

# Bright Horizons Family Solutions

Employer

## Inspection dates

14–17 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Satisfactory

## Summary of key findings

### This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers promote a culture that places the child at the centre of all they do, but the focus on the learners' needs is insufficient.
- Those exercising governance have rightly focused on supporting the development of the apprenticeship programme; however, they do not provide sufficient scrutiny and challenge to ensure that learners progress and achieve well.
- Leaders and managers do not use data effectively to evaluate, manage and improve the provision.
- The support that learners receive in the workplace towards formal study is insufficient and their attendance at training sessions is not high enough.
- The strategy for the development of English and mathematics is ineffective. Achievement of mathematics qualifications by learners is low and the achievement of English GCSEs requires further improvement.
- Assessors and trainers do not plan learning sufficiently to meet individual learner's needs.
- Assessors and managers do not recognise learners' slow progress quickly enough.
- The proportion of learners who achieve their apprenticeship within the planned end date requires improvement.

### The provider has the following strengths

- The number of learners who achieve their functional skills qualifications in English is high.
- Many learners are acquiring good practical skills that allow them to provide high-quality care for children of all ages.
- Learners' understanding of diversity and safeguarding topics is good.
- Learners receive good assessment of their competence by enthusiastic assessors.

# Full report

## Information about the provider

- Bright Horizons Family Solutions (Bright Horizons) is a United States based provider of childcare, early years education and other services designed to help employers and families successfully integrate work and family life. Bright Horizons also offers emergency care for children and older adults.
- Bright Horizons employs over 6,000 people in the UK and Ireland. All learners are employed by Bright Horizons and work in one of their 217 nurseries.
- Bright Horizons ceased to hold its own government funded training contract in 2009. The provider then used the services of other government funded independent learning providers to offer learning programmes to its staff. In 2014, Bright Horizons again secured public funding to deliver its own apprenticeship programmes.

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

- Fully establish the outstanding managerial processes that are needed to support the delivery of a high-quality apprenticeship, by:
  - improving the analysis of data with regard to learners' achievement to ensure that managers have an accurate understanding of the performance of the programme in terms of different groups of learners, and across the different elements that form the framework
  - ensuring that the identified areas for improvement are incorporated into a comprehensive action plan that contains objectives and challenging targets focused on the impact on learners
  - further developing the system for observing teaching and learning, focusing on the need to measure learning and ensuring that identified areas for improving teaching practice are clearly targeted in robust personal development plans
  - continuing to strengthen the governance of the programme to ensure that managers receive sufficient scrutiny and challenge with regard to the effectiveness of the learning programme throughout all its stages
  - supporting trainers and assessors to recognise learners' slow progress more quickly, identifying those learners at risk of not achieving in a timely way and agreeing strategies to help them to achieve as planned.
- Develop a supportive culture towards the apprenticeship programme throughout the business to ensure that apprentices access the agreed study time, both at work and at training sessions off-site so that they can make good progress with their course.
- Agree a robust strategy for the development of English and mathematics that allows all learners to achieve their qualifications well and to fulfil their career aspirations, ensuring the teaching of these subjects relates to the workplace.
- Further develop the information, advice and guidance that learners receive during their learning programme so that they access good-quality information that helps them to make the most appropriate career choices in preparation for when they complete their apprenticeship.
- Improve the planning of learning by teachers by utilising the information available about the learners' starting points, with regard to their existing skills and knowledge. In particular, for those who have been employed in the sector or by Bright Horizons for a considerable length of time, ensuring that they enhance their existing skills and competence considerably by undertaking an apprenticeship.

