

## Apprenticeship Guidance for WCC Schools 2025/26

Welcome to the guide to apprenticeships for all Warwickshire County Council schools. This guide is intended to be your go-to manual for all matters apprenticeships, so that as a school you can use apprenticeships for your benefit, upskilling and developing new or existing employees so that they have the training they need to deliver successfully in their job role.

### What is an Apprentice?

An Apprentice can be any employee undertaking a genuine job role for their employer – either a newly recruited individual, or an existing employee, who is enrolled onto an accredited apprenticeship qualification in order to further develop their professional competencies.

### What is an Apprenticeship?

An Apprenticeship is a qualification and a developmental pathway, delivered in partnership by an employer and an apprenticeship training provider. The employer provides the job role and on the job learning, while the training provider delivers off the job learning, linked to the Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviour (KSB) components of the apprenticeship qualification.

Apprenticeship qualifications are known as “standards”, and each standard has different KSB components, which have been created and agreed on by sector specific employer groups known as Trailblazers, and then approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE). There are hundreds of different types of apprenticeships available, covering thousands of different job roles across virtually all professional sectors.

Each apprenticeship falls into one of the following categories, or levels:



There are numerous types of apprenticeship already available to use for roles in schools, and the most used include:

<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>Level</b>
Customer Service Practitioner	2
Early Years Practitioner	2
Business Administrator	3
Education Technician	3
Early Years Educator	3
Teaching Assistant	3
Team Leader or Supervisor	3
Schools Business Professional	4
Early Years Lead Practitioner	5
Learning and Skills Teacher	5
Operations or Departmental Manager	5
Specialist Teaching Assistant	5
Early Years Teacher	6
Teacher	6

The above is not an exhaustive list, there may be other apprenticeship standards applicable to roles you have or can offer and that provide the skills development you require. To get further information on any of the hundreds of apprenticeship standards available, see the IFATE list of apprenticeship standards here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

Apprenticeship training providers have developed bespoke programmes for certain apprenticeships, and there are now several providers who have school specific apprenticeship offers, to deliver programmes such as sports coaching / PE, SEN, HLTA, or leadership and management aligned to being bespoke to schools and education professionals.

Any employee, of any age or time in their career, can undertake an apprenticeship providing that what they do is classed as new learning, meaning it is a new qualification for them, or is a qualification at a higher level than they have completed previously in the same subject area (for example, somebody who has a Level 3 Teaching Assistant qualification can do a Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant apprenticeship, but not vice versa).

All apprenticeships are an industry recognised qualification, but some include extra qualifications too, especially where deemed helpful for development of professional knowledge. For example, the Team Leader or Supervisor apprenticeship will usually include a CMI or ILM diploma. Every apprenticeship is ended and completed via an End Point Assessment (EPA), a final extensive assessment used to evidence the apprentice has learned and mastered all the KSB components of their apprenticeship.

## Learning Requirements

Another mandatory requirement of all apprenticeships is that the apprentice must be allocated time within their contracted hours for “off the job learning”. This is calculated as 20% of their weekly contracted hours, up to 30 hours a week – any hours worked beyond that are not counted, so the maximum time required per week for off the job training is six hours. If the apprentice works 25 hours a week, it’ll be five hours per week, and so on.

The training provider will calculate the total number of learning hours that need to be fulfilled across the whole apprenticeship, based on the weekly working hours of the apprentice and the type of apprenticeship they are undertaking. Once the total number of hours is met, the apprentice can proceed to their EPA. It is necessary for the employer to support their apprentice with the required learning time; however, it is not mandatory to enable 20% of their working hours for off the job learning *every* week – if work priorities make that very difficult in one week, then that’s fine as long as the apprentice is given the time to catch up later on. Apprentices cannot demand that they have guaranteed study/learning days every week, they should be flexible to their employers needs and priorities in the same way any other employee would be expected to be, but as the employer you must ensure they do have time available routinely for their learning, within their working hours, that keeps them on target to complete their apprenticeship within the expected timescales.

