

Inspection of Riverside Training (Spalding) Ltd

Inspection dates:

30 November–3 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Riverside Training (Spalding) Ltd (Riverside) was established in May 2009 to provide apprenticeships and work-based learning in the early years, care, and business sectors in south Lincolnshire. A direct contract from the Education and Skills Funding Agency was awarded in May 2017. Riverside has 186 apprentices. Most training is for level 3 early years educators. Other level 3 provision includes business administration, care, marketing, and payroll. There are a few apprentices on level 2 courses in accounts, adult care and customer service. Riverside also provides level 5 courses. Twenty apprentices are enrolled on children, young people and families manager and early years senior practitioner.

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

Tutors teach face-to-face lessons at Riverside's main centre, but few apprentices attend lessons in person following COVID-19 restrictions and the reluctance of employers to release apprentices. Tutors provide extensive revision and catch-up sessions, so apprentices do not fall behind in their studies. However, these activities do not replicate the quality of the training that apprentices receive if they attend in person.

Apprentices are very positive about their experiences. They value their learning and the support that tutors provide for them. As a result, early years educators and teaching assistants feel suitably prepared for their current roles and their next steps.

Although tutors specify a broadly logical sequence for the curriculum, they do not consider in enough detail how to teach apprentices the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need. Managers and tutors do not plan and coordinate training with employers well enough. Employers often rely on apprentices telling them what topics they are working on to support their learning.

Most apprentices have not yet finished their course. All who have completed so far have passed, but few achieve distinction grades.

Apprentices feel safe in their workplaces and in lessons. They are confident that staff will take prompt actions to address any concerns they have.

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

Tutors specify a broadly logical sequence for courses but do not plan in enough detail of how they will teach topics. Although tutors provide a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of apprentices and employers, this does not guarantee that prerequisite learning is covered in the most logical order.

Tutors do not plan the business administration course for the small number of business administration apprentices in any detail. They list the topics in the order that they appear in the specification. There is no evidence of tutors' planning for apprentices' skills development. Apprentices complete their own research and ask their work colleagues for guidance. They have access to study materials on an e-learning platform, but these are poor.

In business administration, tutors use written tasks to check whether apprentices have understood topics. These are submitted monthly, allowing too much time to elapse before a lack of understanding or misunderstandings can be addressed. Early years and teaching assistant apprentices produce work of a good standard. Teaching assistants show a sound grasp of educational issues that impact on their practice and reflect well on the methods they use to support learners in lessons. For

example, the techniques they use to help children remember numbers with number squares and cubes.

Apprentices have opportunities to practise for final tests through mock tests and exercises at the end of the course. However, there is no evidence of retrieval exercises to help apprentices strengthen their recall of topics. Apprentices are not introduced to the requirements of the professional discussion early enough in their course and have a limited understanding of how to achieve a high standard in this task.

Leaders and managers have selected appropriate care, early years and teaching assistant qualifications for apprentices to study. Tutors are suitably qualified and experienced practitioners in these sectors. In business administration, tutors lack subject expertise.

Apprentices who have special educational needs are well supported by tutors to access the curriculum. They benefit from careful chunking of learning material, more frequent reviews with tutors and the setting of clear targets to support their achievement and progress.

Managers recognise the importance of good attendance and punctuality. When they have concerns about apprentices, they intervene in a timely way and escalate this to employers. Apprentices are aware of tutors' expectations for behaviour and the timely submission of work. They meet these expectations with professionalism and maturity.

Staff provide a supportive and inclusive environment for apprentices. Apprentices feel welcomed by positive tutors who work flexibly to meet their needs. They show great concern for the welfare of apprentices. Although apprentices are introduced to some personal development themes throughout their vocational studies, managers have not developed a curriculum to support apprentices' knowledge and understanding of their wider development.

Apprentices have limited access to formal careers support. Prior to pandemic restrictions, managers provided apprentices with access to external careers specialists for advice and guidance. This has not yet resumed. Tutors have qualifications in advice and guidance and offer informal support that apprentices value.

Managers' quality assurance and improvement arrangements are not sufficient to improve the standard of training provided. Their self-assessment report is too positive and does not identify several weaknesses in the management of the curriculum. It highlights a few strengths that inspectors have not found, such as good teaching practices, a focus on quality improvement and excellent development of apprentices' personal, social and employability skills.

Managers check the quality of apprenticeships through observations, internal quality assurance of assessment and standardisation meetings. Observation records do not

really shed any useful light on the quality of the activity and do not result in a clear action plan. Tutors participate in professional development activities such as safeguarding, using the e-learning platform, and how to produce work plans for apprentices. However, tutors undertake little training related to the craft of teaching.

Managers create a positive and inclusive environment. They understand the differences amongst their apprentices and endeavour to take these into account when planning courses. They consider the use of inclusive imagery in publicity and learning materials. They are conscious of the dearth of male role models within early years education and take appropriate steps to promote the sector to young men.

Managers are able to, and do, challenge the strategy and direction of senior leaders. There is some external scrutiny from prime contractors through subcontracting arrangements. However, there is a lack of genuine external scrutiny, challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. The designated safeguarding lead has appropriate authority to carry out the role. They have undertaken appropriate and recent training. All staff undertake appropriate training.

Safeguarding policies are not always clearly written and often lack the necessary detail. For example, how to raise and record a concern is not well documented. However, there have not been any safeguarding concerns raised.

Apprentices feel safe and understand safeguarding children. However, most are not aware of local safeguarding risks or how to protect themselves from them.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Managers should increase the amount of direct training that apprentices receive and make sure employers release apprentices accordingly.
- Tutors should improve the quality of curriculum planning. They should identify the specific content apprentices need to know, consider how they can best teach it and check that apprentices have learned it.
- Managers and tutors should work more closely with employers to plan training, so apprentices can practise their new skills.
- Managers should provide a more-formalised careers information, advice and guidance programme that helps apprentices to understand the opportunities available to them.
- Managers and tutors should include more pastoral content in the curriculum so apprentices encounter learning that supports their personal development and wider understanding of life in modern Britain.

- Managers should strengthen quality assurance arrangements, so they can identify more accurately the weaknesses in the quality of education and take more effective action to improve them.
- Managers should improve the arrangements for external scrutiny and governance to support improvements.

Provider details

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Principal/CEO

Susan Bulbeck

Provider type

Independent learning provider

Date of previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Main subcontractors

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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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