

Inspection of Achieving for Children Community Interest Company

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 June 2023

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

Achieving for Children (AfC) is a community interest company that provides the children's services of three local authorities (The Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, The London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead). Way-to-work is the apprenticeship part of the organisation. This inspection was only of AfC's apprenticeship provision.

AfC was awarded its own contract in 2020 to teach apprenticeships, having previously operated as a subcontractor to the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames. At the time of the inspection, AfC provided training to 58 apprentices. AfC offered seven programmes between levels 2 and 5. The largest subject areas are business administration, teaching assistant and leadership and management qualifications.

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

Apprentices enjoy attending lessons because of the good support and teaching they receive. Experienced assessors/trainers provide good levels of knowledge and insight that help apprentices to develop up-to-date knowledge and understanding that they can immediately apply in their workplace.

Apprentices benefit from learning in a calm and orderly environment where they are motivated to learn and achieve. In workshop sessions, they are engaged and interested in the topics taught. Assessors/trainers make sure apprentices know and learn from each other by facilitating useful peer support. They make effective use of guest speakers to give apprentices a further insight into the areas in which they are employed.

Apprentices have access to a vast range of additional online courses to extend their interests beyond the requirements of the curriculum. Apprentices make good use of the resources that are most directly related to their training, such as on safeguarding and understanding British values. Few apprentices use the wider resources available to them to broaden their interests beyond their qualification.

Apprentices develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They learn in a safe environment. They develop their understanding of topics that include child sexual exploitation, harmful behaviour and domestic violence. This knowledge helps apprentices become confident in reporting any concerns to their tutor or the safeguarding team. They feel that staff will take their concerns seriously and act quickly and appropriately.

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

Assessors/trainers structure their teaching of the curriculum so that apprentices and learners quickly develop their knowledge. For example, teaching assistant apprentices are taught behaviour management techniques that they can quickly apply when in their workplace. Leadership apprentices learn effective strategies to manage their time and complete tasks without being distracted. They then apply these strategies to resolve complex issues, such as goal setting with teams and evaluating staffing proposals.

Assessors/trainers give apprentices good support to develop their knowledge and use of English and mathematics. They teach topics using workplace scenarios to develop apprentices' mathematical skills, such as teaching business administration apprentices how to calculate payroll values. Teaching assistant apprentices learn strategies that they can use with children to help them learn how to tell the time. Apprentices understand the importance of having good English and mathematics skills and how these apply in their jobs.

Assessors/trainers use appropriate forms of assessment to check apprentices' understanding of what they are taught, and how they apply this in their jobs. They

provide helpful feedback to apprentices so that they can improve their work. For example, they provide hints and tips on how apprentices can improve their essays and presentation. Assessors/trainers encourage apprentices to develop their wider reading and research skills as part of the feedback provided. Apprentices know how they will be assessed for their final assessments. Assessors/trainers make good use of mock assessments, both for the vocational qualification and for English and mathematics examinations, so that apprentices feel confident in their abilities and know what to expect.

Assessors/trainers carry out timely progress reviews with apprentices and include apprentices' line managers in the process. Apprentices value this input, as line managers then know how apprentices can apply what they learn in their work setting. Assessors/trainers also adapt what they teach based on their knowledge of apprentices' upcoming work. For example, they make sure that teaching assistant apprentices know how to complete risk assessments for upcoming educational visits for pupils. However, on the team leader apprenticeship, assessors do not always reinforce key aspects such as health and safety, equality of opportunity and safeguarding so that apprentices gain a thorough understanding of these concepts.

Apprentices benefit from effective careers advice and guidance from their assessors/trainers and employers. Many aspire to achieve promotion at work or take higher-level courses. When they complete their apprenticeship, most remain with their current employer or progress to a higher level of study. A high proportion of apprentices who stay to the end of their courses achieve their qualifications.

Governance arrangements are effective. Governors provide good support, through their committee structure, and suitable challenge to senior managers regarding the quality of the provision. Senior managers and governors understand well the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

Senior managers have created a positive culture regarding staff development and make sure that assessors/trainers maintain up-to-date industry knowledge. They give assessors/trainers a range of opportunities to attend external courses, frequent in-house training and 'back-to-the-floor' activities where staff work in childcare, school, or business settings. Consequently, staff feel they are supported to maintain their subject knowledge.

In their evaluation of the quality of the apprenticeships, leaders and managers do not assess closely enough assessors/trainers' pedagogic practice. They do not identify well enough any areas for development in individual tutors' practice. Assessors/trainers benefit from sharing good teaching practice amongst each other, but have limited training that focuses on how to improve their skills further.

Staff are proud to work for the provider and feel that leaders and managers are considerate of their workload. For example, leaders and managers provide staff with a well-being hour per week, as well as activities such as desk-based yoga. As a result, staff feel very well supported by leaders and managers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is an effective safeguarding culture at the provider. When safeguarding concerns arise, managers and staff respond well. Assessors/trainers and apprentices are vigilant and refer any concerns to the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs). Where necessary, they liaise effectively with wider council services and outside agencies to safeguard learners.

Leaders and managers have put in place suitable safeguarding policies, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty, that underpin safeguarding practices. For example, they ensure that staff they recruit are safe to work with their apprentices.

Staff and DSLs are suitably experienced and qualified. They provide effective support to apprentices with, for example, counselling and mental health support where needed.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should improve their assessment of the quality of teaching, and provide training to assessors/trainers that helps them to further improve their teaching skills.
- Assessors/trainers on the team leading apprenticeship should make sure they consistently discuss health and safety, equality of opportunity and safeguarding during reviews so that apprentices gain a thorough understanding of these topics.
- Leaders and managers should make sure that more apprentices use the resources available to extend their knowledge and interests beyond their vocational training.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2626830
Address	Achieving For Children Way2Work Twickenham Training Centre Grimwood Road Twickenham Middlesex TW1 1BY
Contact number	020 8831 6353
Website	www.achievingforchildren.org.uk/
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Ian Dodds
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Head of Learning and Development, 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

Steve Lambert, lead inspector
Asfa Sohail

His Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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