Off the job learning incorporates a large range of types of learning or training that can be applied to time required for it, including:

- Classroom tuition delivered in the workplace, on day/block release at a college or training centre, or online
- Professional development courses and/or e-learning modules provided by the employer
- Undertaking any practical training in or outside the workplace
- Shadowing and/or mentoring with more experienced colleagues
- Time spent reading, researching, or writing for assignments
- Developmental employer led projects, or any work/duties that enable the apprentice to practice new skills or gain new experience and evidence related to the apprenticeship standard

Apprenticeship training providers usually deliver a blended learning programme to support the learner with these requirements, but the employer must be mindful of the apprentice’s development programme too, and consider work-based training/learning the apprentice requires. The training provider doesn’t deliver all the training, employers must play their part in this as well.

Be aware that the term “off the job” learning can be somewhat misleading, simply because apprentices learn at least as much on the job as they do in any separate learning environment outside of that. The practice and demonstration of skills and behaviours associated with their apprenticeship whilst doing the job counts just as much towards the learning hours they must

fulfil as any separate classroom or assignment-based knowledge learning. Some space should be made, and allowed, for the latter; but it's the former that should contribute the most "learning time" for any apprentice, and they should document this learning routinely (every week, ideally), which in turn ensures that any need for study time away from the workspace, and the resource impact of that, is kept as much as possible to a minimum.

Employers must factor the 20% rule into the contracted hours of anyone undertaking an apprenticeship, as it is an apprenticeship funding rule set by the Department for Education (DfE). The training provider will advise on the number of learning hours required to fulfil, after which it is the responsibility of the apprentice and their line manager to record these hours and what learning activity they were used for.

### **Functional Skills**

Apprenticeships can also include functional skills English and Maths as an additional development opportunity for anyone who has not attained these at Level 2 (GCSE or equivalent) previously. These are a mandatory addition to an apprenticeship for any applicable apprentice aged 16-18. However, for anyone age 19+, these are optional unless the apprenticeship requires, in line with a wider industry regulation, attaining one or both subjects at Level 2 as a minimum (where applicable, that will be communicated by training providers at enrolment). Where included in any apprenticeship, functional skills must be passed for the apprentice to reach EPA and ultimately complete their apprenticeship.

Warwickshire County Council's advised stance on functional skills for those age 19+ is for any learner who has not yet attained passes at Level 2 in English and Maths to openly consider including them in their programme and to benefit from the development provided, and for the learners line manager to have the final say on whether functional skills should be included in the apprenticeship; but if the learner elects to not do functional skills and their manager agrees to this, that's fine.

### **Why use an Apprenticeship?**

Within Warwickshire County Council one of our driving forces is the need for succession planning and a desire to attract a younger workforce. Furthermore, a strong and growing economy must have a high level of skills to meet workforce demand. An apprenticeship is one way for an employer to attract younger employees (though there is no age limit), a route to harness fresh new talent, and a way to pass on important skills and know-how. It is also a way to provide existing employees with up-to-date skills and qualifications. There are sound economic and social reasons for employing apprentices that include:

- Attracting a younger workforce
- Developing the skills of local people
- Bringing new skills and talent into the workforce
- Involving the local community in the delivery of local services
- Training your current workforce and growing the workforce of the future

- Funding options make apprenticeships highly cost effective

### **Employing an Apprentice in a School**

- There are no age restrictions to being an apprentice (except they must be at least age 16 and have completed full time education), but they cannot undertake an apprenticeship where they have already completed the same qualification at the same or a higher level, e.g., somebody with a degree in Leadership and Management could not then do a Level 3 Team Leader Apprenticeship.
- Often (but not always), an apprentice will be a young and professionally inexperienced employee, in which case they should receive ongoing supervision and should not be left to work alone for any significant period unless deemed competent enough to do so, after a reasonable amount of time in post.
- Apprentices are usually full-time employees who work at least 30 hours per week, for an absolute minimum of 12 months, although most apprenticeships require 15 – 24 months to complete, and some even longer. Included within the weekly hours is any time spent in training with the training provider, via day or block release (if required). If an apprentice or an employee undertaking an apprenticeship works fewer than 30 hours a week, then they will need to be contracted for long enough to meet the minimum hours required to complete the apprenticeship, as determined by your training provider.
- Each type of apprenticeship has a likely duration, however different training providers can deliver at different timescales, so always discuss the duration of the apprenticeship with the provider before employing an apprentice and then base the fixed term contract on the duration they advise. The training provider must factor in the End Point Assessment as part of the overall duration they advise for the apprenticeship. They also must not consider holiday time for term time only apprentices as part of the overall duration of the programme, nor expect the apprentice to do any practical training or study that contributes to the apprentices 20% off the job training quota, unless the school agrees to pay the apprentice time in lieu for the hours spent doing this.
- Always be led by training provider advice on how long the duration of the apprenticeship should be. With the need to factor the EPA into the contract, it may well be required that you are open to offering term time only apprentices a two-year (six terms) contract.
- By recruiting an apprentice, you are not mandated to retain them in further employment after completion of the apprenticeship – it is understood that sometimes circumstances can mean that isn't possible. However, it is strongly encouraged that if you are considering recruiting apprentices, you do so with the intention of growing your own workforce and seeking to eventually retain the apprentice. You can retain an

