

# The Development Manager Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Martin Ward, Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** County House  
St Mary's Street  
Worcester  
WR1 1HB



## 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 (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 themes set out below.

The Development Manager Ltd was established in 2007. From 2011 the company acted as a subcontractor for apprenticeships. In January 2018, it became a prime contract independent training provider. Through a mixture of apprenticeship levy and ESFA funding, the provider has enrolled 179 apprentices as a prime contractor. It continues to deliver a small number of apprenticeships as a subcontractor. From November 2018, the provider enrolled 36 apprentices who transferred from another provider. Currently, under prime contracts, 171 apprentices are in learning, seven apprentices have withdrawn from the programme and one is taking a break in learning. Most apprentices are at level 3 or level 4, with the large majority on standards-based programmes rather than frameworks. Most apprentices are aged 16 to 24 and are on apprenticeships in computer software development, technical support and engineering, or digital marketing. The provider currently works with about 150 employers, mainly in Worcestershire and the West Midlands.

### Themes

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

#### **Significant progress**

Senior leaders have developed a clear strategy for the company. They are building on their expertise in the software development, network engineering and digital marketing job market. They offer high-quality apprenticeships which meet the needs of the employers and the local economy. Successful collaboration with local enterprise partnerships and the British Computer Society means that managers provide apprenticeships that reflect the best current business practice.

Senior managers and governors, led by the chief executive, have a very distinct and positive approach to the delivery of apprenticeships. They are clear that the development of positive behaviours and attitudes is as important as the development of new knowledge and skills. The chief executive ensures that coaches and employers support the well-rounded development of apprentices. Apprentices rapidly contribute to the business and are well prepared for a career within the industry.

Senior leaders have grown the business slowly, with a focus on providing quality and maintaining the trust of employers. For example, managers are very clear about their expectations of employers and apprentices at the point of recruitment. Where employers or apprentices cannot commit to these expectations, managers do not pursue the relationship further.

Senior leaders demonstrate an accurate understanding of the key strengths and areas for improvement and record this in a self-assessment report. Through regular team meetings, managers take swift and effective actions to address the key areas for improvement for the benefit of apprentices. Senior leaders have developed effective internal quality assurance systems that ensure that apprentices produce consistently high standards of work across all apprenticeships.

In response to becoming a prime contractor, and delivering more standards-based apprenticeships, senior managers have appointed a teaching and learning manager, quality manager, a professional development coach and technical coaches. This has enabled the company to expand and strengthen the processes by which they improve and assure quality.

Coaches have the experience and skills to support apprentices in the development of the behaviours, knowledge and skills. Senior leaders ensure that coaches improve their technical knowledge and skills, as well as their teaching and coaching ability, through a well-planned staff development programme. It includes the regular sharing of good practice, and training with resources from the University of Warwick. This has a positive impact on coaches' performance.

Senior leaders have made highly effective links with employers. Employers are clear about the purpose of the apprenticeships and their responsibilities to apprentices. In most cases apprentices' line managers attend their reviews. As a result, employers are aware of the progress that their apprentices are making and are involved in the development of their behaviours and skills. Employers can see their apprentices developing new skills, behaviours and confidence as result of the programme.

Senior leaders and employers have a clear understanding of the requirements of on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices log their off-the-job training systematically. Most apprentices study for more than the required time.

Senior managers monitor achievement, retention, attendance and progress regularly and effectively. Most current apprentices are making expected progress and many apprentices make rapid progress and produce work of a very high standard. Managers intervene quickly and effectively where they identify apprentices who are making slow progress. Managers concentrate on ensuring that apprentices are on track to pass the apprenticeship and the required professional certificates. Around a fifth of the apprentices achieve additional certificates in technical subjects which align to the needs of their employers.

Apprentices who have recently transferred to the provider are making better progress than they did previously. Managers' and coaches' actions enabled most apprentices to make the transition smoothly and effectively.

Senior leaders have established a board which includes two non-executive directors. They bring a wealth of experience from business and training. They use this experience to help senior leaders set the strategic direction of the company. They are clear about their role in challenging senior leaders and are effective in holding them to account.

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

Managers ensure that apprentices receive high-quality initial advice and guidance. Staff clearly inform apprentices about the job role and the demands of the apprenticeship. On occasion, managers refer apprentices to more appropriate opportunities. They demonstrate integrity and due care. Managers place apprentices on the right apprenticeship for their current job role and ensure that they are acquiring substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Apprentices understand the requirements of the apprenticeship well.

