

# Inspection of SR Supply Chain Consultants Ltd

Inspection dates: 27 February to 1 March 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

SR Supply Chain Consultants Ltd (SRSCC) is an independent learning provider based in Euxton, Lancashire. It specialises in procurement training for a range of sectors. It offers both apprenticeships and non-funded training online and face to face across England.

At the time of the inspection, there were 208 apprentices in learning. There were 165 apprentices studying the level 4 commercial procurement and supply apprenticeship and 43 apprentices studying the level 3 procurement and supply assistant apprenticeship. Almost all apprentices were over the age of 18.

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

Apprentices are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. They like working in the procurement and supply chain sector and enjoy the challenges that the role brings. Apprentices develop their character and confidence. They learn essential professional skills such as negotiation and teamwork. Apprentices successfully apply these skills at work when carrying out tasks such as meeting with stakeholders and negotiating contracts.

Apprentices are respectful and considerate of others' opinions. Tutors set high expectations of behaviour at the start of learning sessions. They encourage open discussion, debate and listening to others' views. Apprentices use the professional attitudes and behaviours that they learn in the workplace, in their teams and when speaking to suppliers and customers.

Most apprentices are self-motivated and demonstrate resilience when studying topics that they find difficult such as mathematical concepts. Where apprentices are struggling, or falling behind, tutors provide one-to-one sessions to help them to catch up. Apprentices are well supported to complete their apprenticeships.

Most apprentices attend their sessions regularly. Where apprentices do not attend a planned session, they are provided with a recording so that they can use this to fill gaps in their knowledge and to revise for examinations. Leaders work with employers to ensure that they are mindful of apprentices' workload and the time pressures when examinations are approaching. Employers reallocate work where possible so that apprentices can focus on their revision.

Apprentices feel safe. They know how to report any concerns both at work and at SRSCC. Apprentices benefit from a helpful newsletter that highlights local area risks, such as county lines. Leaders have widened their advice to apprentices so that it now includes all the regions across the country where apprentices live and work. Apprentices are better informed of risks that may be relevant to them.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for the apprenticeships that they offer. They specialise in training for procurement and the supply chain, which is their sole focus. Leaders use their links with stakeholders to inform their knowledge of current skills shortages in procurement, which they say have increased since Brexit. Leaders are currently working on the introduction of the level 6 senior procurement and supply chain professional apprenticeship to provide a progression route for apprentices.

Leaders have developed appropriate apprenticeship curriculums. The curriculums are designed with topics to be taught that align with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) national examinations and the requirements of employers. Level 3 apprentices learn the steps of their role in a well-considered order. For example, they learn basic knowledge about the supply

chain and tendering process before moving on to the steps they need to take to choose the right supplier.

Leaders ensure that tutors and progress mentors are suitably qualified and have subject expertise. Tutors are chartered procurement professionals and are qualified teachers. Tutors and progress mentors attend training events to help them understand changing regulations and legislation impacting the procurement and supply sector. They participate in training to improve their teaching skills on topics such as effective questioning techniques and supporting apprentices with additional needs. Apprentices benefit from current and relevant teaching.

Progress mentors and tutors accurately identify apprentices' prior learning and experience at the start of their apprenticeship. Apprentices' progress is reviewed frequently. Apprentices demonstrate their increased knowledge through the tasks that they complete at work, for example in topics such as financial awareness where they calculate the cost savings and efficiencies that they have made at work.

Apprentices learn new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they apply at work. They learn about stakeholder engagement and how to rank stakeholders in terms of importance to the success of the project. Apprentices learn about procurement contract regulations and can describe the different types of thresholds and contracts that they can use, such as services, works or third-party frameworks. Apprentices demonstrate the confidence they have gained by demonstrating skills such as speaking to other professionals in supplier meetings.

Tutors design and use activities during teaching sessions effectively. They systematically check apprentices' understanding and help apprentices to remember the content that they have learned. Challenging topics such as stakeholders and the stages of the tender processes are revisited regularly throughout the apprenticeship, using a range of methods such as interactive quizzes and discussions. This helps apprentices to retain and recall what they have been taught.

Apprentices learn to use professional and technical terminology early in their apprenticeship. They describe the five rights of procurement outlining added value. They explain Mendelow's Power and the interest matrix for managing stakeholders within a procurement process. This builds their confidence when speaking to others in meetings.

Leaders have improved the standard of feedback that tutors provide to apprentices. Most apprentices now benefit from constructive and developmental feedback on their written work and performance. Most apprentices find their feedback is useful to help them improve. However, apprentices who study functional skills English and mathematics do not always receive helpful feedback, and a few are not made aware of how to improve their work to a higher standard.

Apprentices understand the requirements of their final assessments and are supported to make progress towards achieving. However, a few level 3 apprentices

are not aware of the grade they are working towards and not all are challenged to strive for a distinction grade.

Apprentices are prepared effectively for their next steps and roles in procurement. A few apprentices are given additional responsibilities such as managing more complex projects. Others have received a promotion because of the knowledge and skills they have gained during their apprenticeship.

Apprentices benefit from appropriate careers advice and guidance, including options for studying for a degree and gaining chartered CIPS status. Leaders arrange for guest speakers from large public and private sector companies to tell apprentices about their journey in procurement. Apprentices are well informed of the options open to them on completion of their apprenticeship.

Leaders have rectified, or improved, most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have invested in additional staff and significantly strengthened their quality monitoring processes. The number of apprentices who do not complete their apprenticeship on time has reduced. However, leaders recognise that there is still work to do to further reduce the number of apprentices who leave their apprenticeship early and to support the few apprentices who are making slower-than-expected progress.

Governors have a realistic view of the quality of training that apprentices receive. They meet with senior leaders regularly to critically evaluate the strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders have improved the quality of information that governors receive to ensure that they are able to evaluate the quality of training and provide support to help leaders prioritise actions that improve outcomes for apprentices.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that functional skills English and mathematics tutors provide constructive feedback to all apprentices who require these qualifications.
- Further reduce the number of apprentices who leave their apprenticeship early.
- Support level 3 procurement and supply assistant apprentices to strive for distinction grades in their final assessments.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	1278610
<b>Address</b>	Parkside House 190-192 Wigan Rd Euxton Chorley PR7 6JW
<b>Contact number</b>	01772 282555
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.srscc.co.uk">www.srscc.co.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Susan Rashid
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 to 29 October 2021
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of central services, 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

Ruth Stammers, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Ingle	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Greenhalgh	Ofsted Inspector
Maria Rayworth	Ofsted Inspector
Jaqui Scott	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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