

Inspection of Clearline Recruitment Ltd

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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

Clearline Recruitment Ltd trades as Next Step Apprenticeships for its apprenticeship provision. It has offered apprenticeship programmes since November 2019. At the time of the inspection, approximately 215 apprentices were studying on 21 different standards-based apprenticeships. Most apprentices were studying apprenticeships in early years at levels 2 and 3, business administrator at level 3 and digital marketer at level 3. Approximately 40 apprentices were under the age of 19.

Most apprentices work at nurseries and other small- and medium-sized employers in Brighton and Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex. A very small number work at other locations across England.

Next Step Apprenticeships does not work with any subcontractors.

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

Apprentices are very positive about their learning. They work very closely with their skills coaches and benefit from a culture of mutual respect.

Apprentices develop valuable skills and behaviours that they apply at work effectively. For example, level 3 business administrator apprentices use their project management skills to organise tasks and support other members of staff. Level 2 early years practitioner apprentices become more confident to make decisions about the care of children independently. Consequently, their managers, colleagues and clients rightly appreciate the positive contribution they make to their organisations.

Apprentices are highly motivated and learn new skills and knowledge quickly. Leaders and staff support apprentices well by having high expectations for what they can do. For example, they celebrate the achievement of individual apprentices through an 'apprentice of the month' award. Skills coaches work well with most level 3 business administrator apprentices to ensure that their work meets the criteria for distinction when they resubmit it. As a result, most apprentices achieve high grades in their final assessments.

Apprentices benefit from very effective careers information, advice and guidance. For example, skills coaches support apprentices to apply for promotions and identify further courses and job opportunities that are suitable for their career plans from an early stage of their course. Staff help apprentices with making applications and with their job interview skills. Consequently, apprentices are well prepared for their next steps.

Most apprentices apply their understanding of British values and life in modern Britain effectively to their roles at work. For example, level 3 business administrator apprentices understand that it is important to take account of opposing points of view in the workplace to maintain a respectful environment. Early years apprentices ensure that children can choose from a diverse range of books and celebrate religious festivals from different cultures, such as Lunar New Year.

Apprentices rightly feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are confident about how to report any concerns they have. Early years apprentices have a clear understanding of the policies and processes that ensure that children and staff are safe in their nurseries.

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

Leaders work effectively with employers to address skills gaps in the local area, particularly in the childcare sector. As a result, leaders ensure that the programmes they offer meet local business and skills priorities.

Leaders and managers plan the order of topics in each course carefully, so that apprentices can build on their knowledge effectively. For example, level 3 early years

educator apprentices learn about children's welfare and well-being before they apply this knowledge in learning about the value of play. Level 2 early years practitioner apprentices learn about their role and its responsibilities before they explore how these include caring for children and keeping them safe. As a result, apprentices apply new knowledge and skills at work quickly and confidently.

Leaders plan for apprentices undertaking English and mathematics functional skills qualifications to complete their learning for these alongside the other elements of their apprenticeship. Staff support nearly all of these apprentices to develop their mathematical and English skills effectively and to achieve their qualifications successfully. A small minority of apprentices do not start their functional skills course until later in their apprenticeship. Consequently, these apprentices make slower progress.

Skills coaches work well with apprentices and line managers to check what apprentices know and can do. For example, level 2 early years practitioner apprentices learn about care routines before skills coaches and line managers observe them caring for children at work to confirm that they can relate what they are learning to what they are doing. Skills coaches use questioning effectively to ensure that level 3 business administrator apprentices understand the importance of data protection legislation for service users. As a result, apprentices check and apply new knowledge quickly to ensure that they incorporate it into their long-term memory securely.

Apprentices benefit from helpful feedback and support that enable them to improve the quality of their work. For example, skills coaches identify when level 3 business administrator apprentices use capital letters and apostrophes incorrectly in their written work. Skills coaches use resources with larger text so that level 2 early years practitioner apprentices with dyslexia can read these more easily. Consequently, apprentices, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make swift progress.

Experienced and well-qualified staff use their industry expertise well to support apprentices in the workplace. For example, skills coaches use their experience of recent storms to show level 3 early years educator apprentices how to respond to adverse weather conditions that close schools and nurseries and prevent children from going outdoors. As a result, apprentices use their knowledge confidently to make decisions in promoted roles, such as that of nursery-room leader.

Leaders acknowledge that apprentices do not have sufficient opportunities to develop as active citizens. They are implementing suitable plans rapidly to organise volunteering, charity fundraising and well-being activities for apprentices. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders are highly supportive of their staff and their well-being. For example, staff participate in volunteering for local charities during work time each year and attend social events together regularly. Managers respond to their concerns quickly. Consequently, staff retention is very high.

Leaders have recently appointed a highly experienced and well-qualified governor who is working with leaders to offer them suitable challenge and support. Although leaders have a broad understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision, they do not consistently monitor the impact of the actions they are taking on the progress of apprentices. As a result, leaders are unable to evaluate fully the impact of their actions on the progress apprentices are making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The suitably qualified and experienced designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL ensure that all staff benefit from regular safeguarding training. Apprentices complete safeguarding training when they start their course. Staff, apprentices and employers benefit from a monthly newsletter with useful information on safeguarding themes.

Leaders identify, manage and refer safeguarding concerns effectively. They work well with local safeguarding partners to do this. They have implemented a suitable action plan to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders have implemented appropriate and effective processes for safer recruitment to ensure that staff are safe to work with apprentices.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that all apprentices studying functional skills progress quickly.
- Leaders should ensure that apprentices benefit from wider opportunities for active citizenship, including volunteering.
- Leaders should ensure that they consistently evaluate the impact of teaching and assessment on the progress that apprentices are making.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2625241
Address	Second Floor 132 Queens Road Brighton BN1 3WB
Contact number	01273 980260
Website	www.nextstepapprenticeships.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Angela Potter
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality 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

David Towsey, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Woodward	His Majesty's Inspector
Suki Dhesi	Ofsted Inspector
Viki Faulkner	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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