# Inspection judgements

## Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- In the last two years, since the inception of the programme, leaders and managers have responded well to the considerable challenges faced. In particular, they have prioritised building the capability of their training team to ensure that they could deliver a high-quality apprenticeship programme. As a result, they have not yet been able to establish fully all the managerial processes needed to ensure that all learners progress and achieve well.
- Over the years, leaders and managers at all levels in Bright Horizons have created and promoted a culture where the child is at the centre of everything they do. However, this ethos does not fully support staff to achieve their apprenticeship well. Many nurseries find it difficult to release apprentices to undertake training and learning due to the operational demands of looking after the children in their care. As a consequence, most learners have to complete much of their studies at home in their own time, preventing them from learning from their most experienced colleagues at their workplace. Similarly, many apprentices are unable to attend the off-the-job learning sessions and this hinders their progress towards achieving their qualification.
- Managers make insufficient use of data to help them evaluate the effectiveness of the provision and improve its quality. Managers do not currently have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship programme. They do not routinely identify gaps in the progress and achievement learners make. Managers do not use the self-assessment process effectively to identify key areas for improvement and, therefore, have not produced a comprehensive and challenging improvement plan to address these issues.
- Managers have not developed an effective strategy to improve the development of learners' English and mathematics skills. Teaching sessions in English and mathematics are infrequent and too long, and many learners find it difficult to remain engaged in learning activity in these sessions. Managers do not ensure that learners continue to improve these essential skills throughout their apprenticeship beyond the level expected of the qualification.
- Observations of teaching and learning do not focus sufficiently on the progress learners make during these sessions. Observers do not highlight the trainers' areas for improvement adequately, and development plans lack clarity on how trainers can improve their practice. In many cases, managers do not follow up these plans appropriately to evaluate improvements in teaching.
- In the last few years, leaders and managers responded well to the national shortage of well-qualified childcare practitioners by providing further training and development to their existing staff. In addition, they correctly identified the need to improve the quality of learning their staff were receiving from external trainers and decided to re-start delivering their own apprenticeship programme in 2014. Senior leaders have set a challenging target to train 80% of all staff at Bright Horizons to at least a level 3 qualification, which is substantially over and above the government's regulatory expectations for this industry sector.
- Programme managers have made many quality improvements in the past two years. They have secured the programme's compliance with funding requirements and have improved the learning experience for learners. The rigorous processes they use to monitor the quality of assessment have ensured that learners benefit from a timely and accurate assessment of their competence in the workplace.
- Managers at all levels manage people effectively. They regularly communicate the company's priorities, and share good practice with staff. Nursery managers receive useful information on the progress their staff make with their apprenticeship programme. They in turn reassure trainers that the apprenticeship programme meets the needs of the sector and Bright Horizons' expectations.
- Managers use the appraisal process well to support individuals to improve. They regularly meet with their team to discuss welfare and work-related topics. They use performance management arrangements particularly well to improve the provision further. Leaders have not avoided taking the necessary actions to manage the performance of managers who have not been able to meet the company's expectations.
- Extensive training has taken place in the development of trainers' and assessors' knowledge of topics relating to equality, diversity, radicalism, extremism and fundamental British values. The majority of teaching staff clearly demonstrate their confidence in supporting and challenging learners to increase their understanding of how these issues apply in the workplace.

## ■ The governance of the provider

- In the last two years, the company's executives in America and Europe have provided governance that has focused on developing staff and improving the quality of the provision. Managers informed their senior leaders of the need to deliver the apprenticeship programme by themselves after identifying areas of poor performance among their previous training contractors. Senior leaders provided managers with good support to implement these changes, while regularly challenging managers to improve the standards of teaching.
- The recently appointed managing director has clear plans to strengthen governance by exercising regular monitoring and scrutiny of the performance of the entire learner journey.

