

Inspection of Davies Learning Solutions

Inspection dates: 16–19 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Established in January 2015 as FWD Training and Consultancy Limited, the company was acquired by Davies Group in September 2019 and rebranded to Davies Learning Solutions in October 2020. Davies Learning Solutions is an independent learning provider that offers apprenticeships to the financial services and insurance sector from level 2 to level 6.

At the time of inspection, there were 1,676 apprentices on programme. The vast majority of apprentices study finance and insurance. There were 732 apprentices studying the level 6 senior insurance professional, 143 studying the level 4 insurance professional, 430 apprentices studying the level 3 insurance practitioner, 19 apprentices studying the level 6 senior financial professional and nine studying the level 4 paraplanner apprenticeship. Davies Learning Solutions work with a significant number of large high-profile financial services companies.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices enjoy learning in a calm and organised environment. Their attendance to training sessions is good. They have access to high-quality training materials and are respectful to their coaches. Most apprentices feel well supported by coaches.

Apprentices feel safe at work. They are aware of the risks related to radicalisation and extremism in the context of their work environment. They recognise the importance of being vigilant while living, working, and travelling in London.

In the early stages of the pandemic, coaches adapted the curriculum to bring forward learning on mental health and well-being. This helped apprentices to develop their resilience to mental health issues, while working from home.

Too few apprentices know what they need to do for their end-point assessment. Apprentices studying the level 6 financial services professional apprenticeship are unclear what they need to do for this assessment. As a result, they do not know how to achieve the grades of which they may be capable.

Apprentices too often undergo teaching from multiple coaches over a short period of time. Consequently, apprentices become demotivated and frustrated, and a few apprentices lack motivation to achieve.

Apprentices do not always value the apprenticeship they are studying. They often want to achieve their professional qualifications and then leave the programme. As a result, too many apprentices, particularly at level 6, leave the apprenticeship.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed a specialist apprenticeship curriculum that meets the needs of a diverse employment sector with a particular focus on finance and insurance. They work with the sector's leading employers to create a bespoke curriculum of learning for their employees. For example, they teach apprentices to work in roles that require an expertise in credit control and, at higher level, in credit management.

Leaders have aligned, structured, and sequenced what they teach to the apprenticeship standards well. They use one-to-one coaching to personalise and relate learning to the apprentices' job roles. They develop and design schemes of work for flexible modular teaching. The curriculum builds on complexity by starting with foundation knowledge progressing to advanced levels of learning. As a result, apprentices build their knowledge incrementally, enabling them to remember more.

Leaders have not made sure that the first cohorts of apprentices on the level 6 insurance professional standard received a positive learning experience. The initial cohort went through a range of challenges that hindered their progress. For

example, many apprentices on the level 6 insurance professional standard did not clearly understand the expectations of the apprenticeship. As a result, most apprentices left. Many apprentices left following the successful achievement of the professional qualifications without then finishing the final apprenticeship assessment. Others, who have now moved job roles, are still struggling to complete their apprenticeship. As a result, too many apprentices do not complete their apprenticeship.

Coaches proficiently plan and teach the technical and professional skills of the apprenticeship standards. They use workshops to develop apprentices' wider skills such as presenting data to a good standard. They teach modules that are relevant to the workplace, for example, business environment and organisation content, credit control and regulatory practice. As a result, apprentices learn the technical language that allows them to communicate effectively within the workplace.

Too few apprentices receive effective continuity of coaching. For example, one apprentice, over an eight-month period, worked with four different coaches. Another apprentice, on a different programme, worked with three different coaches, over a 12-month period. These changes cause frustration and confusion for apprentices. As a result, a few apprentices now lack motivation.

Coaches have a high level of experience of financial services and insurance. They know and understand the apprentices' job roles well. They use examples from their sector experience to teach apprentices. For example, during the pandemic, coaches introduced apprentices to procedures by the financial services authority in relation to business interruption insurance. They used appropriate and recent examples to help show the importance of circumstances that impact on the insurance industry. As a result, apprentices develop up-to-date new skills and knowledge.

Most apprentices receive helpful feedback on their work. Coaches provide useful feedback on assignments which includes specific guidance to improve apprentices' use of grammar. Feedback on assessed work helps apprentices to improve the quality of their assignment content and gather appropriate evidence. However, this is not always the case with some apprentices waiting long periods of time to receive feedback, which is not timely.

Apprentices rapidly develop their confidence as a result of their training. They undertake rotations in underwriting, claims, brokering and other areas of their business to help them make informed decisions about their next steps. They complete an analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses and maintain their personal development performance as part of their apprenticeship programme. Most apprentices benefit from career and personal aspiration discussions with coaches. However, a minority of coaches do not share suitable information on progression opportunities for apprentices. For example, apprentices on the level 4 para-planner apprenticeship are not aware of opportunities available to them at the end of their apprenticeship. As a result, they are unable to make an informed decision about their next steps.

Leaders have a secure understanding of the quality of training. They rightly recognise problems with the level 6 insurance professional standard. For example, they identified concerns with recruiting apprentices, with the design and teaching of the curriculum, and that coaches place too much emphasis on apprentices completing their portfolios rather than on teaching new knowledge and skills. As a result, leaders put in place a range of quality assurance activities to monitor apprentices' progress and the quality of teaching. They improved how they recruit apprentices and sharpened their focus on teaching and learning. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Governors have good experience in areas such as further education and the financial sector. They undertake appropriate training to develop knowledge and understanding in areas outside of their expertise. This enables them to contribute to, and challenge across all areas under review. As a result, governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They provide appropriate support and challenge to senior leaders where needed to secure improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and employers have put in place comprehensive arrangements to ensure the safety and well-being of their apprentices. For example, apprentices are aware of employers' procedures, emails, and the helplines they need to use when reporting concerns at work. They know the procedures needed to follow to stay safe in a secure office environment with restricted access. They have not experienced bullying and harassment in the workplace but know what to do if they did. As a result, apprentices understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding and staying safe.

Leaders ensure that appropriate pre-employment checks are carried out for all new employees. These include disclosure and barring service checks, the right to work in the United Kingdom, and checking references. They have a comprehensive understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty requirements. They have in place appropriate policies and procedures associated with these subjects. The designated safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained. All staff receive suitable training as part of their induction on safeguarding and the Prevent duty, which is updated annually.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that apprentices on the level 6 insurance professional standard are supported to achieve their full apprenticeship programme and receive a high-quality learning experience.

- Leaders should create stability within their coaching work force to ensure continuity for apprentices over the duration of their apprenticeship. They must ensure apprentices receive a consistent approach to their education which is motivational.
- Leaders should recruit apprentices who are suited to the programme. Leaders need to make sure they examine apprentices' prior experience and their commitment to the apprenticeship before enrolling them onto a programme of study.
- Coaches should ensure that apprentices know what they need to do as part of their end-point assessment, to ensure they achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Staff should provide apprentices on all programmes with impartial careers advice and guidance. Apprentices should know the progression opportunities available to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1276474
Address	234-236 Broadway Bexleyheath DA6 8AS
Contact number	07702 957204
Website	https://davies-group.com/learning/
Principal/CEO	Craig Potter
Provider type	Private Provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Chartered Institute of Credit Management

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the CEO, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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