CIPFA Business Limited

Address: 77 Mansell Street, London, E1 8AN

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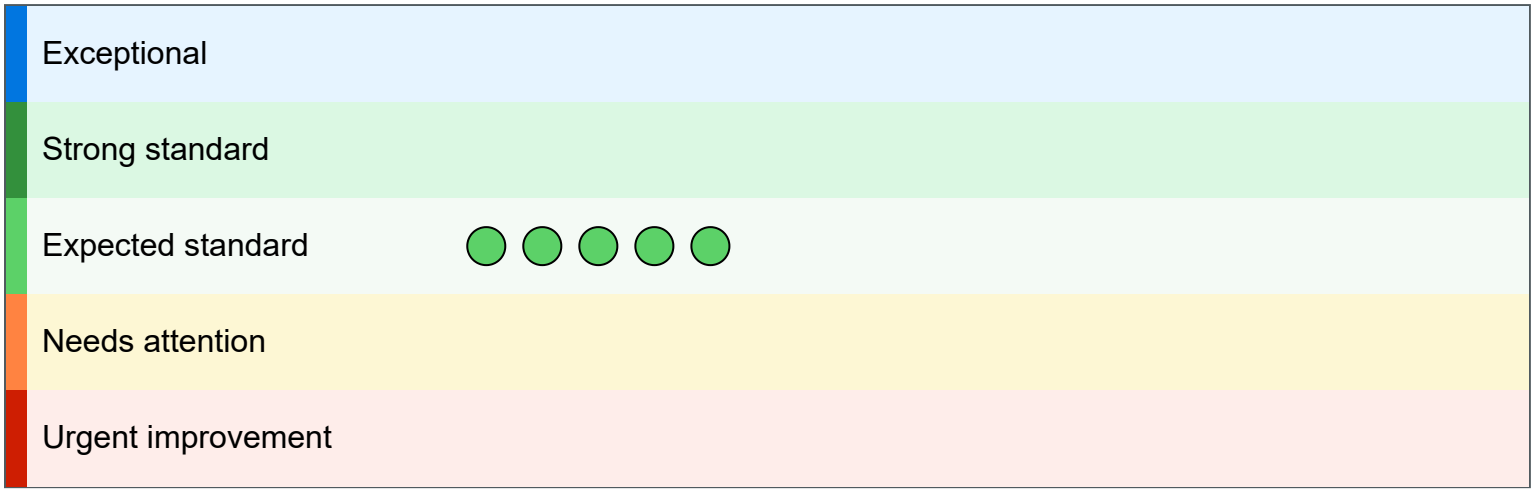

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, learners are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect providers for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The provider has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The provider has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

1. Inclusion, and leadership and governance

Expected standard

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders are committed to combatting discrimination, promoting equality and creating an environment where all apprentices feel welcome, valued and supported. They have created a culture where learning is accessible and inclusive, so that apprentices can thrive and reach their full potential.

Leaders understand apprentices' needs and circumstances well. They ensure that, through their assessments, they capture apprentices' learning, personal needs and wider barriers to learning. They use this information to put in place suitable support for apprentices. For example, they give apprentices extra time in tests if needed, adapt assessments and offer one-to-one academic and study support. Where necessary, staff signpost apprentices to external specialist support which they commission, and services such as employee assistance programmes.

Leaders monitor and review the support that apprentices receive effectively. They review a wide range of information that informs them when support needs to be reduced or is no longer needed. This helps apprentices to remain in learning and make progress.

Leaders provide staff with a range of effective training opportunities that helps them to develop their knowledge and skills to support apprentices with a wide range of needs. This includes training on the graduated approach, neurodiversity and dyslexia.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders, including governors, understand the sector they work in very well. They ensure that the apprenticeships they offer meet the needs of local authorities, central government and other public bodies for skilled stewardship of public sector finances. They have considered policy changes in funding apprenticeship and have increased the number of apprentices they recruit to meet the demands in the public sector.

Leaders take decisions that are in the best interests of apprentices. They have a thorough and accurate understanding of the quality of their training. They use a wide range of information to assess where they need to improve the provision. Leaders act in a timely way to secure the improvements needed. For example, they have adapted the sequencing of modules on financial accounting, business and public sector financial reporting to tackle low pass rates. This has led to improved outcomes for most apprentices in their examinations.

Those responsible for governance provide effective oversight of the provision. Leaders provide governors with detailed information on performance. This gives them effective insights into the quality of the provision and a sound platform to provide support and challenge to the leadership team.

Leaders ensure that staff benefit from well-tailored training and development activities to improve their teaching skills. Staff value the frequent professional development they receive

that keeps their technical knowledge up to date. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workload and wellbeing and that they are proud to work for CIPFA.

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2. Apprenticeships

Expected standard

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Apprentices, many of whom start their training with limited accounting experience, develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours well. For example, they quickly gain a detailed understanding of public sector financial reporting and how to use financial models. Apprentices develop their leadership and critical thinking skills. This supports their long-term goal of becoming leaders in the public sector.

Apprentices produce work of, and sometimes above, the expected standard. Many produce high-quality reports as they develop their writing skills.

Employers value the new skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices develop. They see them as an asset at work because of the positive impact they have. Many apprentices secure promotion at work during or after their apprenticeship, receive a pay rise or take on extra responsibilities.

