

Let Me Play Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Established in 2004, Let Me Play Ltd is a sports, education and outreach organisation based in Hammersmith, West London. LMP education is the training arm and has been teaching apprenticeship training through subcontract arrangements since 2015. LMP education became a prime-contract holder in May 2017 and delivers apprenticeships to schools and academy trusts paying the apprenticeship levy, and through its apprenticeship training agency, Sporting Education Ltd.

There are currently 119 apprentices on programme. The majority of these are on a level 3 supporting teaching and learning framework. Smaller numbers are on standards in business administration level 3, sports coaching level 3, journalism level 3, facilities management levels 2 and 3, team leading and management levels 4 and 5. Since gaining their direct contract, LMP education has gained a national schools academy trust contract and now teaches its programme across the country.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Directors and managers at LMP education share a vision to inspire ambition in, and widen horizons for, young people and adults through sports and education. They work very closely with schools and academy trusts to design and teach apprenticeship programmes that support young people into working in education and upskill current school employees. Pre-apprenticeship programmes successfully prepare young people for the transition onto an apprenticeship and, as a result, very few apprentices leave their programme early. Directors ensure that there are clear pathways and progression opportunities available for apprentices working within schools.

Since gaining a directly funded contract, managers at LMP education have restructured the management team and increased the number of subject tutors in business administration, sports and teaching and learning to support apprentices. In the early stages of the programme, directors recognised that the staffing structure in place was not effective in ensuring that apprentices made good progress. Tutors' caseloads were too high and apprentices suffered from too many cancelled appointments. As a result, a minority of the apprentices enrolled at the beginning of the contract are behind where they should be with the completion of their

assessments. However, the newly recruited tutors, who now have lower case-loads, work hard to ensure that apprentices achieve their programme on time.

Directors have invested appropriately in new management information systems and an online portfolio. However, not all tutors use the online portfolio consistently well. The new structure ensures there are clear lines of reporting and accountability. Directors meet regularly to monitor the performance of their managers and tutors and to check that they comply with all the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. Directors rightly acknowledge that as the provision grows, they need to strengthen their governance and are reviewing the arrangements they have in place.

The focus on the entitlement to off-the-job training is clear. Apprentices take part in a variety of learning activities, such as regular workshops, online group sessions and one-to-one coaching. Schools receive comprehensive information about their responsibilities when they recruit apprentices and tutors work closely with apprentices' managers to link the off-the-job activities to apprentices' work. For example, apprentices on supporting teaching and learning programmes take part in school trips and then use these experiences to meet the appropriate criteria in their qualification.

Directors do not have clear oversight of the delivery of mathematics and English functional skills qualifications, or the development of these skills for apprentices who have already achieved the qualifications. Managers ensure that the majority of tutors receive good support to improve their own English and mathematics skills and to support apprentices to achieve their qualifications in these subjects. The variety of online resources for tutors and apprentices to access is good. Apprentices speak about how they have improved their written communication skills. In a few progress reviews, apprentices show how they have used appropriate mathematics while at work. However, there is not a clear plan to bring these activities together and evaluate the impact on apprentices' development.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

The majority of apprentices are highly motivated, enjoy their apprenticeship and develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours relevant to their job roles. For example, following a visit to a magistrates' court, apprentices on the journalism standards course create press releases and understand what they can and cannot report on in legal cases. Business administration apprentices deal well with angry parents at school, take minutes of meetings, and improve their information technology skills. Apprentices on supporting teaching and learning programmes develop very effectively their understanding around child protection.

Apprentices have regular contact with their tutors through effective progress reviews and assessments. Tutors plan and arrange extra support and one-to-one sessions when apprentices fall behind or miss sessions. As a result, the majority of apprentices make their expected progress.

Tutors are well qualified and experienced in the specialist subject areas they teach. The majority use the assessment of apprentices' prior skills, knowledge and job roles appropriately to ensure that apprentices complete learning and work that is new and relevant, and that supports them to prepare for their next steps. In a minority of cases, where employed apprentices have worked in their role for some time, staff do not take account of apprentices' prior experience sufficiently to ensure that apprentices are on the correct programme.

The quality of information that apprentices receive about their work, in their progress reviews and in the targets set is not consistently high across all subject areas and tutors. Apprentices on supporting teaching and learning programmes often receive helpful advice on how to improve their work and useful actions on how to do this. However, this is not the same for the small minority of apprentices on the business administration and supporting the delivery of physical education programmes.

In the small proportion of teaching sessions observed on the monitoring visit, tutors linked well the classroom activity to work practices. In journalism, apprentices are given the opportunity to practise their 'live and on the whistle' reporting techniques by attending events such as the Football Association Disability Cup. In business administration, apprentices develop mentoring skills to support and oversee new apprentices joining their organisation. In a minority of sessions, where tutors questioning to check and deepen apprentices' knowledge is not effective, it is not clear if apprentices understand the topic.

Most apprentices, particularly those that attend the pre-apprenticeship course, receive effective careers advice and information at the start of their programme. They have a good understanding of the routes they can take and the opportunities open to them once they complete their apprenticeship. A very small number of previously employed apprentices at schools have not received the same level of information and are unclear about the benefits of completing an apprenticeship or the options open to them.

Directors have implemented appropriate quality monitoring processes and have appointed a new quality team. Lead tutors and quality assurers work closely to ensure they comply with the requirements of the qualifications and new standards. Regular quality reviews take place and managers support tutors to improve their teaching practice through the observations of teaching, learning and assessment they carry out. Managers, in their recent review of the observation process, rightly identified that they focus too much on what the tutor does and not enough on the skills development and knowledge of apprentices.

Directors, in their evaluation of the quality of provision, correctly identify areas for improvement, such as stronger governance, robust quality monitoring and reducing the number of apprentices who make slow progress. The resulting action plan to make these improvements does not contain clear steps on how and when these will be achieved.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Directors and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Managers and tutors establish a culture of safeguarding and apprentices understand well how to keep themselves safe. Apprentices receive appropriate safeguarding training at induction, through regular newsletters, discussions at progress reviews and compulsory online courses. Directors do not systematically check if apprentices have completed the online modules.

Apprentices benefit from additional safeguarding training and information they receive at their schools. They talk confidently about how important it is that they understand the dangers of radicalisation and extremism in the context of their work.

A designated safeguarding lead has received appropriate training and is responsible for monitoring and reporting any disclosures, of which there have been few.

Directors have trained several other members of staff to the same level and all staff attend regular safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.

Two members of staff are qualified as mental health first aid trainers and have trained a group of apprentices in mental health first aid. These apprentices are now the youth mental health first aiders at their schools.

Through the recruitment process, managers have ensured that all staff are safe to work with children and apprentices. The safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriate, with clear lines of responsibility and reporting.

Managers support tutors well to integrate safeguarding, British values and the threats associated with radicalisation and extremism into their delivery of training and their discussions with apprentices at progress reviews. Tutors feel confident and able to use current and local incidents to generate discussion with apprentices. For example, in a journalism session, apprentices develop their understanding of British values and equality through the tutor's skilful integration of the 'editors' code' which outlines the expectations to which journalists should adhere.

Since the provision has extended nationally, directors have not carried out a risk assessment, nor implemented a 'Prevent' duty action plan, in all the geographical areas where apprentices work.

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