

Inspection of Crackerjack Training Limited

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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	Outstanding

Information about this provider

Crackerjack Training has been providing training courses to young people and adults for around 20 years. They prepare learners for work in the childcare and early years sector. Currently, there are around 50 younger learners on levels 1 to 3 early years education courses. There are four younger learners studying a traineeship curriculum. There are around 15 adults studying level 3 early years education courses. Apprentices study standards-based apprenticeships. Around 64 apprentices study the level 3 early years educator and 15 study the level 2 early years practitioner apprenticeships. The provider does not subcontract any provision.

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

Learners and apprentices enjoy their time at the provider. They participate well in learning activities, acquiring new knowledge, developing confidence, and adopting positive behaviours such as resilience and teamwork.

Learners and apprentices have a good understanding of diversity and show respect for their peers, teachers, and the children and employers with whom they work.

Staff support learners to overcome barriers and develop essential skills such as attendance, timekeeping and study skills. However, teachers' support for a few younger learners who have low attendance or poor punctuality does not ensure that they develop these skills quickly enough.

Most learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications and develop the knowledge skills and behaviours needed for the next level of learning or work in early years settings. Most move into either employment or apprenticeships. Nearly all apprentices remain with their employer, who gives them increased responsibility, including working with children independently.

Learners and apprentices know the career opportunities in their current work placements and employment. However, too few receive impartial careers advice and guidance about options more widely in the early years sector.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They know how to stay safe online, at work and in their lives. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns. Learners and apprentices have an adequate understanding of the dangers of extremism and terrorism, they are aware of the threat of grooming from individuals and groups. However, they are less aware of the local threats in their area.

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

Leaders have developed a focused curriculum to enable learners and apprentices to develop the skills necessary to work in the early years sector. They have strong relations with employers, who inform leaders about the sector's skills needs. They ensure that the early years curriculum includes important topics and procedures, such as safeguarding and the observation of children in order to monitor their behaviours and developmental needs.

Leaders have high aspirations of learners and apprentices. They ensure that learners and apprentices study at the most suitable level. Teachers ensure that they develop a good understanding of the early years curriculum and continue to develop their English and mathematics skills. Leaders ensure that learners who have additional learning needs or learners with high needs receive the support to enable them to continue with their studies and achieve as well as they should.

Teachers identify effectively what learners and apprentices know and can do. Learners and apprentices undertake activities to allow teachers to gauge their prior knowledge about the early years sector and to assess their English and mathematics skills. Most teachers use this information well to plan learning so that learners and apprentices follow an ambitious curriculum. Teachers and employers also ensure that they plan learning effectively so that apprentices have sufficient time off-the-job to complete their studies and apply theory to practice. For a few younger learners who have already studied the early years curriculum, teachers do not always plan learning to extend these learners' understanding quickly enough.

Teachers plan learning in order so that topics such as health and safety, safeguarding and working in partnership with others make sense and build in complexity over time. For example, while exploring nonverbal communication, teachers use role play effectively in order to help learners and apprentices to understand the importance of positive body language when communicating with parents. They repeat these activities over time until learners can communicate confidently and positively in various settings.

Teachers, who are subject and sector experts, communicate new knowledge to learners clearly, linking new content to their previous learning effectively. They use appropriate resources, including charts and extracts from various texts to help learners focus on key learning points. For example, in GCSE English, teachers highlight examples in printed text to help learners identify key terms, such as tone of writing and features of sentence structure. As a result, learners analyse and discuss similarities of style and genre quickly, helping them to consolidate their understanding.

Teachers check learners' and apprentices' understanding routinely. They question learners and apprentices skilfully at the beginning of each session and use a range of tests and assignments to help them recall what they have learned. This means that learners and apprentices develop their fluency and ability to remember new learning.

Teachers identify gaps in learners' and apprentices' knowledge and skills and provide them with helpful feedback, including on their written work. They identify what they have done well and what they need to improve. However, teachers of adults and apprentices do not always provide sufficiently individualised feedback relating to their wider skills and attributes, such as empathy and teamwork, to ensure they make the progress that they could.

Teachers help younger learners to understand how to maintain healthy relationships. Leaders are proactive in engaging external organisations, such as a local theatre group, whose members leads activities which promote mental health and well-being through interactive workshops. Consequently, the majority of learners are well-equipped to look after themselves and their peers and know who to speak to for support.

Leaders understand well the strengths and areas for improvement in the curriculum. They identify appropriate actions to improve learners' experience. However, they do

not always evaluate the effectiveness of teaching well enough to identify sufficiently specific and helpful training to improve teachers' performance so that all learners and apprentices achieve as well as they could.

Leaders have recently appointed a chair of governors with the appropriate expertise and experience of the early years sector. As a result, governors now review useful information about learners' and apprentices' progress and question leaders about their actions to improve the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise and are committed to safeguarding and create a positive and safe working environment for staff, learners and apprentices. They continually update policies and procedures so that staff, learners and apprentices know the organisation's expectations, such as how to recognise abuse and neglect and who to refer to or contact if they have any concerns. As a result, learners and apprentices know how to work safely and stay safe at work and in their lives.

Leaders follow safer recruitment procedures effectively in order to ensure that all staff hold the relevant qualifications and clearances. The designated safeguarding lead monitors safeguarding concerns carefully, ensuring that all learners receive help, including multi-agency support where necessary.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should ensure that they identify the appropriate training and support for teachers to enhance their skills to better meet learners' and apprentices' individual needs in areas such as behaviour, dyslexia and dyscalculia.
- Leaders should ensure that learners understand more fully the employment opportunities within the early years and associated sectors.
- Leaders should ensure that teachers and employers provide learners and apprentices with individualised feedback to help them develop skills such as empathy, teamwork and resilience so they can achieve their potential.
- Leaders should ensure that learners and apprentices have a thorough understanding of the potential threats posed by extremist groups in their local areas.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51395
Address	78–79 Francis Road Edgbaston Birmingham B16 8SP
Contact number	01214 542043
Website	www.crakerjacktraining.com
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Fiona Baker
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	10 May 2011
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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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