

Alt Valley Community Trust Limited

Not-for-profit organisation

Inspection dates

1–3 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Senior managers and education board members have taken very good action to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for learners since the trust was inspected in 2015.
- Senior managers have developed very strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations, including local community services, local hospitals and children's nurseries, which are of immense benefit to apprentices.
- Senior managers have a good record of attracting funding and support from a variety of organisations to improve and develop the quality of the community-based learning venues.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Tutors have high aspirations for apprentices and they provide good levels of learning, pastoral support and encouragement.
- Apprentices develop their vocational competencies in childcare and early years education very successfully.
- Most apprentices are highly motivated, participate enthusiastically and make good progress in their vocational studies.
- Apprentices' understanding of safeguarding for themselves and those they work with, including children and young people, is very good.
- The number of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date has increased considerably over a three-year period and is now good. Almost all apprentices complete their vocational award successfully.
- A small minority of apprentices do not complete their qualifications in English and mathematics quickly enough and this delays the completion of their apprenticeship.
- The range of apprenticeship provision is limited to working in early years education and this leaves gaps in other vocational specialisms to meet local priorities.
- Arrangements for observing, and reporting on, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to drive further improvements are underdeveloped.
- Apprentices' English and mathematical skills are insufficiently developed and applied in off-the-job vocational training sessions.
- Tutors' feedback does not always tell apprentices how they can improve the standard of their work or their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Alt Valley Community Trust Limited (the trust) was established in 1983 as an educational charity in the Croxteth area of Liverpool. It provides learning opportunities, vocational qualifications and community activities to improve the health and well-being of local people.
- Additionally, the trust seeks to reduce social isolation, lessen the impact of poverty and create local employment opportunities. The childcare apprenticeship programmes are targeted particularly at young people, many of whom are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- In the Liverpool City region, the proportion of young people who achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics, is lower than the North West and national averages. The unemployment rate is higher than the rate for the North West of England and nationally. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are NEET is higher than the average for the North West.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that:
 - apprentices prepare for, and pass, the functional English, mathematics and, where applicable, information and communication technology examinations before their planned completion date
 - advanced apprentices complete GCSE in English and mathematics and obtain grades A* to C before their planned completion date.
- Expand the apprenticeship provision by introducing apprenticeships in other vocational areas to meet local and national priorities.
- Strengthen the arrangements for observing, and reporting on, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to drive further improvements by:
 - focusing much more on learning, the topics that learners are mastering and learners' progress in lessons
 - ensuring that staff and board members' observation reports identify clearly the strengths and areas for improvement, and are free from spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors
 - encouraging tutors to become more self-evaluative by reflecting on the way in which they plan and manage apprentices' learning and progress.
- Develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills in vocational training sessions by providing further training for vocational tutors so that they include English and mathematics in apprentices' off-the-job learning competently and confidently.
- Tutors should ensure that apprentices know how to improve the standard of their work, including their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior managers are enthusiastic, committed and passionate about the apprenticeship provision. They have improved the quality of provision significantly since the trust was inspected in 2015. Managers took appropriate action to develop underperforming staff, or where underperformance persisted, to dismiss them. The remaining staff have good levels of subject expertise and a good range of skills for facilitating childcare-related learning.
- Managers have created good working relationships between teaching staff, apprentices and themselves. Their expectations of staff and apprentices are high and they lead by example. They have created, very successfully, a culture of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.
- Senior managers have a good record of attracting funding and support from a variety of organisations. Budgetary planning is good. Financial resources obtained through subcontracting arrangements and other sources are used creatively to expand the range of non-apprenticeship courses available, for example for adults and school pupils.
- Managers are highly committed to improving the community-based learning centres. Very good progress has been made in developing a disused school for construction and healthcare courses. Managers will soon implement the ambitious plans for upgrading the multi-activity centre as a result of the funding obtained for doing so.
- Partnership working is extremely good and mutually beneficial. Managers have developed very strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations, including local community services, local hospitals and children's nurseries. The trust is highly respected in the Liverpool region for the contribution it makes to learning and particularly for supporting learners from areas of considerable deprivation.
- Managers are particularly active and in the forefront of local and national initiatives. These include, for example, working very successfully with local employers and a national awarding organisation to develop a paediatric healthcare assistant award at level 3. Managers are also actively involved in the 'Trailblazer' initiatives and in the North West group of early years providers. Their up-to-date knowledge is shared with, and benefits, tutors and apprentices.
- Managers are very good at promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, resulting in a positive learning culture. Tutors and apprentices work collaboratively and very successfully to prevent any form of direct or indirect intolerance, discrimination or prejudice. They are very well informed about the dangers of extremism, radicalisation, online grooming and internet fraud. They have a very good knowledge of British values and their importance in British society. These topical issues are openly discussed by tutors and apprentices to develop apprentices' knowledge further and challenge their understanding.
- Managers and tutors are well qualified and experienced. They have good opportunities for continuing personal and professional development. They take full advantage of these opportunities, which are having a positive impact on their teaching, on apprentices' progress and on achievement rates. The quality of teaching and learning is now good.

