

# Catalyst Learning and Development Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Darrell Bate OI

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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 themes set out below.

Catalyst Learning and Development Limited (Catalyst) is a private training provider that was established in 1988, specialising in commercial programmes in leadership and management. Catalyst gained a contract to provide apprenticeships and started training in September 2017. The company is based in Enfield and works with levy-paying employers across London. This is the first time that Catalyst has been involved with apprenticeship training.

Currently, 98 apprentices are on apprenticeship programmes. The majority follow team leader/supervisory and operations and departmental manager standards at levels 3 and 5, with smaller numbers on the recruitment consultant standard at level 3. All apprentices are over the age of 18 years.

### Themes

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

#### **Insufficient progress**

In setting up the apprenticeship programme, leaders and managers have not ensured that all employers understand and apply the commitment required for off-the-job training for apprentices. As a result, for too many apprentices this entitlement is not being met. Managers fail to monitor closely the hours apprentices have to study off-the-job, relying instead on apprentices' own records. In many cases, these are inaccurate. In a few cases, employers do not allow apprentices the full entitlement. As a consequence, these apprentices are not on track to complete within their original planned timescales. Apprentices who require English and mathematics qualifications do not receive the additional time they need to study these subjects.

At the start of the programme, staff assess apprentices' prior knowledge, skills and behaviours accurately using personality profiling methods. However, they do not use this information to adjust the content and duration of an individual's programme. For example, apprentices who are experienced managers have to complete all the

modules of an ILM diploma over the same length of time as less experienced apprentices. This is instead of selecting only those modules in which they need to build new knowledge or meet end-point assessment criteria. This results in many making slow progress, given their prior knowledge and skills.

Leaders and managers do not have effective processes for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They are over-reliant on feedback from apprentices rather than carrying out their own observations of coaching and training, in order to be able to support coaches to make the necessary improvements. In their self-assessment report, leaders and managers do not sufficiently evaluate the quality of provision. They correctly identify areas requiring improvement, but do not include any actions to address them.

Staff do not provide the level of support employers need to ensure the success of apprenticeship programmes. A high turnover in staff has disrupted continuity and communication. As a result, employers receive conflicting information and do not always have timely responses to their concerns. Staff take too long to inform employers which apprentices do not have English and mathematics exemptions. This delays apprentices starting these qualifications. A new management database to improve communications is now in place and is starting to have a positive impact.

Leaders and managers do not make enough use of management information to assure the quality of apprenticeship programmes. They do not routinely check how many planned reviews and coaching sessions take place, nor do they track apprentices' attendance at monthly training sessions. As a result, they do not identify quickly enough when apprentices fall behind.

Directors share a strong vision and ambition to provide high-quality apprenticeship training in leadership and management. They have an extensive track record in commercial training and have been very effective in attracting high profile, levy-paying employers to the apprenticeship programme. The apprenticeship standards match the professional development needs of employers very well.

Apprentices benefit from working in professional, well-run working environments. Employers provide good opportunities for promotion or advancement in the organisation. Recruitment consultant apprentices benefit from higher rates of pay than those not on the programme.

Coaches and trainers have considerable experience and are occupationally competent. Employers regard their expertise and commitment highly, and this benefits apprentices.

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

**Insufficient progress**

Coaches plan formal progress reviews poorly, and many do not involve employers. They do not use reviews to set specific targets for apprentices to gain the skills and knowledge they need. Targets, in the few reviews that include them, focus only on completing portfolio tasks and do not help apprentices to make more rapid progress.

Support to develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills is insufficient. Leaders and managers do not encourage coaches to see their role as teachers of English or mathematics. Apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in these subjects only have access to online learning materials provided to support their studies. The vast majority of apprentices do not start these qualifications until late in their apprenticeship. This results in them making slow progress against the planned timescales.

Level 5 leadership and management apprentices do not have realistic expectations of the demands of the programme. Many struggle to keep on top of the heavy workload. As a result, nearly half of this cohort have left before completing their programme. Managers have now extended the planned duration of this programme by six months so that it is more realistic, and more are staying on the programme.

Apprentices are unclear about the arrangements for end-point assessment. While many are aware of the range of grades they could achieve, coaches do not prepare them sufficiently to achieve high grades.

Apprentices learn new skills and behaviours for work and apply their new knowledge well in their workplace setting. For example, recruitment consultants develop effective ways of closing deals. Team leader apprentices develop critical-thinking skills through keeping reflective journals. Employers are positive about the improved performance of their apprentices as a result of the training they receive. For example, health sector recruitment consultant apprentices improve business productivity and meet very demanding targets.

Coaches and trainers provide effective face-to-face coaching sessions that help apprentices decide which aspects of their everyday work role provide evidence they can use to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship. They give detailed feedback on marked work that enables apprentices to make improvements. Off-the-job training sessions are of a high standard, and both apprentices and employers value them. Trainers plan sessions to reflect the work context of the apprentice, for example in designing healthcare scenarios for those working in that sector.

Trainers source good workbooks and learning resources. These break down learning into tasks and projects that help apprentices acquire the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need. Employers and apprentices benefit from having access to Catalyst's wide range of commercial training courses.

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

**Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers do not create a culture of safeguarding apprentices. Instead, they place much of this responsibility on employers. As a result, apprentices are unclear about mechanisms for reporting concerns to the provider. Staff refer to safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values at induction and in reviews, but this does not extend beyond a basic definition of the terms.

Apprentices do not have sufficient awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Coaches do not routinely reinforce apprentices' understanding of safeguarding issues, including the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism.

The newly appointed member of staff who has responsibility as the designated safeguarding lead only recently undertook relevant training. Coaches do not receive training in safeguarding or the 'Prevent' duty. They do not fulfil the expectation to develop apprentices' understanding of how to stay safe.

Coaches and trainers do not receive routine checks to ensure that they are safe to work with apprentices. Most do not have a current Disclosure and Barring Service check in place. As a result of the inspectors' visit, leaders and managers have put in place plans to rectify this.

Leaders and managers have not taken sufficient actions to mitigate the risks posed by extremism and radicalisation. They do not have a 'Prevent' duty action plan in place and so do not know what to do if anyone raises a concern.

Employers have well-developed safeguarding policies and place a high priority on the safety and security of their workforce. As a result, apprentices feel safe at their place of work.

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