## ■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- Safeguarding is a high priority for all staff at Bright Horizons. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are comprehensive and firmly established.
- Managers work closely with key teaching staff to ensure that all employees receive regular safeguarding training and to ensure that learners stay safe in the workplace.
- Managers carry out appropriate recruitment checks on all staff and keep detailed records in relation to safeguarding requirements in the care sector.
- Learners are very clear about their accountabilities in keeping the children in their care safe, and this empowers them to extend their responsibility to keeping themselves safe at work and at home, for example, when using social media.
- Learners express a comprehensive understanding of radicalisation and extremism and they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Learners demonstrate this knowledge in the workplace effectively.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement because trainers do not plan the theory sessions well enough to help all learners make good progress. Tutors thoroughly assess learners' starting points with regard to their skills and knowledge at the start of the course, but assessors and trainers do not use this information well enough to plan lessons that challenge the most able or experienced and support those who need further help. In a minority of sessions, trainers do not check that learning has taken place nor do they use questioning effectively to probe and elicit a deeper understanding by learners of the topics being taught.
- The teaching and learning of English and mathematics require improvement. Apprentices receive too little coaching to improve these skills within their programme, and trainers do not relate these subjects sufficiently to childcare settings. Learners who start their apprenticeship with GCSE grades at the level required by the qualification do not receive support to develop these skills further.
- Trainers do not always give learners verbal feedback quickly enough to help them understand how to improve. For example, in an English session learners practising interview techniques did not engage in helpful discussion with their trainer on what they did well and what needed improvement.
- Assessors provide detailed and helpful verbal feedback to learners, following the assessment of their competence. However, their written comments are often too brief and do not contain sufficient guidance on how learners can improve their work. Assessors do not always correct learners' spelling and grammatical errors and do not identify what the learner needs to do to improve these skills.
- Learners' individual learning targets focus largely on the completion of qualification units rather than the development of specific skills. Assessors and managers do not always recognise the slow progress made by learners quickly enough in order to put effective actions in place to get them back on track. In the best cases, they set specific and clear targets, but often they write brief and general comments that do not accurately reflect when learners are making slow progress and are at risk of not achieving within set timescales. Consequently, learners are not clear on the need for urgent action to accelerate their progress.
- Many learners do not access study time while at work due to the operational demands of their employment that dictate a fixed ratio of staff to children in the nurseries. Furthermore, many learners are not able to attend the off-the job English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) training sessions as planned. This slows learners' progress and, in some cases, impacts negatively on their motivation to continue learning.

- Learners and assessors make good use of learning and assessment technology. In particular, apprentices enjoy the flexibility they have to choose from a wide range of readily available e-learning resources, learning activities, carefully produced learner booklets and webinars. Learners and employers appreciate how well this flexible mode of learning fits the business needs. The majority of learners apply their ICT skills confidently when using the e-portfolio to evidence their competence and to record their progress. They know well what they need to do next to achieve their qualifications.
- Assessors make good efforts to fit the learning around the business needs of employers. Good communications from assessors ensure that employers feel informed about the progress of their apprentices.
- Trainers and assessors are enthusiastic, well-qualified and experienced practitioners. This enables them to encourage learners to try new practices as part of their development. One learner changed the age groups in the rooms in her nursery as a result of her studies and mentoring. Assessors develop a good relationship with learners that inspires them to feel confident about their ability to learn and progress.
- In the best sessions, assessors encourage learners to develop their ability to work independently. Learners develop good reflective skills and draw on their experiences in the workplace in order to extend their learning.
- Trainers assess learners' knowledge and practical skills development thoroughly. Tutors expertly support learners' differing abilities and preferences to record and demonstrate their learning.
- Assessors promote equality and diversity topics well with learners. They have drawn learners' attention to the 'Prevent' duty and its implications for their work in nurseries. For example, in a professional discussion session the assessor and learner explored aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion in child care settings in a sensitive way that contributed well to the learners' professional standards of practice.
- Learners benefit from training and support that engage them well and develop their self-confidence. They develop useful skills that prepare them well for their employment and daily life, for example time-management when caring for children. Most learners improve their personal attitudes towards learning, and as a result gain self-belief and uphold professional behaviours when communicating with parents.
- Teaching staff contribute well to Bright Horizons' emphasis on keeping children safe, and safeguarding policies are reinforced throughout the learning programme and working environment with all learners, staff and children.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

