

Inspection of Central Young Men's Christian Association

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 December 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Information about this provider

Central YMCA (CYMCA) is an independent training provider and charity. Much of the provision is located in socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,628 learners and apprentices. There were 847 apprenticeships on standards-based apprenticeships at levels 2 to 5. Of these, most apprentices study at levels 2 and 3. The largest number of apprentices train on the early years educator level 3, early years practitioner level 2, horticulture level 2 and personal trainer level 3 standards. There are smaller numbers of apprentices on other standards, including adult care worker level 2, leisure team member level 2 and teaching assistant level 3. Most apprentices learn through one-to-one sessions with a tutor, both online and face to face.

There were 539 learners aged 16 to 18 and 15 learners aged 19 to 24 on study programmes from levels 1 to 3. Most study programmes have sport or employability as their focus. Smaller numbers of young people take part in study programmes in fitness, horticulture and childcare. Programmes are taught across 15 centres nationally, including 11 sites where CYMCA partners with six Premiership Rugby and five football clubs. At the time of the inspection, CYMCA worked with three subcontractors, who deliver study programmes.

There were 227 adult learners using adult loans to fund vocational qualifications at level 3. Most study early years and gym and personal trainer qualifications.

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

Apprentices receive good support from their tutors, who are experts in their subjects. Tutors tailor the training well to reflect current industry practices. Apprentices appreciate the prompt responses they receive from their tutors when they need support. Leaders, managers and tutors work effectively with employers to coordinate the good-quality training apprentices receive. Apprentices achieve well and develop the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for work and to achieve their career goals.

Young learners, many of whom face significant challenges in their lives, feel extremely well supported by staff, who care for them and are ambitious for them to succeed. They enjoy a very effective and wide-ranging curriculum beyond their core programme. For example, they learn skills for everyday life, such as budgeting. They take part in charitable and community activities, such as fun runs and litter picking. Consequently, young learners develop the wider skills and knowledge they need for adult life. They enjoy learning at football and Premiership Rugby clubs. They participate well and become motivated to pursue their goals in the sports sector, for example as coaches or through taking football scholarships.

Adult learners benefit from a well-planned curriculum. This enables them to practise and develop the practical skills they need to achieve and gain employment in their chosen sector. They receive effective feedback from tutors on their practical work. This helps to build their self-confidence and develop their practical skills to a good standard. A high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications.

Apprentices and learners of all ages enjoy their courses. They learn in calm, orderly, and positive teaching environments, whether they are learning online, face to face, or in one-to-one sessions. Apprentices and learners show respect for each other and for the staff with whom they work. They are courteous towards their peers, work colleagues and tutors. They are motivated to succeed and develop a good range of skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to achieve their goals.

Apprentices and learners receive good careers advice and guidance. Tutors arrange for learners to visit employers, attend career fairs and university open events, and to go on work experience. They also organise for a wide range of guest speakers to talk to learners and apprentices on topics such as how to gain a football scholarship in America. Learners and apprentices are aware of what they need to do to succeed in their chosen sector. A high proportion of apprentices and learners move into employment or further education when they complete their studies.

Apprentices and learners feel safe. They know who to speak to if they have a concern for their own or others' welfare. They are confident that if they raise any concerns, staff would treat these seriously.

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

Leaders and managers have a strong mission: to provide education and training to improve the lives of young people and adults, many of whom experience barriers to success. They have successfully developed a broad and rich curriculum that meets the needs of learners, apprentices and employers. Apprentices and learners achieve well, and many progress to further training and employment once they complete their training.

Across the provision, tutors teach the curriculum in a logical order. For example, tutors on level 3 sport coaching courses first use the simple test of heart and breathing rates to teach learners about the basic physiology of the cardiovascular system. They then revisit this knowledge and build on it as they explore the impact of exercise on the heart and lungs. Consequently, young learners develop a deep understanding of the science behind fitness and the different biological systems.

Tutors teach in ways that ensure that apprentices and learners remember what they are taught. For example, apprenticeship tutors provide clear instructions and explanations that ensure that apprentices understand important theoretical concepts. Tutors frequently revisit previously learned topics and use practice tests to check apprentices' understanding. In adult provision, tutors make excellent and frequent use of analogies to link complex theoretical concepts, such as about fast- and slow-twitch muscle fibres, to things that learners can easily remember. Tutors plan frequent opportunities for learners to practise and develop their practical skills. By the time apprentices and learners take their final assessments, they are confident and achieve.

Most tutors use assessment effectively to help apprentices and learners thoroughly understand what they are taught. For example, in early years courses, tutors use multiple-choice questions and online quizzes to test learners' knowledge and identify any gaps in learning. Tutors use the results from these assessments well to plan further activities and repeat content where necessary. Consequently, most apprentices and learners recall what they have been taught.

Tutors make sure that apprentices are well prepared for their final assessments. They introduce the requirements of final assessments and examinations from the start of the training. Apprentices have a good understanding of what is expected for the end-point assessment and how to achieve distinction grades.

Leaders and managers make sure that apprentices and learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. For example, tutors break down complex information into bite-sized chunks and set small tasks for learners. They extend the teaching hours learners receive and provide additional one-to-one support. Consequently, learners and apprentices who need extra help make good progress and achieve as well as their peers.

Tutors teach young learners effectively about healthy relationships and harmful sexual behaviours. They make sure that young learners understand what consent means and discuss how to avoid putting themselves in vulnerable situations.

Across all provision types, tutors give apprentices and learners helpful verbal feedback on their work and performance. However, tutors do not consistently give feedback on written work so that learners understand what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. In adult provision, tutors do not mark and return learners' work promptly. In these instances, this hinders the progress that learners make.

Leaders and managers do not make sure that enough young people develop the English and mathematics skills they need. Leaders and managers have identified this as a key area for development and have taken steps to secure the improvements needed. For example, they have increased the number of tutors, appointed a new English and mathematics lead, and invested in a new online learning platform. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions on learners' achievements.

Across the provision, apprentices and learners attend well. Most arrive on time for their sessions and are ready to learn. However, for a small number of young people, their attendance at mathematics and English classes is not good enough. A minority of adult learners are often late for their classes. As a result, they miss out on key elements of teaching.

Leaders and managers use subcontractors well to extend the scope and reach of the provision. For example, leaders work with subcontractors who are able to engage with young people who have not been in education or employment, helping them to achieve. Leaders and managers frequently monitor the quality of subcontracted provision through, for example, site visits, meetings with managers, observations of sessions and gathering feedback from learners. As a result, the quality of education at subcontractors is good, and learners make good progress.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision because they frequently visit centres to assess the quality of teaching. They use a range of data to inform them of the performance of the different aspects of the programmes. They use this information well to make improvements where needed. For example, they have improved the quality of learning support that learners with SEND receive.

Governance arrangements are effective. The education and training committee provides effective support and challenge to leaders and managers. The committee understands very well the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. It visits centres to form its own view of learners' and apprentices' experiences. The committee receives good-quality management information, which helps it to understand the provision and hold leaders and managers to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve the quality of teaching and support in English and mathematics so that more young people develop their knowledge of these subjects and achieve their qualifications.
- Improve the feedback that learners receive on their written work so that they know the steps they need to take to improve the standard of their work.

Provider details

Unique reference number	57598
Address	112 Great Russell Street London WC1B 3NQ
Contact number	020 3994 9544
Website	www.ymca.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Ryan Palmer
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	17 to 20 January 2017
Main subcontractors	Sports Group International Build Skills Plus Virtual Alliance Limited (VLUK)

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 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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