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Sustaining outstanding apprenticeship success rates: Runshaw College

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Brief description

Runshaw College has consistently achieved high success rates for its apprentices by recruiting learners with ambition, matching their needs with those of employers and paying very close attention to detail during the apprentices programme.

Overview – the provider’s message



‘Our main focus is to ensure the success of all of our apprentices. Our mission is to ‘change lives’ for the better through education and added value by focusing on teaching, learning and support. Our work-based learning teams have engendered a culture where every learner really does matter and where every programme of learning is unique. To improve we knew that we needed to ensure that everyone involved in the programme had a shared vision, focus and desire to be successful.

We have high expectations and robust monitoring procedures in place for both learners and staff but we also work hard to ensure that they are well trained, effectively supported and recognised for their achievements.

There is no single solution; it is more a matter of “doing all the right things right” on a consistent basis. Success is ultimately built on the passion and belief of our staff because they know that what they do is important – that they can make a difference – and so together we relentlessly strive for further improvement.’

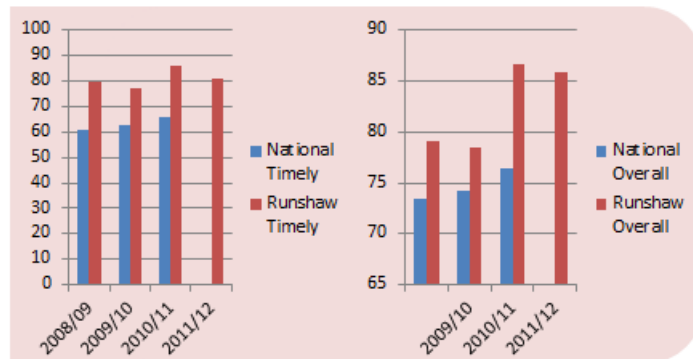
Claire Foreman, Deputy Principal

The good practice in detail

Many providers strive for the elusive outstanding success rates for apprenticeships. Runshaw College has not only achieved this but has sustained success rates around 15 percentage points above the national average for over two years. The success rate to date this year is 85% and indicates that these high rates are continuing.

The apprenticeship programme is managed by a central team of dedicated and specialist staff in Runshaw Business Centre and is delivered by vocational experts from the curriculum teams. Learners are carefully placed with employers, are visited regularly in the workplace and may attend college for off-the-job training. So far so familiar, but what is the secret to the college's success?

Timely and Overall Success Rates



'There is no secret,' says Anne Frear, Head of Studies, 'But we do ensure that we manage every part of the learners' journey well, monitor the programme rigorously and pay close attention to detail.'

The journey to success starts with the culture of the college. Staff have high expectations for themselves and the learners. They expect every learner to be successful.

The staff team supporting learners are experts, the recruitment and placement team know the employers, and they understand the apprenticeship framework and the employment opportunities. The trainer assessors are vocational experts. Learning mentors are specialists who work with apprentices and understand their needs. Communications between these staff to ensure a coherent programme and excellent support are clear, prompt and focused.

The apprenticeship programme is held in the same high esteem as the full-time learner responsive provision and the college's extensive higher education programme. This means that the senior management team receives regular reports on progress and gives the programme the same level of scrutiny at senior team meetings.

Staff teams critically evaluate the programme through team meetings and self-assessment to determine 'What have we not yet got right?'. Success of learners and staff is celebrated and good practice shared regularly and effectively.

Success starts with taking the time and effort to ensure that the right learner is on the right programme and placed with the right employer. Runshaw's employer liaison team works hard to understand the needs of the apprentice and the opportunities and circumstances of each employer to ensure a good match. The team choose to work with the best employers who they know will provide excellent support.

Jayne McGurran of the [Sue Ryder Foundation](#) has established a very successful relationship with Runshaw and the foundation's apprenticeship programme has recently been highly commended by the local authority. 'We have a social obligation to support apprenticeships and to grow our own skilled workforce and introduce new ways of working. Runshaw and our amazing tutor have been key to our success. Our tutor fits well with our culture, is flexible and adaptable, thinks nothing of going the extra mile and is an asset to Sue Ryder.' The Sue Ryder Foundation now has eight apprentices and the three who are about to complete have been given permanent jobs.

‘The support at Runshaw Business Centre is always helpful. My assessor is always available and happy to give me help and guidance when required. She has encouraged me to aim higher.’ - *April Bateman, Business Administration apprentice*

Visits to learners in the workplace are planned to meet learners' needs and often take place outside normal working hours. The visits are planned to maximise opportunities in the workplace and to ensure that this is quality time. Trainers are aware that employers have pressing business needs so tasks which can be carried out 'back at base', such as marking assignments, are completed before the visits. An electronic portfolio assists this. This means that time in the workplace is for high-priority coaching, mentoring and assessment, and keeping in contact with employees. Wherever possible, Runshaw's team adds value in the work place by sharing practice with employers, providing training and briefings and supporting the employer to best support the apprentice.

‘I am thoroughly enjoying all the classes. The skills and experience from the apprenticeship programme have helped me gain a lot of confidence. The support from Runshaw has been exceptional.’ - *Kieran Thomas, Business Administration apprentice*

Each apprentice's programme is designed to match his or her needs and the workplace. For example, where hairdressing apprentices do not need the perming module it is replaced with the more popular plaiting and twisting module. But apprentices achieve a College Certificate in Perming to future proof their qualification and prepare them for every eventuality. One learner working at a patisserie employer attends the college restaurant to gain wider skills and ensure that all competencies are met.

responsibility for coordinating and managing the learning programme for individual learners and ultimately the learners' success.

Trainers and apprentices are supported by learning mentors, counsellors and functional skills tutors at the college. But the trainer assessors retain full

A strong staff-development programme is in place and all trainers have received training to deliver functional skills. Most deliver functional skills training themselves, but are supported by dedicated functional skills trainers where needed.

The Runshaw philosophy is that apprentices should not only succeed but should enjoy their learning. Classes are well planned and learners value the high-quality and aspirational learning environment at Runshaw's Business Centre. Apprentices are included in cross-college events such as enrichment, social events and pamper days, and their success is celebrated.

It is the attention to detail which makes Runshaw's apprentices so successful.

The team's recipe for success

- Do the right things and do them right.
- Sweat the small stuff – pay attention to detail.
- Expect that it will be good!
- Ensure equal status with other provision.
- Recruit the right learners and place them with the right employer.
- Ensure clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and good communication – work as one team!
- Provide excellent support from specialist staff, including learner mentors.
- Devise simple systems which are flexible and adaptable to meet the needs of learners and managers.
- Add value to the workplace to build that excellent relationship with employers and ensure that time in the workplace is quality time.
- Make sure learners enjoy their programme.

Provider background



[Runshaw College](#), based in Leyland, has been outstanding for over 20 years. The college meets the diverse needs of its students at three centres. A dedicated sixth-form centre in Leyland provides A-level and vocational programmes for 16–18 year olds. Education for adult learners from basic skills to higher education is provided at adult centres in Euxton and Chorley. The Euxton centre, Runshaw's Business Centre, delivers training and development programmes and work based training to hundreds of businesses across the North West.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch.