

# The Childcare Company Ltd

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		19–22 January 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

## Summary of key findings for learners

### This provider is good because:

- all apprentices achieved their full qualifications in the previous year and the vast majority did so by their planned end dates
- the vast majority of apprentices secure sustained employment, often with improved pay or promotion
- learners demonstrate a good level of subject knowledge and understanding and develop good communication and team working skills that are needed for employment
- the good virtual learning environment and online support enable apprentices to learn in a way that suits their needs, and help employers plan off-the-job training around work commitments
- very good care and support are provided by assessors who set challenging targets that help learners to make good progress
- leaders and managers have successfully developed the provision to meet the skills needs of local employers and regional stakeholders and ensure apprentices are well prepared for the world of work.

### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- managers and staff do not promote the understanding of equality and diversity sufficiently well with learners, and their analysis and use of data relating to equality of opportunity for learners is under developed
- measures to prepare learners for functional skills examinations are not effective, and too many learners require multiple attempts before they pass
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in business administration does not challenge learners to achieve to their full potential improvement plans and feedback to staff after teaching observations are not specific enough to be effective in raising standards or improving the learning experience
- managers do not use performance data well enough to inform self-assessment.

## Full report

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

- Ensure learners are better prepared for functional skills examinations by developing their literacy and numeracy skills to the required standard before entering them for tests. Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in business administration by setting more challenging targets and raising expectations of all learners.
- Raise staff awareness of how to promote equality and diversity with learners, and make better use of data related to equality of opportunity to inform action planning.
- Ensure quality improvement plans and teaching observations identify specific actions for teachers, and employ better quality resources that will raise the standard of teaching and learning.
- Improve the use of data about staff and learners' performance to inform self-assessment and quality improvement plans.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The Childcare Company (TCC) provides four fifths of its apprenticeships in early years, where the very large majority of learners are women on level 3 programmes, and also a small, but expanding provision in business administration. The inspection covered the provision in both subject areas funded directly by the Skills Funding Agency, which currently forms a minor part of TCC's offer. Programmes are available at both intermediate and advanced level; learners are spread geographically across the country, with most in the south east and Midlands.
- Success rates are outstanding. In 2013/14, the small cohort of apprentices all passed their qualifications. This exceptional performance is coupled with almost all learners completing by their planned end dates. Early years apprentices are all making good progress based on their start points; business administration apprentices only started their programme recently and it is too early to assess whether they will complete on time.
- Progression into sustained employment or further training is extremely high. The vast majority of early years apprentices who have completed to date secured permanent employment, often with improved pay or promotion. A small minority of apprentices progress to take higher-level management qualifications; however, TCC does not give sufficient guidance about how apprenticeships can lead into university. On early years courses all learners that successfully complete an intermediate level apprenticeship progress to an advanced level.
- Learners enjoy their learning. They recognise the benefit of their apprenticeships and can see clear improvements in their practical skills and knowledge. The 'Laser' virtual learning environment is engaging and motivating. It enables learners to identify easily their individual progress and the elements of the qualification they still need to complete. The full functionality of 'Laser' is not yet available on handheld devices nor does it work offline, however TCC staff are taking steps to address this.
- Apprentices develop their knowledge and understanding to a good standard because of very good tuition and detailed feedback from assessors. For example, an early years learner showed good awareness of the prevention of sudden infant death syndrome. Learners develop good personal skills and attributes required for employment. They are confident and able to articulate opinions clearly on topical matters in early years education.
- The large majority of learners already hold a GCSE in English and mathematics at grade C or better. However, trainers do not sufficiently develop the literacy and numeracy skills of learners

who do not have a GCSE at grade C or above in these subjects and too many require multiple attempts before they pass functional skills examinations. Opportunities to gain additional qualifications or broaden experience to further enhance learners' employability skills are underdeveloped. There is no discernible variation in achievement between different groups of learners. The few learners with specific learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support and make good progress. Three out of four learners are from a White British background; participation by learners of Black heritage is too low.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and this is reflected in the very high proportion of apprentices who complete their qualifications within the expected time frame. The vast majority of current learners are making good or better progress and are on track to complete their apprenticeship on or before their expected end date.
- Early years apprentices develop good practical skills and knowledge that help them to support children's learning more effectively, for example being responsible for settling new children or understanding the reasoning behind child protection policies and procedures. Business administration learners are at an early stage but develop their interpersonal skills such as speaking confidently on the telephone and greeting clients.
- Good online resources, 'webinars' and frequent one-to-one teaching sessions with their assessors via Skype enable learners to study in a way that suits their needs and work commitments. This highly flexible approach to learning is valued by line managers who can release employees for training at times that meet their business needs. Participation in 'webinars' is variable and occasionally poor connectivity disrupts learning; however, all sessions are recorded and learners can play these back on demand.
- Learners benefit from all assessors having relevant industrial experience. In early years, assessors ensure their teaching is kept up to date through undertaking frequent professional updating in the work environment.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are very good. Assessors in early years have high expectations of their learners, monitor progress carefully and set them clear, challenging targets to work towards in the detailed learning plans. When learners do not progress at the expected rate, assessors work closely with employers and provide extra support, often out of hours, to ensure the learner gets back on track. In business administration, assessors do not always set sufficiently challenging targets or have high enough expectations of their learners. For example, they do not always ensure that learners use professional language suited to a business environment.
- Assessors in early years plan sessions meticulously to take into account the individual needs of learners. They create scenarios and use questioning effectively to teach learners how to relate theory to practice. For example, in one session the assessor asked learners to draw an object, and then told them to do this in a limited time. The task led to a lively discussion about how children may be affected if creative activities are rushed, allowing learners to think about how they might do things differently in future.
- The large majority of learners receive prompt, constructive feedback on their written work. In the better examples, assessors correct errors and give suggestions on improving learners' written English to promote professional standards. However in a minority of cases, assessors do not indicate clearly to the learners what they need to do in order to improve their work, and grammar errors remain uncorrected.
- Progress in developing English and mathematics is good. Assessors incorporate English, mathematics and information technology into individual learning plans effectively, and point learners towards effective on-line resources. A minority of learners find that 'webinars' do not help them to learn mathematics and information technology as well as face-to-face tuition; as a result their progress in these qualifications is slowed. However, a full-time mathematics tutor is

