

Inspection of Big Creative Training LTD

Inspection dates: 20 to 23 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

Big Creative Training Limited (BCT) is an independent training provider situated on three sites in Walthamstow, London.

At the time of the inspection, BCT had 639 learners, of whom 482 were aged 16 to 18 on full-time study programmes, 20 were on T levels in digital skills and 72 were adult learners on part-time vocational or functional skills courses. Sixty-two learners were in receipt of high needs funding. BCT teaches subjects from entry level through to level 3, mainly in performing arts, music performance, music production, digital art, animation, game design, English and mathematics.

BCT had 65 apprentices on the level 3 content creator and events assistant standards and level 4 public relations and communications assistant standard.

The provider works with two subcontractors, Artemis College, and Bodens College of Performing Arts, to teach study programmes to approximately 152 young learners in level 3 performing arts.

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

Learners and apprentices study in an energetic and orderly environment. They thrive in exceptionally welcoming settings, where they enjoy the freedom to be themselves. Staff are highly skilled at promoting equality of opportunity. For example, young learners explore the different protected characteristics and their definitions. They develop an appreciation of each other's differences.

Learners and apprentices live up to the high standards of behaviour expected of them by staff. They attend well, are punctual, and conduct themselves exceptionally well in lessons and in communal areas. They listen attentively to each other's points of view and sensitively explore often controversial and emotive topics, such as racial stereotypes and the conflicts in war zones.

Learners, including those with high needs, are highly motivated to succeed and pursue a career in the creative industry. Leaders provide an excellent range of opportunities for learners to learn from successful industry professionals. Learners complete high-quality projects for tasks set by employers, using up-to-date facilities. They visit production studios and film shoots and develop a sound understanding of what will be expected of them in the industry.

Most learners and apprentices have an excellent understanding of how fundamental British values apply in the creative arts industry. For example, they know the importance of individual liberty and link this well to freedom of expression in the arts. They follow these values maturely when creating content and critiquing each other's work.

Learners and apprentices across all sites, including when they are online and at subcontractors, feel safe. Learners trust that staff will do everything they can to help them if they have any problems. For example, staff support young learners facing homelessness to secure suitable housing and gain financial help from local authorities. This helps learners who face obstacles and challenges stay on their courses and achieve.

Leaders promote positive physical and mental health effectively. Learners attend talks from external speakers on topics, such as healthy eating and gut health. Staff makes sure learners understand about appropriate sexual behaviours. Consequently, for example, young male learners understand the impact of misogyny on women, and how they can be responsible adults.

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

Leaders are highly committed to tackling social inequality and widening participation in the creative arts industry through education and training. Since the previous inspection, they have increased the training they offer to include apprenticeships and adults. They make sure that learners can choose the most appropriate route depending on their personal circumstances and preferences. For example, leaders

provide short courses in digital marketing and visual effects to adult learners who are unemployed or receiving disability benefits due to mental ill-health. Most learners and apprentices achieve well and go on to higher level courses, universities or gain employment.

Across the provision types, including at subcontractors, leaders develop ambitious and industry-relevant training. For example, they work closely with employers to create a contemporary curriculum to train apprentices in sectors where there are labour shortages within music industry, such as in data analysis. As a result, apprentices acquire relevant knowledge and skills that are in demand with employers.

Tutors use effective strategies to teach learners and apprentices. For example, in performing arts, tutors expertly use instruction and demonstration to help young learners develop their dance, singing and acting skills. In visual effects courses, tutors provide clear step-by-step instructions to adult learners on applying different special effects to moving images. Learners and apprentices develop substantial new knowledge and understand what they are taught.

In the provision for learners with high needs, tutors use information from learners' education, health and care plans effectively to create individual learning plans. In lessons, tutors and support staff use effective strategies to support learners, so that they make good progress. For example, they break complex information into small chunks, give clear explanations and provide helpful templates that learners can follow. Learners with high needs make good progress in line with their peers.

