

Big Creative Training Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates 15–17 March 2017

		Good
Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Good		
Good		
Good		
	Good	Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and staff successfully ignite young people's enthusiasm for learning, many of whom have had a poor experience of, or limited success in education; learners have a strong interest in the creative industries and maintain their focus on a job or training in this sector.
- Leaders and managers have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment which is good, and, as a result, a high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications and go on to further study, employment or an apprenticeship.
- Leaders and managers have developed the curriculum well so that it matches areas of emerging skills need, such as digital media, and enables learners to develop subject-specific skills as well as more generic skills for employment.
- Teachers have a passion for, and detailed knowledge of their subjects, which they use well to motivate their learners; they use effective strategies to make lessons interesting, including through the use of technology.
- Staff have designed a comprehensive personal development programme through which learners gain a very good understanding of the creative industries, and of issues pertinent to them in their personal and work lives.

- Teachers are skilled at managing discussions about sensitive issues, ranging from sexual health to the dangers of extremist ideologies; as a result, learners have formed their own mature and well-considered views.
- Staff are highly committed to their mission to improve the opportunities for disadvantaged young people; they provide effective support to learners for whom the provider receives highneeds funding.
- Not enough learners achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics at level 2.
- Staff do not monitor closely enough the impact of the support given to learners who need extra help to achieve, and these learners perform less well than their peers.
- Learners' attendance and punctuality, while improving, are not yet good enough, especially at English and mathematics lessons; in a small minority of cases, learners arrive ill-prepared for their studies.
- A minority of learners participate in work experience or other work-related activities that are not matched closely enough to their career aims.



Full report

Information about the provider

- Big Creative Training Limited (BCT) is an independent training provider based in Walthamstow. BCT offers study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 in subjects to prepare them for further study or employment within the creative industries. Most learners are on study programmes at level 2 or below, although a few learners are on a level 3 games design programme. BCT subcontracts to Bodens Performing Arts College for a small number of learners on level 3 performing arts courses. In January 2017, BCT started a traineeship programme which currently has 13 learners.
- BCT has around 300 learners, of whom 19 receive high-needs funding. This includes the few learners over the age of 19. Learners travel from across London to attend BCT and a high proportion are from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or have low prior attainment at school. Around half of learners are in receipt of bursaries. Almost all learners study English and mathematics alongside their vocational subjects.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Teachers and support staff should monitor more closely the progress made by learners who need extra help to achieve to ensure that the support they receive is effective, and that they achieve at least as well as their peers.
- Managers should improve further learners' preparation for work within their chosen creative industries subject by working with more employers, so that more learners attend work placements or take part in work-related activities that closely match their career aims.
- Managers and teachers should maintain their focus on improving learners' attendance and punctuality at lessons, in particular in English and mathematics, and ensure that learners adhere to the highest standards with regard to their preparation for lessons.
- Managers and leaders should ensure that in their quality improvement planning, they set more precise targets and success measures that relate closely to learners' experiences and outcomes, in order to raise standards further in the remaining areas of underperformance, including English and mathematics qualifications at level 2.
- Leaders should consider how they can introduce further impartial and external scrutiny of their performance, for example by establishing an advisory board, to improve further their assessment of their provision and pace them in the implementation of their improvement plans.



Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have worked successfully to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They have set clear expectations of performance and behaviour that are communicated well to staff and learners. This has had a measurable impact on learners' outcomes and renewed a culture of improvement. There is a sharper focus on improving learners' experiences through raising the standard of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and managers have a realistic vision to be the provider of choice for learners and for employers within the creative industries sector, to expand the business and to meet growing demand. Since the previous inspection, they have moved to larger accommodation and secured sponsorship from equipment manufacturers to provide industry-standard resources.
- Managers continue to forge close links with employers and these partnerships increase opportunities for learners to gain work experience or move into apprenticeships and permanent employment. Employers in creative industries value the contribution that BCT learners make to the sector. Collaboration with BCT's partner organisation, Big Creative Academy, allows learners who are ready, to continue their creative industries studies at level 3.
- Managers' collaborative arrangements with their sole subcontractor are highly productive. The subcontractor's teachers benefit from the support, challenge and access to the continuing professional development that BCT staff provide. Learners' progress in English and mathematics qualifications is enhanced because teaching of these subjects is now delivered at the subcontractor's site by experienced teachers.
- Quality assurance arrangements are effective. A recently appointed teaching and learning lead has ensured greater rigour, consistency and accuracy in the observation of lessons, and underperforming teachers now receive a clear individual development plan. Teachers have time set aside for weekly forums at which they share best practice and develop their craft of teaching.
- Course managers now have access to data that provides them with a good oversight of learners' in-year progress. The new electronic tracking system provides an effective tool that gives managers detailed information about whether learners are on track to achieve, and they use this information well to support those who are at risk of falling behind.
- Managers develop the curriculum offer well in response to local and government priorities, such as the introduction of games design courses. Teachers ensure that each learner has a study programme that suits their ability and goals, and they provide a broad range of options for further study or relevant employment in creative industries. A high priority is placed on the teaching of English and mathematics and improving learners' skills, but more work is needed to raise attendance to the same level as in vocational subjects.



■ While managers correctly identify actions needed to address key areas of weakness within the quality improvement plan, they do not set specific, measurable milestones and targets to gauge progress in implementing improvement actions. Consequently, managers have a more optimistic view of improvement because they focus too much on implementing processes, and not enough on the impact of these on learners' experience or outcomes.

The governance of the provider

■ No formal governance arrangements are in place at BCT. The managing director maintains a close overview of the provision through frequent reviews with the management team and ensures that managers and teachers are held accountable for their performance. Effective use is made of the learner forum to ensure that learners' views are included when evaluating the provision and in planning improvements. However, in their annual self-assessment report, leaders do not use learners or other stakeholders to validate their view and to provide external scrutiny of the overall judgements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Managers have ensured that appropriate policies and procedures are in place that cover all aspects of safe practice. The designated safeguarding officer is appropriately trained and the single central record is up to date.
- A relatively high proportion of learners are referred to managers for safeguarding-related concerns, mostly due to their home circumstances or personal well-being. Staff deal promptly with these referrals and the safeguarding team works well with external agencies to ensure that learners receive the support they need.
- Managers have implemented the 'Prevent' duty well and staff have received appropriate training on how to protect young people from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Managers work closely with the local authority 'Prevent' duty coordinator, who provides expertise and support on how to protect vulnerable young people from the dangers they may face.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, teachers have focused very successfully on improving their skills, and managers have supported them in this through well-planned staff development. As a result, standards have improved, teaching, learning and assessment are now good, and the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has risen.
- Teachers use their skills and professional experience effectively to teach interesting lessons in which learners enjoy their learning and develop the skills required in the creative industries. Teachers incorporate a range of activities that relate well to learners' lives and experiences, such as the use of a ballad by a contemporary Black singer to understand the use of linguistic devices in English.