apprentice in a further role before they complete their apprenticeship officially, if they meet the criteria of the role and you consider them competent, but please allow them the time to complete the apprenticeship fully even if they do progress before completion.

### **The Apprenticeship Levy**

The Apprenticeship Levy is paid to the government by employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million, charged at a rate of 0.5% of their pay bill, an amount based on National Insurance contributions and paid into the levy monthly. Warwickshire County Council and its community schools contribute over £1 million per year to the levy, which can then be recouped to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment delivered by an accredited apprenticeship training provider. There is no cap on how much levy WCC community schools can use, and all are welcome and encouraged to make the most of the funding available through investment in apprenticeships.

Making payments to a training provider is literally the only way levy funds can be used – they cannot be used to pay for an apprentice’s salary costs, nor for any administrative costs associated with employing an apprentice, nor expenses for an apprentice such as travel for the purpose of attending training (these must all be paid for separately by the employer). Levy funds cannot be used for the funding of any non-apprenticeship training/qualification of any kind.

WCC’s levy funds are managed and paid to training providers through the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS), an online account that is managed centrally by the WCC Apprenticeships Team. Community schools who recruit an apprentice or use apprenticeship training for existing employees must inform the WCC Apprenticeships Team, or have their training provider do this for you, so that payments to the schools’ chosen provider can be administered.

**Under absolutely no circumstances should any WCC community school try to register their own DAS account – if a training provider requests this, please refer them to the WCC Apprenticeships Team immediately.**

### **Apprenticeship Funding for non-Community Schools**

Schools that are part of a Multi-Academy Trust will either be able to use the Trusts levy funds, or if not a levy-paying employer, they enter into the governments co-investment funding model (used by all employers with a pay bill lower than £3m), where the apprenticeship is 95% funded by the government and the employer pays the remaining 5% (plus VAT). Alternatively, any non-levy paying employer can receive a levy ‘transfer’ from a large (levy-paying) employer, if that large employer is willing to do so. To use apprenticeship funding through co-investment or a transfer, the employer must create their own online DAS account.

Please note, that if a WCC Community School converts to academy status while they have WCC levy funded apprentices midway through an apprenticeship programme, the WCC levy

funding will stop at the point of conversion and the remaining costs of programme will need to be absorbed by the academy trust.

### **Pooled-PAYE Schools**

WCC schools that are pooled PAYE employers are no longer restricted from accessing levy funding, since a change to the DfE apprenticeship funding rules in 2023 allowed for local authorities to support schools with a pooled PAYE scheme (often attached to Voluntary Aided or Foundation schools), by enabling them to have the same access to levy funding as that enabled for all other community schools.

### **Apprenticeship Training Providers**

Typical training providers are FE Colleges, private training companies, and universities. Some employers are set up to deliver apprenticeships for their own workforce, they are known as Employer Providers. To ensure that providers are delivering quality apprenticeship training, the Government requires them to join the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP), and only providers who are on this register can be used for training that levy funds will be used to pay for. Apprenticeship training providers are regulated and assessed by Ofsted.

There is a mandatory DfE funding rule that any employer purchasing apprenticeship training from an apprenticeship training provider must have a contract for services in place. Warwickshire County Council has a contract framework for apprenticeship training providers, a list of whom can be shared upon request. **It is important that you check with your training provider that they are contracted to deliver for WCC**, there are some who are now well known across the school's community and who deliver in several Warwickshire schools, but if you are unsure then please check this with the WCC Apprenticeships Team.