Coaches guide, assess and monitor apprentices' progress through the apprenticeship thoroughly. Coaches plan the courses appropriately and agree, with the apprentice and the employer, the work-based assessments that will address the requirements of the apprenticeship. Coaches provide high-quality learning resources, both online and in books and journals, which reflect current business practice.

Coaches work closely with apprentices to plan effective independent study activities. As a result, apprentices extend their technical and personal skills, knowledge and behaviours. For example, one apprentice extended his understanding of a computer language which he used to improve the website at work.

Most apprentices rightly value the support and guidance they receive from their coaches. Coaches meet with apprentices frequently to review progress in relation to the completion and setting of assignments, and the development of behaviours and skills. For example, one apprentice analysed the use of social media and made well-founded recommendations for future marketing campaigns.

Most coaches provide helpful feedback to apprentices, which provides them with an accurate view of the progress they are making on their programmes and what they need to do to improve their work.

Coaches set challenging individual targets and plan the development of behaviours and skills, so that apprentices make strong progress. Coaches do not clearly link the skills development on standards-based apprenticeships to the criteria for the

achievement of distinction and merit grades. However, apprentices demonstrate the skills they need to achieve the highest grades.

Apprentices describe confidently how they apply their off-the-job learning at work to improve their effectiveness in completing technical tasks. For example, one apprentice used his new learning about cable types and connections to complete an office refit. He selected and finished cables to complete the job accurately. Another apprentice used his new learning to complete a 'virtual machine' project at work.

Most apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills well. Coaches challenge apprentices to improve these skills in the context of their job role, which makes them more effective at work. For example, apprentices produce technical reports of a high standard and others produce branding guideline documents. Digital marketing apprentices use their mathematical skills effectively when analysing changes to market share.

A small proportion of the apprentices need to achieve their functional skills qualifications. Most of these apprentices benefit from individualised functional skills classes that enable them to achieve these qualifications within their planned timeframes.

Apprentices rapidly gain additional responsibilities at work because of their learning and skills development. For example, one apprentice rapidly gained additional responsibility at work in leading a website development project for a local charity. Another apprentice leads the production of brand guidelines for their marketing business.

Apprentices benefit from well-designed progression pathways for most programmes. Almost all apprentices continue in employment on completion of their apprenticeship programme. More than 10% of level 3 and level 4 apprentices continue to higher level apprenticeships on completion of their study. Managers do not provide careers advice quickly enough for the small number of apprentices whom the original employer does not retain.

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

Senior leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures contain clear statements about the responsibilities and duties of managers and staff in safeguarding their apprentices. Staff understand how to identify and report any concerns they have. Staff report general welfare concerns about apprentices in addition to any serious safeguarding issues. This demonstrates a positive culture. All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

The appointed designated safeguarding officer has appropriate training and good links with external agencies and has positive contact with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Senior leaders and managers carry out safe recruitment and selection procedures when employing staff.

Managers and coaches provide good-quality learning resources on the virtual learning environment that enable apprentices to gain a basic understanding of equality of opportunity, diversity, the 'Prevent' duty and British values during induction. This provides an appropriate foundation for further learning by apprentices.

Coaches ensure that apprentices build on their initial understanding by relating learning activities to safeguarding principles and discussing topical events as they relate to the job role and workplace. Most apprentices understand how these topics relate to their roles and how they should act. Apprentices are aware of the importance of online security as it relates to their jobs in the digital and cyber-security sector.

Most apprentices feel safe and know how to report concerns. A very small number of apprentices who have recently transferred to the provider do not know to whom they should report concerns.

Coaches include reference to British values and the threats presented by radicalisation and extremism into their reviews. Apprentices talk fluently about each of the values. Most apprentices relate British values to the importance of respect for colleagues' different views in the workplace. They are aware of the protected characteristics and how these must affect their behaviour at work. Others reflect on the importance of democracy and know how to use their political voice to influence current political debate. Apprentices are aware of the key risks of extremism as they relate to the local community.

Managers ensure that apprentices are safe online and that employers have appropriate systems for monitoring online activities. Apprentices have a good understanding of the importance of health and safety in the workplace.

Senior managers do not produce a risk assessment as part of implementing the 'Prevent' duty. They do not have a written plan of how to minimise the most likely risks of radicalisation and extremism, given the nature of the apprentices, the work they are doing and the areas in which they work.

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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