- Teachers support learners well to gain confidence, develop effective oral communication skills, cooperate with their peers during teamwork, and to respond to a range of tasks maturely and with enthusiasm. Learners confidently discuss a variety of topics such as differing views of rap music and gang culture. Learners are able to explain effectively the skills and knowledge that they have developed since starting their course.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers clearly inform learners of what they will learn and ensure that learners set targets that relate to this and provide purpose and pace to their learning. Teachers frequently check on learners' understanding, enabling most learners to advance their skills within lessons; for example, music students can explain how, over time, rhyme scheming has improved in compositions. However, in a small minority of lessons, poor time management of activities by teachers impedes learning as activities take too long and learners lose focus.
- Teachers set assignments that are stimulating and relevant to the industries to which they relate and in response, learners produce work of a good standard. For example, fashion learners practise hand-sewing skills and produce artefacts to a good standard, with close attention to stitch details and well-finished seams.
- Learners develop their English skills well as a result of teachers paying close attention to the use of vocational language. During lessons, teachers ensure that learners spell and use subject-specific terminology correctly in the relevant context. Teachers clearly explain the key terminology required for the completion of assignments, and learners use this accurately.
- Mathematics is embedded effectively into lessons to develop learners' skills, and teachers ensure that learners understand the importance of improving these skills. For example, learners are able to use fractions to produce quantisation within music production.
- Teachers make effective use of technology to support learning. In games design, excellent electronic resources enable learners to work at their own pace. An online quiz in psychology provides swift feedback to learners on their ability to recall factual information and, in games design, audio files ensure that learners can remind themselves of the advice provided by the teacher.
- Teachers successfully incorporate modern British values into learning activities. Learners considered the rule of law in relation to the illegal selling of DVDs, and radio stations refusing to play songs containing racist or homophobic lyrics. They designed games that reflect British values in order to gain access to funding for their projects.
- Feedback to learners on their assignment work is comprehensive and clearly identifies how work can be improved. Teachers provide well-targeted interventions to enable those who fall behind to catch up quickly and, as a result, the majority of learners make good progress. However, in English and mathematics, teachers do not routinely encourage learners to respond to feedback and make corrections to their work, and for learners who miss lessons, there are too many gaps in their work.
- Learners for whom the provider receives high-needs funding are well supported in class to participate fully in learning activities, and their progress is frequently and carefully tracked to support their achievement. However, the impact of support received by learners who have additional learning needs, such as dyslexia, is not tracked carefully enough to ensure that these learners make progress as well as their peers.



■ Teachers ensure that the majority of lessons take place in a conducive, respectful atmosphere. They use humour effectively to quickly defuse the occasional instances of poor behaviour, and they ensure that learners focus, concentrate and apply themselves well in most lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Staff have made considerable progress since the previous inspection in their management of learners' preparation for work through participation in work experience. They have a well-considered and successful strategy for increasing the number of learners who go on work placements, and for improving the impact of these placements in helping learners to be better skilled for future jobs. Managers make successful use of their staff's industry connections, for example through learners' participation in a fashion and music retail project in Camden, managed by a teacher.
- Teachers assess well the work-related skills that learners have and do not have, and review these skills with learners throughout the year. As a result, learners can explain well what skills they have gained or improved through work placements, including customer service, cash handling and accounting, liaising with clients and employers, and working in a team.
- Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that learners have the information they need to choose programmes that meet their level of skill and their long-term goals. Teachers assess learners' skills well prior to, and at the start of their programmes in order to ensure that they are on suitable courses. This includes assessing learners' skills in English and mathematics to place them on qualifications at the correct level of learning. Learners provide useful information about themselves to teachers at the start of their course so that staff know how to support them to achieve.
- Staff have good arrangements in place to ensure that learners have the information they need to make choices about their next steps into employment, further study or an apprenticeship. Learners receive effective guidance on how to apply for jobs and courses, how to complete application forms and write a curriculum vitae (CV), and how to present themselves at interviews. The few learners who apply for higher education places receive suitable guidance. Most learners are successful in their applications to further study or into work, both within the creative industries as well as in other subjects.
- Staff have designed an excellent weekly employability and personal development programme. As a result, learners are well informed about issues such as building positive relationships and how to stay safe online. Learners develop a good understanding of topics related to British values. This includes discussing moral conundrums which challenge them to think about the consequences of doing the right or wrong thing.
- Staff work very effectively with each other to create resources for the employability and personal development programme. They ensure that sessions have clear learning outcomes so that learners' understanding of topics taught is improved. Most teachers are confident to discuss issues such as sexual relationships and teenage pregnancy and, as a result, learners have a mature approach to talking about complex or personal matters.
- Staff make good use of visits to employers to help learners understand the standards of work and behaviour expected within the creative industries. For example, learners



participated in live interviews for a radio station and learned about acceptable and unacceptable use of language in public broadcasting. Learners participate in events that simulate well the demands of working to industry standards. Performing arts learners' participation in a theatre in education project at local schools develops both their performance and event management skills, as well as a responsibility for their community.