- Education board members and managers, through the good self-assessment processes, have a detailed and accurate knowledge of the quality of the apprenticeship provision and where improvements are still needed. For example, they acknowledge that the apprenticeship provision is restricted to childcare and early years practitioners. They recognise that they need to expand the offer to meet local and national priorities. Managers also need to ensure that all apprentices receive better careers advice and guidance to enable them to make more informed choices about their next steps.
- Managers have developed the management information system considerably since the previous inspection. They are making good use of it, for example, to monitor recruitment, retention and attendance. However, as managers acknowledge, they need to make further refinements to enable them to monitor more analytically apprentices' progress and success rates, for example according to ethnicity and postcodes.
- Managers and tutors are very aware of the problems that advanced apprentices have had in obtaining GCSE in English and mathematics with grades A* to C and the difficulties that a small number of apprentices have had in passing functional skills tests. Since the previous inspection, managers have successfully appointed two new tutors for English and mathematics who are now working intensively with apprentices to help them to progress and to complete their apprenticeships before their planned end date.
- Vocational tutors require further targeted training to enable them to include English and mathematics in apprentices' occupational training confidently and competently.
- Tutors, as peer observers, managers and education board members frequently observe and report on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The reports that are produced are too descriptive, do not identify the strengths and areas for improvement clearly enough and are focused too heavily on teaching rather than learning. The reports also contain spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. As drivers of further improvement, the reports are not effective enough. Managers have given too little attention to the importance of tutors reflecting on their own practice as a way of continuously improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The governance of the provider

- The trust has strengthened governance considerably since the previous inspection through the creation of an education board. Board members are competent and committed, with a shared vision to achieve the best possible provision for apprentices. Board members are continuing to meet weekly and they systematically challenge and support senior managers to improve the quality of provision and achievement rates. Senior staff are now much more accountable for these aspects. For example, board members focus on apprentices' progress and when it is slower than anticipated, they want to know why and what action is being taken.
- Board members visit classes and employers and report on their observations. This is having a beneficial impact on the quality of apprentices' experiences on- and off the job. Board members are aware of the need to improve achievement rates in English and mathematics and to broaden the curriculum offer.

- Members of the board have a diverse range of experience and expertise, although currently the board does not have any employer representatives. Notes are made of items discussed at board meetings but deadlines for actions are not routinely identified and monitored for completion. The detailed impact of their interventions is not always recorded.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The trust places a very high priority on safeguarding. All members of staff who work with apprentices have been checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The trust is committed to the safe recruitment of staff and apprentices. No new member of staff is allowed to work with apprentices unsupervised until the appropriate checks have been made. The trust has a single central register that is regularly monitored and is up to date. All current apprentices, who are working in children's nurseries, have also received a DBS check.
- All staff, including the designated lead and the two safeguarding officers, have been appropriately trained. Staff and apprentices are particularly well informed about the dangers of radicalisation, extremism, online grooming, female genital mutilation, the 'Prevent' duty and British values. The trust has created a culture that enables apprentices to receive good personal and pastoral support and feel safe.
- Apprentices' concerns, and any suspected misconduct, are treated very seriously and appropriate action is taken to investigate them immediately. The trust has developed very strong partnerships with external agencies and specialists, for example the Local Safeguarding Children Board, neighbourhood councils, a sexual-health worker and a nutritionist, and a senior member of staff attends the monthly inter-agency meetings. Up-to-date information is obtained about gang-related and criminal activities in the area and good strategies for protecting apprentices are discussed and implemented.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- There were 14 apprentices and 12 advanced apprentices in training at the time of the inspection. All apprentices are working in children's nurseries as childcare practitioners. The trust is meeting fully the principles and requirements of apprenticeship programmes.
- Following the last inspection, leaders and managers have taken appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. An increasing number of apprentices are now completing their apprenticeship within the planned timescale. Apprentices are developing the knowledge and skills needed to perform their job roles very effectively and to progress to a higher level programme.
- Apprentices benefit from accurate assessments at the start of their apprenticeship. Very good use is made of the results of these assessments to ensure that apprentices are on an apprenticeship at the correct level to match their starting points and learning needs.
- Managers and tutors have high aspirations for apprentices and provide very good levels of learning and pastoral support and encouragement to them. Apprentices are carefully prepared for sustained employment.

