknesses identified at the previous monitoring visit. Leaders do not have clear oversight of the progress that apprentices make on their programmes. There is too much focus on the completion of tasks and assignments rather than filling the gaps in knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices require.

Coaches do not consistently coordinate on- and off-the-job learning effectively. Employers are often unaware of the topics apprentices learn in online workshops. This leads to a small minority of level 3 team leader apprentices being unable to practise what they have learned in the workplace.

Leaders do not ensure that apprentices receive broad, unbiased guidance on career opportunities beyond their current employment. Apprentices only receive information about further and higher study opportunities at RtB. Apprentices complete personal development plans with their coaches to identify short-, medium-, and long-term career goals.

Leaders have appointed an external board member since the previous monitoring visit. However, they place too little focus on apprentices' learning or how their educational experiences can be improved. This results in too little action being taken to improve the quality of education that apprentices receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices feel safe. They are aware of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and know how to contact the DSL. Apprentices complete training on safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism, and have access to monthly hot topics, such as stress awareness.

The DSL has links with relevant external agencies to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of localised safeguarding issues such as county lines.

Leaders have comprehensive safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty policies and procedures in place. They complete appropriate checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with apprentices. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that they use the information on apprentices' starting points to develop an individualised curriculum for all apprentices so that they gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Leaders should ensure that on- and off-the-job training is coordinated with employers so that apprentices are supported to practise and master the knowledge, skills and behaviours they have learned at work.
- Leaders should quickly establish rigorous processes to monitor the progress that apprentices make on their apprenticeship and swiftly intervene when apprentices need additional support.
- Leaders must ensure that apprentices are supported to understand the content of their mathematics assessments so that they successfully achieve their examinations.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2539233
Address	13a Tiger Court Kings Business Park Kings Drive Prescot L34 1PJ
Contact number	0203 137 7353
Website	www.raisethebar.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Rebecca Bridge (Managing Director)
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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

Suzanne Horner, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Ofsted Inspector
Robin Lindsay	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Hornby	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Nellist	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Price	Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022