If it transpires that a training provider you wish to work with is not contracted to deliver apprenticeship training for WCC, please refer them to the WCC Apprenticeships Team who can enable them to join the contract framework. **Do not sign any contract agreement provided by the training provider** – WCC levy funds will only be paid to a provider that has signed up to the WCC contract framework.

### **Apprenticeship Costs**

Each type of apprenticeship will be placed within a funding band that levy funds can only be used up to; if provider costs go beyond the funding band, the employer must pay the rest of the costs from its own budget (this is a rare occurrence, however). There are 30 bands, the lowest being £1,500 and the highest being £30,000.

All apprenticeship standards are placed within one of these funding bands. The upper limit of each funding band will cap the maximum amount of digital funds an employer who pays the levy can use towards an individual apprenticeship. The upper limit of the funding band will



also cap the maximum price that government will ‘co-invest’ towards, where an employer does not pay the levy or has insufficient digital funds and is eligible for extra support.

Levy payments for apprenticeships are paid to the training provider in monthly instalments, and usually about 20% of the overall cost is reserved for the EPA and the organisation that delivers that.

If an apprentice does not complete their apprenticeship, or leaves their employer after completing it, there is no action the employer can take to recoup these costs.

There are no grants for employers to apply for the funding of their apprentices, however some apprentices to enable extra funding for their employer in the following instances:

**Funding for 16-18-year-olds:** The government will pay £1,000 to employers who employ a 16-18-year-old apprentice. This is to incentivise employers to offer employment opportunities to young people and to help with the extra costs of supporting these individuals so that everyone can benefit from an apprenticeship. This funding will be paid directly to your school by the training provider after they draw the funding down from the government.

**Disadvantaged young people:** The government will also pay £1,000 to employers if they train 19-24-year-olds leaving care or who have a Local Authority Education and Healthcare plan (EHCP). This is to help with the extra costs of supporting these individuals and is so that everyone can benefit from an apprenticeship. Employer funding will be paid through the training provider.

**Funding for English and Maths training:** The government is committed to helping apprentices gain the minimum standard of Level 2 in English and maths. When employers agree with their training provider that their apprentice needs training to meet the minimum standards in English and maths, they will pay training providers for each of these qualifications (Level 1 and 2). This will come direct from the government and will not be deducted from an employer’s digital account.

### **Rates of Pay for Apprentices**

Apprentices have their own lower National Minimum Wage to reflect the investment employers make in their development. The National Minimum Wage (NMW) for apprentices from April 2025 is £7.55 an hour.

Warwickshire County Council agreed that since April 2022, its pay rate for all (non-schools) entry level apprentices will be APP2, and we encourage schools to pay that rate for their apprentices too if they can, but if not then Point 1 remains an option for schools’ use only.

See the table below for full details of the WCC Apprentices Pay Scale (annual rates are based on full time 37 hours a week).



SALARY POINT	APPRENTICES PAY RATES FOR 2025/2026	APPLICABLE TO
<b>POINT 1 (APP1)</b>	£7.55 per hour £14,576.08 per annum (NMW for both Apprentices and 16-17 y/o)	Available as starter rate for WCC schools apprentices (of any level) ONLY
<b>POINT 2 (APP2)</b>	£10.00 per hour £ 19,306.07 per annum (NMW for 18-20 y/o)	Starter rate for WCC entry level (Levels 2 and 3) apprentices  >19 <sup>th</sup> birthday and has completed 12 months of schools apprenticeship where APP1 is used initially
<b>POINT 3 (APP3)</b>	£12.21 per hour £23,572.71 per annum (NLW for 21+ y/o)	Starter rate for WCC higher apprentices (Levels 4 and 5)  >21 <sup>st</sup> birthday and has completed 12 months of entry level apprenticeship

The rates above are based on an apprentice working 37 hours per week (1.0 FTE). The pay will scale down accordingly for part time apprentices working fewer than 37 hours. An apprentice is normally employed for 30 hours or more a week, however this can be fewer if the apprenticeship duration is extended to allow for the required number of learning hours. The duration of the apprenticeship, dictated by your training provider, should also be the minimum length of the apprentices fixed-term contract. Be aware however that the contract may need to be extended should the apprentice require extra time to complete, for example if they have a break in learning, or if they need to retake part of the end point assessment.

