

# Inspection of The Football Association Premier League Limited

Inspection dates:

18 to 21 July 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Outstanding**

The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Apprenticeships

**Outstanding**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

## **Information about this provider**

The Football Association Premier League Limited (Premier League) has responsibility for administering the football played at Premier League clubs under a regulatory framework set out in the 'The Premier League Rules'. The Football Board and shareholders agree on these rules. Each Premier League club operates a football academy, licensed by the Premier League. Academies deliver training and education to a range of children and young people aged eight to 18.

The Premier League trains apprentices attending academies who study the level 3 sporting excellence professional apprenticeship standard at the 20 English Premier League clubs and six clubs recently relegated to the English Football League. At the time of the inspection, there were 266 apprentices aged 16 to 18 studying this standard. Prior to joining the apprenticeship, a large number of apprentices have been at academies for significant periods, some from the age of eight.

A small proportion of apprentices study functional skills in English and mathematics. Of these, a few are taught by one subcontractor.

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

Apprentices thrive in calm, purposeful and highly disciplined environments whether that be in class, on the pitch or in the gym. They consistently live up to the extremely high expectations that staff have of them. Apprentices are part of a respectful and supportive community. They have highly positive attitudes towards their learning and development, on and off the pitch. Apprentices support each other very well throughout their training.

Apprentices train and learn in academies that are safe and secure. They are confident to speak with staff if they have worries or concerns because they know that staff are dedicated and caring. When they or a teammate need to get help, it is quickly provided by coaches, tutors and multi-disciplinary teams at their club. Staff know apprentices very well and understand the challenges that they face on their journey to becoming professional footballers, as many staff have been through the academy system themselves.

Apprentices take part in an excellent range of additional activities that help them broaden their horizons and discover new interests and hobbies, such as music and languages. They become more socially aware through, for example, helping out at summer camps, fundraising for charity, speaking at Black History Month events and tree planting at local schools. They take part in club and Premier League international tours and events such as 'football remembers the holocaust'.

Apprentices benefit from training in an inclusive environment where leaders, managers and staff promote equality and diversity very effectively. For example, they promote the 'no room for racism' and 'rainbow laces' campaigns where guest speakers meet with apprentices and share their experiences.

Apprentices understand very well the importance of maintaining respectful and tolerant relationships with their peers, staff and in their personal lives. They display high levels of respect and humility. Staff expect and promote extremely high standards of behaviour. For example, they expect apprentices to be on time, take responsibility for their own development and adhere to social media policies. As a result, apprentices are highly disciplined, motivated and ambitious to succeed in their studies and achieve their goal to become professional footballers.

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

Leaders, managers and staff at the Premier League and clubs have a clear mission to help apprentices develop the knowledge skills and behaviours they need to succeed in their everyday lives and to pursue their football careers. This is reflected very well in the broad, ambitious and well-structured curriculum that apprentices follow. Leaders and managers have woven on- and off-the-job training seamlessly together so that what apprentices learn in training they practise in matches. Apprentices receive a continuous cycle of constructive feedback and development from coaches and staff.

Leaders and managers have established a rich and comprehensive personal development and life-skills curriculum that prepares young players for a career in football and beyond. This includes topics such as the use of social media, consent, healthy relationships, financial management and addiction. As a result, apprentices develop extremely well their wider knowledge and skills that will help them in their daily lives.

Leaders, managers and staff at each club work closely together to plan the curriculum in a logical order. For example, they teach the physical performance module first. Apprentices learn very effectively about how to analyse their fitness test results. They understand why the tests are used and how they impact their football skills. Tutors build on this foundation knowledge very skilfully by teaching more complex topics such as anatomy and physiology. Subsequently, apprentices learn how to minimise the risks of serious injuries.

Tutors and coaches closely assess apprentices' physical fitness and their technical and academic abilities at the start of the apprenticeship. They use this information exceptionally well to plan a training programme that is very well matched to the specific needs of each apprentice. For the small number who need to develop their knowledge and use of English and mathematics, managers quickly put in place good quality specialist tuition. Consequently, apprentices successfully achieve their qualifications in these subjects.

In training sessions, staff expertly use a range of highly effective teaching strategies, including on-pitch demonstrations, short drills, games and competitions to develop apprentices' skills and knowledge. For example, before training, coaches, sports scientists and physiotherapists demonstrate techniques that stimulate the muscle groups relevant to the upcoming drills apprentices complete. When necessary, they correct apprentices' technique and positioning so that apprentices warm up correctly and are ready to train.

Coaches thoroughly assess each apprentice's performance throughout the programme. They give constructive feedback to help apprentices improve their skills. They use video to analyse apprentices' performance in matches and training and then to guide apprentices to improve, for example, their positional play. Coaches make good use of footage of first-team players to illustrate how apprentices need to position themselves on the pitch. As a result, apprentices understand what they have to do to improve and rapidly develop their tactical awareness.

Apprentices achieve their personal and learning goals exceptionally well. On completing their apprenticeship, a very high proportion successfully achieve a high grade. They are well supported to achieve additional qualifications in, for example, coaching, A levels and the level 3 BTEC National Diploma in sporting excellence and performance.

A high number of apprentices secure a professional contract when they finish their apprenticeship. They become mature young adults, ready and highly motivated for the next steps in their career.

Leaders and managers make sure that apprentices receive excellent careers advice and guidance throughout the programme. Apprentices are aware of the wide range of progression routes after they complete the apprenticeship, including, for example, going to university or pursuing other technical and vocational options. As a result, apprentices make well-informed choices and decisions on how to succeed in their professional football career and more widely in the sport and beyond.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision very well. They monitor the provision closely and take effective steps to improve the curriculum when necessary. For example, they have made sure that the curriculum has an increased focus on the mental well-being of apprentices. They have worked well with a national charity to ensure the curriculum content in this area is of high quality.

Leaders have put in place an outstanding programme of staff development to make sure that teaching and training at the academies is of high quality. For example, visiting speakers teach staff about effective teaching strategies to help apprentices to remember more of what they are taught. Staff improve their competence as teachers by, for example, using digital teaching tools. Staff value this support and take pride in refining their teaching skills.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, managers and academy staff make sure that there is a very strong culture of safeguarding at each academy. Academies benefit from annual external checks of their safeguarding policies and practices. This helps ensure that clubs maintain and develop high standards that effectively safeguard apprentices.

The Premier League and clubs follow effective procedures to make sure that staff they recruit are safe to work with their apprentices. Leaders and managers make sure that when apprentices lodge with house parents, they are suitably recruited and trained to support apprentices in their care.

Leaders and managers make sure that partners who deliver the personal development and life skills curriculum go through a rigorous selection process before they commence teaching. This ensures that suitably qualified, experienced and vetted external organisations teach apprentices.

Leaders and managers make sure that staff are well trained for their roles. Safeguarding leads are highly experienced. Staff have up-to-date safeguarding knowledge because they attend frequent training on, for example, modern slavery and preventing extremism and radicalisation. Where staff need to act to protect the welfare and safety of apprentices they do so promptly and effectively. Multi-disciplinary teams at the clubs meet frequently to discuss any concerns they have about apprentices.

## **Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	54842
<b>Address</b>	57 North Wharf Road Paddington London W2 1HQ
<b>Contact number</b>	020 7864 9000
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.premierleague.com">www.premierleague.com</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Richard Masters
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	28 to 31 March 2017
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Communicate Well Limited

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships and academic progression, 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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