- Tutors use a range of interesting teaching and learning activities. As a result, most apprentices are highly motivated, participate enthusiastically and make at least the progress they should during sessions. In an off-the-job training session on how children learn, apprentices considered a range of play activities to identify the areas of learning in which each activity could develop children's skills, such as role play in a toy kitchen to develop oral communication and social interaction skills.
- Staff are well qualified in their specialist areas. Tutors have substantial occupational knowledge and experience. They use these very effectively to make links between theory and practice. In an off-the-job training session on nutrition, the tutor explained how apprentices could apply their learning about different food groups when preparing a healthy diet that includes five items of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Tutors promote effectively a culture of respect and tolerance for people's differences. Most apprentices show a good awareness of British values and equality and diversity. They understand how important these are in their work with young children and when liaising with children's parents or carers.
- Apprentices make a good contribution to their employers' businesses. They demonstrate a good level of commitment to working in childcare settings and to contributing to children's early years training and welfare. Apprentices develop a good understanding of, and comply with, professional standards in nurseries.
- Tutors carry out regular reviews and maintain detailed and accurate records of apprentices' progress. Employers attend and make good contributions to progress reviews. Apprentices have a good understanding of the progress they are making in improving the skills that are needed in the workplace, as well as the progress they are making towards achieving their qualifications.
- Tutors' feedback, following assessment of apprentices' written work, is not always detailed enough in identifying how apprentices could make improvements, including in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Consequently, apprentices are not always aware of the errors they are making and often repeat them.
- Apprentices' English and mathematical skills are not developed routinely in off-the-job vocational training sessions. As a result, apprentices' progress in improving their English and mathematics is not as quick as it could be and they do not have sufficient opportunities for applying English and mathematics to childcare settings.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices are enthusiastic childcare practitioners and they take pride in the work they carry out in children's nurseries. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning and to increasing their knowledge, skills and understanding through on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices' confidence and self-assurance increase as they become familiar with their childcare roles and responsibilities.
- Apprentices comply with the high standards for behaviour and conduct required by their employers and the trust. They interact well with their peers, tutors and employers. Apprentices quickly become an asset to the children's nurseries in which they are employed and they make very good contributions to the day-to-day running of them.

- Apprentices benefit from a wide range of additional activities that enable them to develop skills that are useful in their workplace. For example, they take a paediatric first-aid course which equips them with the knowledge and skills required to be able to provide first aid in their nursery when the need arises.
- Most apprentices demonstrate a high level of awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Their understanding of safeguarding for themselves and those they work with, including children and young people, is very good. Apprentices are able to give many examples of the signs of extremism, such as making racist comments, and of the risks that can be encountered online, such as being persuaded to divulge personal information.
- Many apprentices arrive at off-the-job training sessions punctually and their attendance is good. However, a small number of apprentices miss off-the-job training sessions when their employer cannot release them from the nursery because there are not enough staff to look after the number of children attending. When this occurs, tutors provide good individual support to prevent apprentices falling behind.
- Most apprentices have a good knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. They show a good awareness of the benefits of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. A few apprentices also take advantage of the gym that is available to them in the trust's multi-activity centre.
- Apprentices show a good awareness of British values and respect for people's individual characteristics. They are able to speak respectfully about parenting, sexuality and same-sex marriage. They also have a good knowledge of the impact of cultural and religious backgrounds on childcare practices.
- Although the number of apprentices who do not complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date has reduced considerably over the past three years, there is still a small number who take longer than predicted to complete. Consequently, the personal and professional development of these apprentices is slower than it should be.
- Many apprentices do not have sufficient awareness of the range of higher level qualifications to which they can progress. They also lack awareness of the employment opportunities that involve working with children and young people other than in nurseries. When the provision was inspected previously, too few apprentices received comprehensive information, advice and guidance and this is still an area for improvement.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Apprentices' overall achievement rates in two of the last three years have been good. The proportion who complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date has increased over the three-year period. Almost all apprentices complete their vocational award successfully.
- Apprentices are highly motivated by their successes, which are celebrated very effectively. For example, their work is displayed in the learning centres, success stories are published in newsletters and they are invited to attend celebration events.
- Apprentices progressively develop their vocational competencies in childcare and early years education very successfully. Additionally, their self-confidence increases and their oral communication skills improve.

- All current apprentices are working in, and making a strong contribution to, children's nurseries as early years educators, children's workers or team leaders. Most of them are making sound progress. They are developing good vocational knowledge and skills that are enabling them to work very successfully with the young children in their care.
- Apprentices are enjoying their on- and off-the-job learning. They are able to explain how the learning is relevant to their present work roles and anticipated future careers in childcare settings.
- Many apprentices have experienced personal difficulties caused, for example, by homelessness, leaving care, or being young, lone parents. They value the apprenticeship programmes for their employment and training opportunities and for the independence that a job provides.
- A large number of apprentices remained with their employers when they completed their apprenticeship in 2015/16. Only a small number progress to the advanced apprenticeship as a means of developing their competencies further and enhancing their career prospects.
- A small minority of apprentices and advanced apprentices do not complete their qualifications in English and mathematics quickly enough and this has delayed the completion of their apprenticeship. However, since the previous inspection, managers have successfully appointed two new tutors for English and mathematics. The tutors are working intensively with apprentices to help them progress and to complete their apprenticeship before their planned end date.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58913
Type of provider	Not-for-profit organisation
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	19
Principal	Mrs Gill Mason
Telephone number	0151 546 5514
Website	www.altvalley.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or 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+		
	9	5	1	11	–	–		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews to gather the views of learners 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.

Inspection team

Ken Fisher, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Brenda Clayton

Ofsted Inspector

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