In a minority of instances, tutors do not provide enough opportunities for learners to consolidate their learning before moving on to the next topic. They do not allow learners sufficient time to recall or practise what they learn. For example, in level 2 visual effects, tutors do not always use questioning effectively to check that learners understand how to add images and edit faults in footage. This contributes to learners not developing a secure enough understanding of these topics and struggling to recall what they have learned.

On most courses, tutors use assessment effectively to identify gaps in the knowledge and understanding of learners and apprentices. They provide detailed and developmental feedback on the completed work. This helps learners and apprentices improve their work and achieve a higher grade. Consequently, most learners and apprentices produce work at a good standard. However, in a few cases, tutors do not consistently correct spelling or grammatical errors in apprentices' written work. As a result, apprentices continue to make the same mistakes.

Too many young learners do not achieve GCSE or functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Tutors previously struggled to assess learners appropriately. They did not meet the needs of learners being taught in the same class who were working towards different qualifications and at different levels of learning. Leaders have recently taken suitable action to improve how teachers assess learners' capabilities in these subjects. While the proportion of learners who

achieve their qualifications has started to increase, particularly in English, it is still too early to see the impact of this on overall achievements for these subjects.

Most employers contribute well to their apprentices' progress reviews. They provide detailed feedback on how well their apprentices perform at work. Staff work effectively with employers to ensure that the training apprentices receive is planned and taught effectively. Consequently, apprentices apply what they learn in their training sessions in the workplace and make good progress. However, too many apprentices leave their courses early for better paid jobs. Leaders have started to work closely with employers to review apprenticeship contracts and improve incentives in the workplace.

Leaders and staff understand well the challenges their young learners face in their lives. They work hard to ensure young learners flourish by putting in place a high-quality social and personal development tutorial programme. Staff cover topics such as substance misuse, gender and racial stereotypes, and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. For example, young learners on the music performance course discuss how protest lyrics could lead to extremist views. Consequently, they develop an excellent awareness of how these issues apply in the workplace and industry.

Leaders and tutors ensure that all learners and apprentices benefit from a rich set of opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and interests outside of their studies. A high proportion of young learners, including learners with high needs, participate in activities and trips. These include museum and theatre trips, television and film studio visits and e-sports sessions. They take part in different clubs and activities, such as ballet, opera, yoga, creative talks, and creative writing workshops. These activities help learners and apprentices to socialise well together and build positive relationships.

Staff provide learners and apprentices with excellent careers advice and guidance. This advice is focused well on the different roles learners can work in within the creative arts industry. Consequently, learners and apprentices understand the range of options available to them at the end of their courses. When they complete their studies, most learners and apprentices go to positive next steps, with most remaining in the creative industries.

Leaders have put in place effective professional development for tutors and support tutors. Leaders use the findings from lesson observations and other quality assurance activities well to plan individual programmes to improve tutors' teaching and assessment practice. For example, staff receive training on how to support learners with specific learning difficulties and conditions, such as autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Consequently, they provide effective support to learners with high needs in lessons.

Senior leaders and the advisory board have an accurate oversight of the provision. The board members have a good mix of useful skills and experiences that they draw upon effectively in their roles. They provide robust challenge to leaders to improve

learners' achievements. As a result, leaders have taken suitable actions, such as to provide training to tutors on developing their pedagogical knowledge and skills continuously to improve their teaching practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Make sure that tutors provide consistently high-quality teaching and learning support, so that a higher proportion of learners, particularly young learners on the English and mathematics courses, achieve their qualifications.
- Make sure that tutors accurately check learners' knowledge and understanding in lessons and provide consistently good developmental feedback, so that learners develop secure understanding of topics and improve their work.
- Increase the proportion of apprentices who stay on their courses and complete their apprenticeships.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51619
Address	BCE Uplands House Blackhorse Lane Walthamstow E17 5QJ
Contact number	020 3873 5800
Website	www.bigcreative.education/bct
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Alexis Michaelides
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	15–17 March 2017
Main subcontractors	Bodens College of Performing Arts Artemis College

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of performance, 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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