Please note that an apprentice's salary will progress to a higher increment, depending on their age, after one full year in post if they are age 19 or above. An apprentice aged under 19 and who has been contracted for a year will only go up an increment on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, whenever that falls within their apprenticeship. Likewise, an apprentice who reaches their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday after they've been contracted for more than a year will automatically rise to Point 3. If an apprentice is term time only, they will still rise an increment one year from their employment start date. These pay progressions to NMW rates are in line with Pay and Work Rights set by the Government and therefore law – you cannot prevent an apprentice from receiving this progression.

Any Warwickshire County Council school must adopt the pay scale above and ensure they pay their apprentice the correct rate. You should not pay an apprentice at a higher rate than they should be on (e.g., starting a Level 2 or 3 apprentice on a point APP3), regardless of the age apprentices age, because this may lead to an equal pay dispute from apprentices elsewhere within the council and/or schools. Contact the WCC Apprenticeship Team, or your HR Advisor, if you would like any further advice on apprentices pay.

The pay scale above only relates to newly recruited apprentices. Existing employees who undertake an apprenticeship for their professional development will not be required to take a pay cut, their pay is not affected in any way.

If there is opportunity for an apprentice to progress into a further role within your school whilst part way through their apprenticeship, for example to secure a higher salary and a permanent contract, they are able to apply and their apprenticeship does not affect this, as they can continue it through to completion in that next role. It is highly encouraged that where opportunity is presented for an apprentice to be retained within the school, you seek to encourage the apprentice to apply (providing you believe they are ready and capable to progress).

### **Apprenticeship First**

Warwickshire County Council has developed a new recruitment practice for apprentices, known as Apprenticeship First, and WCC schools are also encouraged to consider this as a recruitment method, where deemed appropriate.

Usual apprenticeship recruitment process is to create an additional apprenticeship job role, and hire the apprentice to it, on a fixed term contract. Apprenticeship First is different – rather than creating a new additional role, you take a position that already exists and has a vacancy, and temporarily change it to be an apprenticeship (a trainee position), so that it is an apprenticeship, first. Once the apprenticeship is over and the apprentice completes, the role reverts to its original state and they remain in the role permanently, as they have achieved the required amount of experience and competencies for it.

Using this method means you can recruit somebody based on their potential rather than any skills, qualifications, or experience that they already hold – the apprenticeship will provide them with those. In the current challenging labour market, this method offers a creative alternative way to recruit the people and resource you need within your school.

Apprenticeship First can also enable short term savings, as the apprentice pay scale is used for their salary rather than the usual graded salary rate for that role, until they complete. This creates motivation for the apprentice to perform and succeed in their apprenticeship, in order to eventually increase their pay. It also provides reassurance that there will be a further role to be retained in post-apprenticeship, as they are effectively already in it.

If you would like to discuss Apprenticeship First as a possible recruitment solution for your school's needs, contact the Apprenticeships Team for further advice and support.

### **What the WCC Apprenticeship Team can do for you**

- Discuss with you the potential recruitment of an apprentice and help determine if it's the right course of action for you
- Research the apprenticeship standard that best matches the job role / staff development need that you have in mind
- Advise to you reputable Apprenticeship Training Providers who are contracted to deliver for WCC and can deliver that apprenticeship
- Provide any advice required for the recruitment process (this is also something that the training provider will do for you as they play a large role in the recruitment phase)
- Provide on-going support throughout the apprenticeship – if you have any questions or need some advice, we are here for you
- Manage the payments to your chosen training provider through the Digital Apprenticeship Service

### **Where can I get more information?**

The Warwickshire Apprenticeship Team is part of Warwickshire County Council and offers advice and guidance, completely free, to anyone interested in Apprenticeships - whether you are looking to be one, employ one or just know more about them, we will be very happy to support you. Please contact us via any of the following:

Tel: 01926 418040

Email: [apprentice@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:apprentice@warwickshire.gov.uk)