

Inspection of Halifax Opportunities Trust

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Halifax Opportunities Trust is a registered charity and social enterprise that was founded in 2001. It operates children's centres and provides training throughout Kirklees and Calderdale. In 2017, it began to provide apprenticeships to meet the growing demand for skilled staff to work in children's centres and early years settings. At the time of the inspection, there were 71 apprentices enrolled on standards-based programmes. Of these, most were on standards at level 3, with 35 following programmes in supporting teaching and learning in schools (STLS), 17 in early years educator and seven in business administration. A further 10 were on the level 2 standard for early years practitioner, with the remainder on the level 5 standard for early years lead practitioner.

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

Tutors and employers set high expectations for apprentices' professional behaviours, attitudes, attendance and punctuality, and create calm, positive and respectful learning environments. As a result, apprentices enjoy and take pride in their learning and work.

Apprentices are committed to their learning, and many take advantage of additional training that enhances their skills and benefits their employers. For example, STLS apprentices complete Makaton courses that prepare them well for working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Other apprentices complete first-aid courses, so that they are better equipped to help children in their workplaces.

Apprentices feel safe and understand how to keep themselves and others safe. They take their responsibilities regarding safeguarding, health and safety very seriously. They understand risks in their local areas, including from radicalisation and extremism, and learn to recognise any signs that children in their care may not be safe.

Most apprentices receive helpful and impartial careers advice and guidance that prepares them well for their next steps. For example, level 3 early years educator apprentices understand what they need to do to progress to level 5 early years lead practitioner training and roles. However, in a few cases, level 3 STLS apprentices do not receive sufficient impartial careers advice on possible career advancement.

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

Leaders have thoroughly addressed the recommendations from their last inspection and have taken effective steps that have improved the quality of the apprenticeship programmes that they deliver. Managers have high expectations and ambitions for the curriculum that they offer. They offer programmes that address significant areas of skills shortage locally and that aim to meet the needs of parents and carers, and of employers who need staff to provide good-quality early years childcare.

Leaders and staff engage effectively with employers. For example, they have established positive collaborative relationships with other local charities who run children's centres, supporting them to recruit and train apprentices for their businesses. Leaders and managers establish and respond well to the workforce development needs of employers, who values the apprenticeship programmes. The design of the curriculum supports schools with their strategy to develop their own specialist staff.

Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced for their roles and benefit from useful professional development that helps them to carry out their roles. Managers support tutors well. For example, they have rightly recognised occasions when tutors

have struggled with assessment workloads and have used extra staff to help with marking, so it is completed in a timely manner.

Tutors plan and sequence the curriculum well so that it meets the needs of apprentices and the children with whom apprentices work. For example, in settings where high proportions of children have SEND, tutors teach SEND strategies early on so that apprentices are equipped to meet the needs of the children in those settings.

Tutors accurately assess apprentices' work to identify what apprentices have done well and what they need to need do to improve. Most apprentices and learners receive helpful and timely feedback that helps them improve the standard of their work. However, tutors do not ensure that apprentices on early years standards swiftly resubmit work that has not met requirements. As a result, a few apprentices fall behind. Tutors recognise this and have set clear targets with apprentices and employers to help apprentices catch up.

Tutors ensure that apprentices embed key concepts in their long-term memory and apply them fluently and consistently. For example, tutors support level 3 STLS apprentices to research specialist resources and techniques to support bilingual children to learn and make progress. As a result, most apprentices gain substantial new knowledge and skills, and nearly all apprentices who have completed their training have achieved, several with distinction.

Tutors carefully consider apprentices' individual learning needs. For example, tutors support apprentices with dyslexia to audio-record their feedback, so that these apprentices can easily access important information.

Tutors support apprentices well to develop their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices who need to achieve English and mathematics functional skills qualifications receive the tuition that they need to pass their examinations.

Employers ensure that most apprentices have protected time every week for off-the-job training, and most apprentices use this time well to complete assignments or for online learning. However, a few apprentices on early years programmes do not routinely have enough protected time, meaning that they struggle to keep up with their coursework or produce work that is not of a high enough standard.

Governance is effective. Those responsible for governance understand their responsibilities. They know the provider well, and support and strengthen the provider's leadership. They provide constructive challenge that helps leaders to focus on key aspects of education and quality assurance processes to enhance the effectiveness of the provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all apprentices have access to consistently high-quality off-the-job training that supports their learning and development.
- Ensure that managers implement assessment methods that help all apprentices to know what they need to improve and make rapid progress.
- Ensure that all apprentices receive high-quality impartial careers information, advice and guidance, to understand better the next steps that are open to them.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58139
Address	Hanson Lane Enterprise Centre Hanson Lane Halifax HX1 5PG
Contact number	01422 399400
Website	www.regen.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Alison Haskins
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	30 June to 2 July 2021

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality and systems lead, 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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