

Decidebloom Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Decidebloom Limited is the training academy of Stoneacre Motor Group and started its directly funded apprenticeship programme in 2017. Decidebloom Limited provides apprenticeship programmes for the motor vehicle industry at levels 2 and 3. Apprentices choose to follow career pathways in vehicle parts, vehicle maintenance, customer service, team leading, and business administration and management. Approximately a quarter of apprentices study on new standards-based apprenticeship programmes and the remainder follow apprenticeship framework programmes. Decidebloom Limited employs all 140 apprentices currently on the apprenticeship programmes. Approximately three quarters of apprentices are aged 16 to 18. Decidebloom Limited does not use subcontractors.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have a clear strategy to deliver apprenticeships in the motor industry. They effectively use their significant experience of the motor industry and their previous experience of delivering apprenticeships as a subcontractor. Senior leaders' rationale is to provide sustainable jobs for new apprentices. They also aim to enhance existing employees' knowledge and skills to equip the workforce with the skills to meet the future demands of the industry. They invested in a new technical school in direct response to the skills shortage in the motor industry and the lack of highly qualified and experienced vehicle technicians. Senior leaders, managers and staff set high aspirations for apprentices to develop a 'career for life'.

Senior leaders, managers and staff ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. They work effectively with employers and have strengthened the recording of apprentices' activities. Apprentices routinely receive their on- and off-the-job training. Staff and employers record apprentices' activities well. As a result of close monitoring, a high proportion of apprentices who have completed their programme so far in 2018 achieved their qualification on time, and most gained employment.

Senior leaders have invested significantly in training resources at the head office site and at the new technical training school in Goole. They have recruited trainers with extensive industrial experiences and ensured that trainers receive high-quality training to develop their teaching skills. As a result, apprentices benefit from effective teaching, informed by the latest industrial knowledge and skills. Senior leaders plan for future growth. They provide resources that enable apprentices to use leading and renewable technologies in car manufacturing. Consequently, apprentices develop new skills in their role and make a valuable contribution to the workplace. For example, apprentices use advanced diagnostic equipment and carry out repairs to motor vehicles, including electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cells.

Leaders and managers ensure that they recruit apprentices with integrity. Their selection process is thorough, and they ensure that apprentices receive a comprehensive recruitment and induction programme. This enables apprentices to have a clear understanding of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that they need to achieve their career choices and aspirations. Trainers' strong working relationships with employers help to ensure that apprentices enrol on the most appropriate programmes for their job role.

Senior leaders and managers frequently review the quality of the provision and the progress that apprentices make towards achieving their qualification. However, they do not have a good understanding of all aspects of apprentices' progress. Their self-assessment and quality improvement plans do not focus clearly enough on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or the progress that apprentices make in developing the skills, knowledge and behaviours that they require. This means that senior leaders and managers do not have sufficient oversight of the provider's performance. As senior leaders are also directors, the board does not provide sufficient challenge to leaders to monitor these areas and improve them rapidly.

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

Trainers and assessors are highly experienced in the subject areas for which they are responsible. They have appropriate teacher training, English and mathematics and internal quality assurance qualifications that are relevant to their roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders provide frequent training opportunities that enable staff to share good practice well across all the apprenticeship programmes.

Trainers and assessors use their subject knowledge and experience effectively to plan and deliver relevant, useful and interesting training sessions. Apprentices are enthusiastic to learn and to make a positive contribution to their workplace. For example, apprentices on customer service programmes provide useful guidance to customers about insurance products and have secured sales to customers purchasing new vehicles. Apprentices on business administration programmes communicate clearly with staff in dealership branches and maintain accurate records of service plans on the company's management information system.

Trainers and assessors place a high priority on developing apprentices' English, mathematics, and information and communication technology skills. This includes those apprentices who have already achieved the qualifications required by the apprenticeship programme. Trainers and assessors use the information about apprentices' starting points effectively. They provide apprentices with frequent training and homework to address individual areas of weakness. Apprentices receive good support and develop their skills to a higher level.

Apprentices receive effective support from workplace mentors and line managers that ensures that most acquire the knowledge, technical skills and behaviours relevant to their chosen roles. Most apprentices are clear about what they need to do to complete their qualifications. They are aware of the timescales for completion. The opportunities to obtain jobs in the company incentivise them to make good progress. Almost all apprentices produce work of the required standard.

Trainers and assessors do not routinely provide feedback or targets, following assessment, to ensure that apprentices understand fully how they can improve their work or skills. As a result, a small proportion of apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable.

The assessment of apprentices on the new level 3 standards-based apprenticeship is underdeveloped. Trainers and assessors do not have a clear view of the progress that apprentices make.

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

Senior leaders have developed appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures, including the safe recruitment of staff, to ensure that apprentices and staff are safe. Staff and apprentices follow these policies and procedures well. They implement appropriate referral procedures if they have concerns. Staff make referrals to external agencies and provide appropriate support to guardians and families when required.

Senior leaders and staff have taken notable and rigorous actions to ensure that those apprentices who stay in a local hotel when attending training at the head office are safe. They provide thorough risk assessments and adopt thorough supervision practices to maintain apprentices' personal safety when staying away from home.

Leaders provide staff and apprentices with frequent safeguarding training, including data protection, online safety and the dangers from extremism and radicalisation. Leaders and staff, in response to the lack of sector-specific resources, have developed high-quality and interesting 'run, hide and tell' training. This is specific to employer-led provision and apprenticeships. All apprentices, staff and employers receive this training and demonstrate their thorough understanding by completing follow-up surveys and assessment quizzes. However, senior leaders are right to

identify that they should implement refinements to ensure that staff and apprentices have a better understanding of the risks to apprentices in their own locality.

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