

# Inspection of Parenta Training Limited

Inspection dates: 16 to 19 August 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this provider

Parenta Training Limited (Parenta) is an independent training provider based in Maidstone specialising in the early years education sector. Prior to gaining direct funding, Parenta had substantial experience teaching apprenticeships as a subcontractor.

Parenta has significantly increased the number of apprentices it has recruited since the new provider monitoring visit in December 2019. At the time of the inspection there were 2,105 apprentices in training. Most of these apprentices are studying level 3 apprenticeships: 1,265 on early years educator, 48 on team leader/supervisor and 13 on business administrator apprenticeships. There are 666 apprentices on the level 2 early years practitioner standard. There are 108 apprentices on the level 5 early years lead practitioner apprenticeship. Leaders and managers have very recently started working with a subcontractor to teach the level 5 health care assistant practitioner apprenticeship. There are currently two apprentices studying with the subcontractor. The three remaining apprentices are completing a framework-based apprenticeship in children and young people's workforce at level 3.

Apprentices work for over 1,000 different employers across the country. Just over a quarter of apprentices are under 19.

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

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they quickly apply at work to support the children in their care better. For example, an early years educator apprentice pays more attention to their tone of voice and facial expressions when talking to children as they are now aware of how these can impact on how children react. Employers recognise the good progress that apprentices are making in their studies and give them additional responsibilities at work, such as supporting them with health and safety responsibilities or developing new systems.

Apprentices respond well to the high expectations of behaviour and conduct that tutors set for lessons and review meetings. Apprentices behave maturely, are attentive and work well with tutors and each other. In remote lessons, apprentices participate actively in discussions, both in tutor-led sessions and break-out rooms. Apprentices are happy to share their own practice with others as they know that their views and ideas will be respected. For example, on a session on the holistic development of children, level 3 early years educator apprentices share the approaches they take in their workplace and listen carefully to the methods used by other apprentices.

Through their training, apprentices develop their knowledge and understanding of topics such as the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, focusing on mental and emotional well-being and the value and importance of equality, diversity and inclusion. Apprentices appreciate the relevance of these topics to the early years sector and to themselves and are able to apply what they have learned at work and in their daily lives. However, most apprentices have a limited understanding of what constitutes healthy relationships in the workplace or in their private lives.

A few apprentices who have experienced delays in tutors setting and marking work and responding to emails feel despondent as a result. These apprentices have a less positive attitude to their learning and are less motivated to complete their work.

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

Leaders and managers have developed a range of apprenticeships which prepare learners well to work in nurseries and childcare settings. Leaders are knowledgeable practitioners who are experienced at working in and with the early years sector. They understand in detail the severe and continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on childcare employers, in particular with regard to recruiting and retaining staff. Employers rightly value the up-to-date and relevant training that apprentices receive.

Leaders understand the strengths and most of the weaknesses of the quality of the training that their apprentices receive. They act quickly and effectively to improve most weaknesses. For example, when they identified poor-quality training from a subcontractor, they swiftly terminated their work with them. They changed the

structure and length of functional skills English and mathematics courses to support apprentices who were not previously gaining these qualifications and skills better.

Leaders and managers have planned their curriculum, including that for English and mathematics, logically so that apprentices build on what they already know and can do. For example, apprentices initially learn the concepts fundamental to early years education, such as legislation that influences early years practice, and then progressively move on to learn about more challenging topics, such as specific safeguarding legislation and how to apply it in different contexts.

Tutors teach well-planned and carefully structured lessons that help apprentices learn new topics quickly. They link remote lessons carefully and effectively to face-to-face support sessions and help apprentices make links between theoretical knowledge and workplace practice. For example, when learning about transitions and how these can impact on children, apprentices draw on their previous learning about attachment theory.

Tutors have extensive and current vocational subject knowledge. They use their experience of the sector to bring theoretical concepts to life in their lessons and illustrate how they can be applied in practice. Tutors facilitate professional discussions and use effective questioning on the remote masterclasses that help apprentices to retain knowledge in the long term. For example, following a masterclass on 360-degree feedback, a level 5 early years practitioner tutor facilitates a reflective discussion on how apprentices may change their behaviour in the workplace as a result of feedback they have received.

Leaders support tutors to continually develop and stay up to date with their vocational skills and knowledge. Tutors complete online training, attend early years conferences and benefit from monthly continuous professional development days. However, leaders and managers do not identify carefully enough the teaching skills that tutors need to improve. When assessing the quality of teaching and learning, leaders and managers set tutors improvement targets that are too process driven. As a result, tutors are unclear about how to improve their pedagogical skills further.