### **requires improvement**

- Learners' attendance to the scheduled English, mathematics and ICT off-the-job learning sessions requires further improvement. Often, the operational staffing pressures in the workplace receive priority without effective contingency planning to allow the release of learners from the work duties. Most learners carry out their study in their spare time. This decreases learners' motivation to learn, which is otherwise very high.
- The development of the learners' English and mathematics skills beyond the demands of the framework requirements is weak and not always aligned to the learners' aspirations and the professional standards generally demanded by employers in this industry. This prevents learners who already have a GCSE in these subjects from developing their skills further.
- Learners who join Bright Horizons benefit from an extended familiarisation period when they do not undertake official duties in the nursery that count towards the staff-children ratios. This supports them to develop their basic childcare skills, becoming valuable members of the team very quickly. However, once they begin their programme they receive little advice and guidance with regard to how they can achieve the next steps in their professional career. For example, during a progress review, one learner expressed interest in becoming a social worker after completing the apprenticeship but this was not followed up by the assessor.
- Despite developing good practical childcare skills in the workplace some learners do not produce written work to the expected professional standard; sometimes work contains spelling and grammatical errors.
- Learners demonstrate appropriate standards of work and develop good practical skills in line with the demands of their job role, preparing them well to look after children of all ages. They acquire good knowledge of the theory of childcare and pedagogy and the good relationships with their assessors help them to build their confidence. This is demonstrated by learners maintaining very good communications with colleagues and parents from a more informed perspective.

- Learners evaluate their own professional practice and progress to date confidently and with enthusiasm. They are very positive about the course and the support they receive from their tutors and assessors. A learner with dyslexia felt they were supported well during their apprenticeship and had benefited from their assessor's efforts to minimise the amount of written work the learner had to do.
- Apprentices feel safe. Learners display a very good awareness of how to protect themselves from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of safeguarding procedures and they know who to contact if they feel concerned. Bright Horizons' learners are very clear about their role and responsibilities in keeping themselves and the children in their care safe from harm. They support young children to recognise how they are part of British society – teaching them to respect others and understand differences among people. In one session, a learner planned a practical activity for a child with physical disabilities with good consideration to safety. The activity generated a great deal of interest from the other children who quickly joined in, making the activity fully inclusive. Learners know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and accessing social media.
- Learners have a robust understanding of Bright Horizons' culture and its high expectations of care and they comply well with these. They display good standards of behaviour during learning sessions and in the workplace, portraying themselves as responsible members of staff.

## Outcomes for learners

## Require improvement

- Learners' achievement of their apprenticeship framework at Bright Horizons is not yet high enough overall and, therefore, requires improvement. For the very large majority of learners who are doing an advanced apprenticeship, achievement rates are currently considerably higher than for this type of provider last year. However, they still require further improvement, based on data collated by the provider.
- The achievement of mathematics qualifications by learners is low. For most of the two years in which the programme has been delivered, learners taking functional skills in mathematics achieved low results. The provider introduced GCSE qualifications at the end of last year and the pass rate for the first group of learners undertaking these qualifications is particularly low. The pass rate for learners in GCSE English is higher than in mathematics, but requires further improvement.
- Equally, the proportion of learners achieving their ICT qualifications is not high enough.
- Achievement rates across different groups of learners vary too much. The few learners aged 16 to 18 and the small group of learners undertaking an intermediate apprenticeship do not achieve as well as the majority of learners. Apprentices based in nurseries in different geographic locations do not achieve as well as each other.
- More than half of the learners who undertake an apprenticeship have been in employment with Bright Horizons or a similar employer for more than a year and have therefore already acquired considerable skills and knowledge. For these learners, the development of new skills during the apprenticeship is not as extensive as for those apprentices who have joined the industry more recently. All apprentices remain in employment with Bright Horizons on completing their framework.
- At Bright Horizons, most learners achieve their functional skills qualification in English well and, as a whole, learners with learning disabilities achieve better than those with no disabilities.
- The standards of the learners' work meet the requirements of the qualification appropriately. A few learners who have achieved their intermediate apprenticeship have quickly progressed onto an advanced apprenticeship. According to the provider's own records, a very small proportion of the current learners have already exceeded their expected completion date, but many of the current learners are broadly making the progress that is expected of them.

## Provider details

Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	201
Principal/CEO	Mr James Tugendhat
Website address	<a href="http://www.brighthorizons.co.uk">www.brighthorizons.co.uk</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	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	3	14	19	127	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ N/A							

# Information about this inspection

## Inspection team

Maria Navarro, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Zimmerman	Her Majesty's Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Groves	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the head of early years workforce development, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.



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