

# Inspection of Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Inspection dates:

23 to 25 August 2022

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

---

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Apprenticeships

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) has provided levy-funded apprenticeships for their staff in local government and partner organisations in the East Kent area since 2018.

FHDC provide apprenticeships to prepare apprentices for administration and management roles in various council departments and human resources organisations. At the time of the visit, there were 37 apprentices studying level 3 team leader, 19 were studying level 3 business administrator and five apprentices were studying level 5 coaching professional. There were 18 apprentices from level 3 team leader and level 3 business administrator programmes on a break in learning as a result of the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing in local government.

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

Apprentices benefit from a welcoming and positive environment that is highly conducive to their learning. They value the high-quality online learning sessions that they participate in. Tutors record all sessions, which enables apprentices to consolidate their learning after the session or to catch up if they were absent. Apprentices participate well in online learning lessons and group discussions, readily contributing their views and sharing experiences, which greatly enrich the learning of other apprentices.

Apprentices enjoy their apprenticeship and value the new skills, knowledge and behaviours that they acquire. They are motivated, conscientious and keen to produce work to a high standard. Their confidence grows over time and they take on additional responsibilities at work. For example, apprentices on the level 3 team leader apprenticeships learn how to handle difficult conversations with staff in a way that avoids confrontation and leads to a positive outcome. Level 3 business administrator apprentices gain a greater understanding of project management, including risk management, which helps them better support their colleagues to oversee projects.

Apprentices are respectful towards each other and provider staff. Provider staff value diversity and promote a culture of inclusion and equality of opportunity. They encourage apprentices to share their experiences from the workplace to provide further examples of concepts applied in practice. For example, level 3 team leader apprentices discuss their experience of different types of leadership styles, helping them to apply their learning to work contexts other than their own.

Apprentices benefit from useful careers information, advice and guidance through discussions with their tutors. They identify their needs, strengths and interests and agree a personal development plan to encourage extension of their learning and career development. As a result, apprentices are therefore able to make well-informed decisions about their next step. For example, level 5 coaching professional apprentices are supported to become accredited coaches when they achieve, which enables them to use their skills in a range of employment opportunities.

Apprentices become more effective in their current roles and a significant minority take on additional responsibility or promotion because of completing their apprenticeship. For example, an apprentice of the level 3 business administrator apprenticeship has secured promotion to become the county policy officer. Most apprentices successfully complete their apprenticeship, often at distinction level.

Apprentices feel safe at work and while studying with the provider. They understand the principles of safeguarding and know who to talk to if they have a concern.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the apprenticeship training they provide. They have designed a curriculum which meets the needs of local government organisations and partner organisations in East Kent. Leaders regularly consult with business partners to ensure that curriculum pathways and content meet workforce planning and development needs. For example, staff have added content about use of social media to communicate with stakeholders to the level 3 business administrator programme.

Staff have planned and sequenced the curriculum in a logical manner, starting with more straightforward concepts and developing towards increasingly complex activities. For example, apprentices on the level 3 team leader apprenticeship standard initially learn about managing themselves and their team, before moving on to more complex topics such as projects and managing risk.

Tutors are well qualified and have good vocational and teaching subject knowledge. They participate in a wide range of relevant, and often ambitious development activities to maintain and further extend their skills and knowledge. For example, tutors are undertaking studies at Master's level in relevant subjects.

Leaders and managers are ambitious for their apprentices. For example, staff teach all curriculum to distinction criteria. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum extends beyond the technical learning of the apprenticeship standards. Apprentices complete training in mental health first aid and explore a range of leadership and management theories to enhance their practice. They also complete a personal development plan, as well as taking part in a 360-degree appraisal. As a result, they receive feedback from staff they manage, peers and their manager, which helps inform their development further.

Tutors mark apprentices' work carefully and thoroughly. They give detailed, comprehensive feedback on how apprentices' work meets the assessment requirement. Where the work is not yet to the distinction standard, they give detailed, supportive feedback to help apprentices improve their future work.

Leaders use effective quality assurance tools, such as visits to training sessions and catch-ups, standardisation, resource and planning reviews to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They know well the improvements that they need to make, and actions are sensibly planned and have a positive impact on apprentices' experiences.

Governance is strong. Senior council leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and challenge apprenticeship leaders to ensure continuous improvement. For example, they have scrutinised the delays to apprentices' progress and challenged leaders to ensure that current apprentices make swifter progress before taking on new cohorts. It is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders engage very effectively with their staff. They work together well to provide high-quality training. Staff are supported to continue their professional development and ensure that they improve their teaching and assessing skills. They receive specific study time while at work and financial assistance to complete their chosen studies. Leaders are aware of staff workloads and ensure that staff are supported and enabled to complete their work without undue stress.

Although leaders have a detailed understanding of the progress of apprentices and support them well, they have not ensured that all apprentices make appropriate progress and complete their apprenticeships in a timely manner by setting challenging and realistic deadlines. As a result, a significant minority of apprentices are behind in their studies.

Apprentices are supported by tutors with their functional skills qualifications. However, they attend a separate provider independently for these courses. As a result, leaders and managers have no oversight of the quality of the provision and very little oversight of the progress of apprentices in these qualifications. Leaders have coherent plans to ensure that they improve oversight of this provision.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that they have a highly qualified and experienced designated safeguarding officer (DSO), who supports staff well and is part of the council safeguarding groups.

Leaders and managers have appropriate policies and procedures in place to meet their statutory responsibilities. Staff are well trained and keep their knowledge up to date. Apprentices know who to speak to should they have a concern and are confident that they would be listened to.

The DSO has ensured that the provider meets the statutory requirements of the 'Prevent' duty.

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

- Leaders must quickly ensure that they arrange oversight of the functional skills provision to ensure that apprentices receive high-quality training that leads to success.
- Leaders should ensure that they and staff support apprentices to make quicker progress and achieve their apprenticeships in a timely manner.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2510893
<b>Address</b>	Civic Centre Castle Hill Avenue Folkestone CT20 2QY
<b>Contact number</b>	01303 853000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk">www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk</a>
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Jo Gage
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the organisation and development and engagement lead specialist, 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

Emma Leavey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Roland White

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sara Woodward

Ofsted Inspector

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022