Tutors check apprentices' understanding effectively using a variety of appropriate techniques, such as verbal questions, observing apprentices as they complete tasks and checking their written work. As a result, tutors understand what apprentices know and can do and use this information to inform future teaching.

Most tutors hold comprehensive review meetings to help apprentices understand the progress they are making with their learning and their personal development. Tutors and apprentices discuss in detail the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices are developing, linking it to topics such as safeguarding, fundamental British values or equality, diversity and inclusion where relevant. For example, an apprentice on the level 3 team leader/supervisor apprenticeship explains how they have implemented new working ways to support children with sensory behaviours at their setting as a result of research they completed on their course.

Most tutors give apprentices detailed feedback on their work, highlighting what they did well and providing useful explanations on any areas for which apprentices need further clarification. As a result, most apprentices are able to improve their work if they need to resubmit it. Feedback from a small number of tutors focuses only on how the apprentices' work meets the assessment criteria and does not provide apprentices with guidance on how to improve the standard of their work or how to further develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, a small number of apprentices do not know how to improve their work or how to further develop the skills they need for the workplace.

Apprentices' attendance at training sessions and English and mathematics lessons is not high enough. Leaders and managers have analysed in detail the reasons for this, which are due to employers not being able to release apprentices due to staffing pressures at work. Leaders and managers have developed new systems to improve attendance, such as moving lessons to times that are easier for apprentices to attend. Tutors monitor apprentices' attendance closely and swiftly book them on to alternative group lessons or provide one-to-one sessions to ensure they do not miss any learning. At the time of the inspection, it was too early to assess the effectiveness of these actions to improve attendance.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that the schedule for lessons in functional skills English and mathematics is well organised or communicated to those apprentices who need to achieve these qualifications as part of their apprenticeship. As a result, these apprentices are unsure about how or when they will study for these subjects. A few apprentices have not been able to complete their apprenticeship in a timely manner because of delays in starting their lessons in English and mathematics. Tutors do not consistently help apprentices improve their literacy skills. They do not systematically correct apprentices' spelling or grammatical errors. As a result, apprentices do not improve the skills they need to communicate with other professionals and parents.

Governors are highly skilled and very knowledgeable about apprenticeships. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the company in detail and challenge leaders effectively to take quick action to improve quality. For example, governors worked closely with the chief executive officer to appoint a new role of managing director, to strengthen the oversight of quality.

Tutors prepare most apprentices well for their next steps in education or work. They discuss future study and work opportunities and support apprentices with job searches and writing applications and covering letters. As a result, most apprentices have a clear understanding of what they can do on completion of their apprenticeship and have aspirations of moving on to a higher level of training or a role with greater responsibility. A small number of apprentices, particularly those on the level 5 early years practitioner apprenticeship, do not receive sufficient advice and guidance to ensure they are fully aware of all the options available to them on completion of their apprenticeship.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have created a positive safeguarding culture that ensures that staff and apprentices are safe. Leaders check the suitability of staff to work with young people and adults thoroughly. Safeguarding staff record and monitor safeguarding concerns carefully and take appropriate action, involving local agencies when required.

Leaders know about local threats for their learners in detail and ensure that tutors incorporate this information in their lessons. Apprentices are clear about risks such as grooming or cuckooing and the prevalence of county lines in certain areas. They know how to keep themselves and the children they work with safe. For example, apprentices are aware of the signs of female genital mutilation and understand the health and safety requirements of their employers.

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

- Leaders and managers should continue to work on improving apprentices' attendance so that this is high for taught sessions, including English and mathematics, and reviews.
- Leaders and managers should identify the teaching skills that tutors need to improve when they assess the quality of the teaching and learning that apprentices are receiving, so that tutors are clear about how they can improve their pedagogical skills further.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices develop an understanding of healthy relationships through their training so that they know how to establish these in the workplace and in their private lives.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that those apprentices who need to achieve qualifications in English and mathematics do so in a timely manner and that apprentices continue to develop their English skills as part of their apprenticeship.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that apprentices on the level 5 early years practitioner apprenticeship receive sufficient advice and guidance to ensure they are fully aware of all the options available to them on completion of their apprenticeship.

## Provider details

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<b>CEO</b>	Allan Presland
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Oracle Training

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality and curriculum, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report, position statement and development plans, and the previous monitoring visit 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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