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Inspection of UKFast.Net Limited

Inspection dates: 1–3 September 2021

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

UKFast.Net Limited (UKFast) was formed in 1999. It provides managed hosting, including dedicated servers and cloud services, to a wide range of businesses. UKFast started to receive public funding to deliver apprenticeship training in February 2018. It currently has 10 apprentices enrolled. All apprentices are working towards a standards-based programme at level 3 in IT infrastructures. All apprentices are aged 18 or over. UKFast employs the apprentices. UKFast does not subcontract to other providers. The head office is based in Manchester and has training facilities on site.

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

Apprentices are exceptionally well motivated. They enjoy their learning and demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to learning. Tutors help apprentices achieve high grades and all apprentices produce work of a consistently very high standard.

Apprentices demonstrate the expected behaviours they need to espouse while at work. Apprentices quickly take on the responsibility of early shifts on their own and are aware of the consequences to the business if calls are not answered on time.

Apprentices develop significantly in confidence. For instance, apprentices describe feeling nervous before they start to talk to clients on the telephone. They are now highly effective and skilled in their verbal communication, which they adapt very well to the client they are talking to.

Apprentices gain and develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, they learn about coding and command lines and are able to skilfully apply their knowledge in the workplace when they install operating and software systems.

Apprentices demonstrate an exceptional awareness about the risks of working online and how to keep themselves, their clients and the businesses they work with safe. They know the importance of protecting their clients' network systems from hackers and online fraud.

Apprentices strive to achieve to the best of their ability in the workplace. All apprentices go on to be successful and move into permanent or promoted posts within the company.

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

Board members and senior leaders have established a culture of high expectations for themselves, their staff and the apprentices they train. The very ambitious curriculum ensures that apprentices make good progress in their work and careers.

Leaders support staff to plan and implement highly successful apprenticeship programmes. Tutors adapt the curriculum to support individual apprentices' and business needs. For instance, they introduce modules such as cloud applications. This supports apprentices well when they are giving frontline support to clients.

Tutors use especially effective teaching and assessment strategies. They identify what apprentices understand and can do and plan very well to rectify any misconceptions they may have. For example, they provide individualised revision sessions for apprentices who need extra help in achieving additional qualifications in cloud applications.

Tutors provide frequent opportunities for apprentices to practise their skills and to recall and develop their knowledge. They help apprentices to build their knowledge, skills and behaviours by planning on- and off-the-job training exceptionally well in conjunction with team leaders in the workplace. Apprentices are allocated roles, so they are able to learn in a logical order. For example, they learn how to monitor customer servers and raise tickets for support before they move onto the helpdesk.

Apprentices develop their understanding of key concepts and can ably apply the theoretical knowledge they gain to their practical work. For example, apprentices demonstrate a clear understanding of disaster recovery and can advise clients on how to mitigate their risks.

Relationships between apprentices, their tutors and team leaders are excellent. Pastoral and academic support is exceptional. For example, tutors organise counselling support for apprentices who have personal or health concerns.

Apprentices produce work of a consistently high standard. The quality of apprentices' work improves throughout the duration of the course, indicating apprentices' increased levels of knowledge.

Tutors provide opportunities for all apprentices to become involved in community projects. Prior to the pandemic, apprentices took part in designing a website for a sports personality and running coding clubs for local school children. Apprentices feel part of the local community and enjoy giving their time to help others.

Staff provide highly effective initial information, advice and guidance to ensure apprentices are on the right programme. Apprentices benefit from work shadowing different areas of the business, such as the help desk and security teams. This enables them to make informed decisions about which team they wish to work in on completion of their apprenticeship. Apprentices do not always have sufficient knowledge or understanding of the wider range of progression routes available to them outside of the company.

Senior leaders and staff are very ambitious for their apprentices. They are committed to providing a high-quality education, which means that most apprentices achieve their full potential. Apprentices who study here do exceptionally well.

Leaders and managers use a range of information to gain a thorough and accurate oversight of apprentices' progress. Staff set apprentices challenging targets to achieve and routinely monitor their progress against them. Almost all apprentices make excellent progress on their course and achieve high grades.

Leaders' self-assessment processes are accurate and have resulted in high-quality provision. However, the numbers of apprentices are currently small. Leaders need to

develop a more strategic oversight to sustain the quality of education in line with their ambition to recruit a larger number of apprentices.

Board members hold managers to account for the quality of provision. They receive highly detailed reports and information at board meetings to provide managers with the support and challenge they need to continually improve the quality of apprentices' training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding and the safety of apprentices is a high priority. The designated safeguarding lead and all staff have the appropriate training and experience to carry out their roles effectively. Staff use links to external agencies to signpost apprentices to additional help, such as counselling.

Managers ensure that staff are recruited safely. Staff have regular training in safeguarding, including how to identify any potential mental health concerns. They know how to keep apprentices safe and report any concerns they may have.

Apprentices say they feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns.

Provider details

Unique reference number   2526604

Address   1 Archway
Manchester
M15 5QJ

Contact number   0800 458 4545

Website   www.ukfast.co.uk

CEO   Ian Brown

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 apprenticeships, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit 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

Andrea Machell, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Ruth Stammers	Her Majesty's Inspector

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