

Inspection of The Side by Side Partnership Limited

Inspection dates:

3–4 February 2022

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Side by Side Partnership Ltd, (hereby known as SbS) is located in Poundbury, Dorchester where it has a training centre. SbS is a small provider specialising in training for people working in the early years, childcare and schools' sectors. SbS has offered apprenticeships since 2017. Its tutors work with apprentices and employers in Dorset and the surrounding areas.

The training centre has a classroom where apprentices receive off-the-job training. At the time of the inspection, 13 apprentices were studying the early years educator apprenticeships at level 3, and three were studying the early years practitioner apprenticeships at level 2.

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

Apprentices receive training that enables them quickly to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to become highly valued by the nurseries and childcare facilities that they work in. Apprentices develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and the children they care for safe.

The vast majority of apprentices enjoy their programmes and have a very positive attitude towards their learning. They value their apprenticeships and are motivated to achieve.

Apprentices quickly develop the social skills they need to work with their peers. They attend their workplaces and the training centre regularly and punctually. They are respectful towards each other, the people that train them and the colleagues they work with.

Tutors set high expectations for apprentices' behaviour and conduct. This results in apprentices rapidly developing the professional and caring approach required within the early years settings. Apprentices work hard in lessons and contribute effectively within classroom discussions.

Apprentices benefit from and value the SbS staff member whose role is to ensure their well-being. Apprentices receive regular updates on how to look after their own physical and mental health. Apprentices also have access to the provider's useful online learning platform. This has helpful information, such as how to feel calmer and less stressed and how to become more self-aware.

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

Managers have developed a curriculum that is ambitious and effectively meets the needs of apprentices and employers. Managers plan the curriculum carefully to ensure that apprentices quickly learn substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. These enable apprentices to work safely with young children from the start of their programme. For example, tutors teach the health and safety and safeguarding units of the apprenticeships early in the programme.

Apprentices benefit from a well-sequenced curriculum. Tutors structure topics within the curriculum systematically. This enables apprentices swiftly to become useful to their employers as they put into practice their newly gained skills.

Apprentices receive generally well-planned and effective off-the-job training. They make good use in the workplace of what they have learned. Consequently, they improve how they support and teach the children in their care. For example, following a learning session on language acquisition, an apprentice stopped using slang at work. This was because they had become more aware of the impact of their own language on children.

Tutors are highly experienced practitioners. The vast majority are qualified teachers or have early years professional status. Their expertise enhances classroom discussions and allows them to provide apprentices with highly relevant examples.

Tutors use effective assessment methods and strategies. They ensure apprentices carefully record and reflect on the scores they receive for assessments, and on what they have learned at the training centre. Tutors then agree in detail with each apprentice what the apprentice will focus on at work over the coming week. As a result, apprentices understand how much they have learned and what they need to do to improve further.

Apprentices receive good preparation for the assessment at the end of their apprenticeships. When they approach the end of the programme, they undertake mock presentations and professional discussions. However, too many apprentices and employers do not receive information about the final assessment early enough in the programmes and are unaware of the grading system. As a result, apprentices do not always understand how to achieve a high grade or how to achieve their full potential.

In recent months, managers have effectively improved and formalised communication and reporting processes for employers. Employers are now more involved in their apprentices' programmes and have a clearer understanding of how their apprentices are progressing. However, employers are not sufficiently involved in the planning of the curriculum. As a result, tutors do not cover some topics at the most appropriate time. For example, they do not introduce paediatric first aid early enough in the apprenticeship.

SbS prepares apprentices well for their next steps in employment and training. Tutors highlight the potential for apprentices to develop their careers and move on further throughout the apprenticeships. Apprentices who have recently completed their studies now have work with more responsibilities and have gained promotions to roles such as room supervisor and nursery manager.

Managers have a good oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. They ensure that tutors reflect on and improve their practices. However, they do not routinely gather apprentices' views on what SbS could do better.

The role of governance is undertaken effectively by the director of SbS. They understand the responsibility they have for oversight of the SbS's performance. As a result, they are able to offer adequate challenge and support to the managers and have a good understanding of the main strengths and areas to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Apprentices rightly feel safe at work and when attending the training centre. They know who to report any safeguarding concerns to and are very confident in doing so if needed.

Apprentices articulate clearly how to identify an individual at risk of radicalisation and who to talk to if they do. However, they are not well-enough informed about local risks and how these may have an impact on them.

Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, with regular updating. Managers have put in place thorough and effective recruitment procedures which ensure the suitability of staff to work with young people and apprentices.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Managers should involve employers more in the planning of the curriculum so that tutors introduce new topics at the most appropriate time.
- Managers should ensure apprentices and employers receive timely information about the range of grades achievable in the assessments at the end of the apprenticeships, so that with support from employers, apprentices can aim to achieve the highest outcomes.
- Managers should routinely seek the views of apprentices on what SbS could improve, and use these to inform their improvement actions.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2526596
Address	SbS Training Centre Middle Farm Barns Middle Farm Way Poundbury Dorset DT1 3WA
Contact number	01305 787678
Website	Side By Side Training - Side by Side Training
Principal/CEO	Joy Scadden
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operational manager, 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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