- Staff set high expectations for learners' behaviour, including in their attitude to one another, their use of language, and their focus on their studies in lessons. As a result, most learners are well behaved, pay good attention in class and work cooperatively with one another.
- Teachers prepare learners well for working with the diverse people they will encounter in the creative industries, and in life more broadly. For example, learners discuss how sexuality is conveyed in the fashion industry and teachers prepare learners on how to present themselves. In music technology, learners consider how inappropriate online or on-air comments and 'tweets' can affect their careers and those of others, and discuss how inappropriate lyrics can degrade women.
- While managers and teachers ensure that most learners attend work placements, in a minority of cases these do not relate directly to learners' career ambitions. In these cases, learners make gains in skills such as relating to customers and working in teams, but do not learn enough about the more technical skills required for future jobs in which they may be interested.
- Managers have taken positive actions to improve learners' attendance, for example through reward schemes. Attendance in the current year is better than it was in the previous year, but still requires further improvement, in particular in English and mathematics lessons. For a minority of learners, their punctuality is not good enough.
- A small minority of teachers do not enforce well enough the standards they expect of learners with regard to their preparation for lessons and adherence to codes of conduct. In these lessons, learners are ill-prepared, for example by not having basic resources such as pens and notepaper, or by being unsuitably clothed, such as performing arts learners wearing jeans that restrict their ability to move freely during practical work.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- A high proportion of learners have had a poor experience of, or limited success at school. Staff at BCT have successfully motivated these learners to study and most stay to the end of their course. The proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications has risen over the past three years and is high in most creative arts and personal development subjects. Managers and staff have continued to raise standards and current learners are making good progress in most subjects.
- Learners make very good progress in mathematics relative to their often low prior attainment, and a high proportion of learners achieve qualifications at entry level and at level 1. In English, learners make good progress and achievement rates are similarly high at entry level and level 1. In both English and mathematics, the proportion of learners who pass functional skills qualifications at level 2 or achieve grades A*—C in GCSE examinations is too low.



- Managers have a very good overview of the achievement of different groups of learners and have successfully implemented actions to bring about improvements. As a result, male and female learners achieve as well as each other, and the large number of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds do as well as their peers. While learners from a minority ethnic background do not achieve as well as White British learners, the difference in performance is steadily diminishing. Learners who are, or have been in the care of the local authority achieve well, as do most learners for whom the college receives highneeds funding. However, learners who need extra help to achieve perform less well than their peers at BCT.
- Managers monitor closely the participation of different groups of learners on their programmes and take effective actions, for example through their marketing strategy, to raise the participation of those who are under-represented. This has resulted in an increase in the number of females who enrol on music production courses, which are often dominated by males.
- Learners are prepared well for jobs, training and education in the creative industries and the large majority of learners go on to work or further study when they complete their programme. Learners who choose not to pursue their interest in the creative industries develop skills that help them in other subjects; for example, learners have gone on to train in plumbing, accountancy and hairdressing.
- Managers introduced a new 12-week programme in September 2016 to prepare learners to move on to traineeships and apprenticeships. Learners who completed the programme achieved their qualifications and a small number of learners are now on traineeships, but overall too few learners stayed to the end of the programme.



Provider details

Unique reference number 51619

Type of provider Independent learning provider

250

Age range of learners 16+

Approximate number of all learners over the previous full

contract year

Principal/CEO Mr Alexis Michaelides

Telephone number 020 3873 5800

Website www.bigcreative.education

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	8 19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	
	19	2	191	3	74	1	0	0	
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		te	e Adva			Higher		
	16–18	3 19	9+	16–18	19+	16-	-18	19+	
	0		0	0	0		0	0	
Number of traineeships	16–19			19+			Total		
	13			0			13		
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0								
Number of learners for which the provider receives high- needs funding	19								
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency								
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	Bodens Performing Arts College								



Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of performance, 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 learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions and reviewed learners' assessments. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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