now in place and is providing more face-to-face tuition. No staff member is able to teach GCSE English, and the few apprentices who require this qualification take it with other providers.

- Learners receive effective information and guidance and a comprehensive induction so that they are fully prepared for the demands of the apprenticeship; as a result, very few leave early. Assessors provide helpful advice to learners who wish to progress to higher-level professional courses; however, they do not adequately guide learners who seek to go to university.
- Learners' understanding of how to promote equality and diversity in their work settings requires improvement. Assessors in early years challenge stereotypical attitudes and encourage learners to adapt their practices in order to meet children's individual needs. For example, one learner presented and explained her own religion and dress in an assembly which helped the children to learn more.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Good

- The effectiveness of leadership and management is good, resulting in outstanding achievement and secure employment for the vast majority of learners. Learners benefit from the good reputation that TCC has established as a leading provider of early years training built upon the successful 'Laser' virtual learning environment. This provides flexible delivery of high quality learning materials, which learners and employers value highly.
- Leaders and managers aspire to excellence. There is a strong learner-centred ethos and staff work enthusiastically to raise standards and promote a culture of high achievement for apprentices. The company has widened its offer to areas outside its core business of child care, but this provision is not yet of the same standard.
- Arrangements for performance management of staff are rigorous. Managers give assessors and trainers clear targets that focus on improving the learners' experience, and these are monitored closely through monthly supervision meetings. Despite assessors being based far from the centre, through frequent online communication, managers share good practice and ensure that assessors do not feel isolated. Staff training is good. Professional development is encouraged and the company gives financial support for staff to undertake additional qualifications.
- Evaluation of the quality of provision requires improvement. Self-assessment involves all managers and teachers and pinpoints appropriate areas for improvement. However, records of planned actions are not specific enough and do not identify the right resources needed or timescales for completion. Grading within self-assessment is broadly accurate. Teaching observations are thorough, and observers accurately identify strengths and weaknesses; however, their written feedback focuses too much on the trainer's activity rather than on learning. Managers use data effectively to monitor learners' and assessors' performance; however, data do not adequately inform self-assessment, and comparison against external benchmarks is not yet routine.
- Curriculum initiatives to meet the skills shortages of employers, recruiters and government agencies are outstanding. The chief executive has an entrepreneurial approach to expanding provision, creating a new training brand to target new sectors, and works hard on forming partnerships that grow the business. A recent business acquisition has increased capacity to recruit potential learners; for example, apprentices from a training provider which went out of business have become the direct responsibility of TCC and are now able to complete their qualifications.
- The promotion of equality and diversity requires further improvement. More needs to be done to promote ethnic and cultural traditions so that learners' understanding of these is raised. Managers collect data about learners related to equality of opportunity, but do not use these systematically to identify potential under-representation of particular groups. Good vigilance by assessors helps to identify learners' concerns and protect learners from potential bullying or harassment.

- Safeguarding of learners is good. Managers and staff take safeguarding seriously and this is reflected in comprehensive reporting procedures; staff follow up well any disclosures by learners about abuse. Because of the nature of early years work, a high priority is placed on child protection, and safe practices for recruiting staff are in place to deter potential abusers from applying. Training and professional updating for staff in relation to safeguarding are effective and learners feel safe.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### The Childcare Company

<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	<b>Overall</b>	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
Outcomes for learners	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>2</b>	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-

<b>Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>3</b>

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16-18, 19+								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	75								
Principal/CEO	Mr Guy Helman								
Date of previous inspection	NA								
Website address	<a href="http://www.thechildcarecompany.com">www.thechildcarecompany.com</a>								
Provider information at the time of the inspection									
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	5	7	31	21	-	1			
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	-		-		-				
Number of learners aged 14-16	-								
Full-time	-								
Part-time	-								
Number of community learners	-								
Number of employability learners	-								
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)								
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bromley College</li> <li>■ Rewards Training Recruitment Consultancy</li> <li>■ ATG Training</li> </ul>								

## Contextual information

The Childcare Company is a private limited company established in 2008 and located in Langley, Berkshire. The company is a national provider contracted to deliver online training and apprenticeships in early years and playwork, health and social care, business administration, management, customer services and supporting teaching and learning. A far greater proportion of its work is as a subcontractor to other providers. Training is delivered through its award-winning virtual learning environment, the 'Laser', supported by a team of tutors based around the United Kingdom.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Darrell Bate

Three additional inspectors, assisted by the senior operations manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the past year to help them make judgements. They used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions (face-to-face and online), assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all provision directly funded by the Skills Funding Agency at the provider. Inspectors graded the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of both the sector subject areas listed in the report above.



## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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