Most accounting apprentices and a high proportion of fraud investigator apprentices achieve their apprenticeship. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that more apprentices achieve their apprenticeship.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders understand the strengths and areas for development of the curriculums well because they carry out a detailed analysis of the provision. They put in place timely actions to make improvements. For example, to improve outcomes on the audit and assurance module, they have introduced a new course to develop apprentices' writing skills and increased teaching hours.

Leaders sequence the curriculums well so that apprentices incrementally build their knowledge and skills over time. Fraud investigator apprentices learn about the fraud landscape and legislation, before learning about intelligence gathering, case management and conducting investigations.

Leaders work effectively with employers to plan and teach the curriculums. They tailor the curriculums well to meet the needs of apprentices, including those with barriers to learning.

For example, apprentices spend time in different departments so that they gain exposure to different accounting methods and activities.

Trainers and coaches are highly knowledgeable subject experts. Most trainers and coaches assess apprentices' knowledge effectively. They use memory aids and mnemonics to help apprentices retain and recall key concepts. Coaches check apprentices' understanding and use questioning effectively to check how they have applied their learning at work. However, in a few online lessons, trainers do not check well enough that apprentices understand key concepts.

Trainers and coaches provide effective feedback to apprentices. They give apprentices comprehensive guidance on project reports to help them improve their critical evaluation and academic writing. Consequently, apprentices improve the standard of their submissions.

Participation and development **Expected standard**

Leaders ensure that apprentices receive helpful advice and guidance about their next steps and careers. They have access to a wide range of high-quality online resources that help them to explore their career options and develop their wider skills. Apprentices complete training on how to lead meetings effectively, present information and manage projects. They have access to current vacancies. They attend career events with alumni and senior professionals to develop their network.

Apprentices understand the sector-wide professional standards they are required to adhere to. They learn about the importance of professional values in the context of being a financial leader in the public sector. Through the curriculum, they learn about ethical decision-making, accounting rules and regulations. Apprentices understand how to mitigate the risks to them in their roles, such as bribery, corruption and conflicts of interest.

Apprentices attend classes well as they manage the demands and pressures at work such as year-end activity. They know who to contact if they are unable to attend a lesson. When they cannot attend, they catch up on missed learning through viewing recordings of lessons. This, and the additional support that staff provide, helps apprentices remain on track with their studies.

What it's like to be a learner and/or an apprentice at this provider

Apprentices quickly feel part of the CIPFA community when they start their training. They benefit from expert and highly experienced coaches and trainers who are passionate about public sector finance. Apprentices enjoy their training, socialising with each other and developing their professional network.

Apprentices benefit from very effective support from staff to develop the skills and knowledge they need to progress in their careers. Staff are approachable and accessible to apprentices outside of organised sessions. Staff provide effective guidance and support to apprentices about all aspects of their training.

Apprentices learn in welcoming and inclusive face-to-face and online lessons. They appreciate the high-quality self-study materials, such as workbooks, reading materials and videos, which complement the classes they attend. Additional to the core curriculum, a wide range of bitesize courses, such as anti-money laundering, project management and problem-solving, support apprentices well to develop their wider skills and knowledge.

Apprentices work hard. They show resilience and high levels of motivation to keep on track with their studies. Their positive attitudes help them cope with the demanding requirements of their training, such as the frequent examinations that level 7 apprentices sit.

Apprentices, including those with barriers to learning, develop well the range of professional behaviours they need to manage public finances effectively. They develop their critical thinking skills and professional curiosity well. Apprentices collaborate effectively at work and with their peers in training. They build confidence to interpret and present complex financial information to senior staff.

Apprentices benefit from joint planning by coaches and employers who make sure that apprentices have the opportunities they need at work to consolidate the new skills and knowledge they learn. For example, apprentices take on projects at work that help them to quickly put into practice what they learn.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that a high proportion of apprentices stay in training and achieve their apprenticeship.
- Leaders should ensure that trainers check thoroughly that apprentices have understood what they teach in online lessons.

About this inspection

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with leaders, coordinators, skills coaches, trainers and apprentices during the inspection.

CIPFA Business Ltd (CBL) is a subsidiary of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). CIPFA Education and Training Centre (CETC) is the training arm of CBL. CETC specialises in training professionals to work in public finance. Apprentices work throughout the public services, many in local and national government, in national audit agencies and other bodies which manage public money. Leaders offer apprenticeships, as well as a range of privately funded qualifications.

At the time of the inspection, there were 829 apprentices studying on the level 7 accountancy/taxation professional and 29 studying on the level 4 counter fraud investigator

apprenticeship. All apprentices are adults. Apprentices are based nationally, with many in London and the north west.

Apprentices attend their training through a mix of face-to-face and live online classes with recordings and support materials provided on the online learning platform. CETC offers full face-to-face tuition in London, with some hybrid regional teaching.

Head of Education and Training : Sarah Shreeves

Lead inspector:
Jon Bowman, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:
Joanna Walters, His Majesty's Inspector
Asfa Sohail, Ofsted Inspector
Jane Hughes, His Majesty's Inspector
Kelley Malthouse, Ofsted Inspector
Janine Archer, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 16 March 2026

Number of learners

Apprenticeships

829

Percentage of learning aims successfully achieved

Apprenticeships overall achievement rate

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24	65	61	Close to average

Year	This provider	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	58	55	Close to average
2021/22	59	53	Close to average

Apprenticeships pass rate

Year	This provider	National average
2023/24	96	98
2022/23	91	97
2021/22	96	98

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other providers can learn from it.

Strong standard

The provider reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The provider is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The provider needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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