

BlackRock Training

Monitoring visit report

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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 themes set out below.

BlackRock Training is a private training provider that was established in November 2016 and started running standards-based apprenticeships in May 2017. Based in Tonbridge, BlackRock Training works with one levy-paying employer, based in Sheffield. It delivers most of its training online, with workshops on the employer's site in Sheffield.

BlackRock Training delivers apprenticeship programmes for team leaders and supervisors at level 3 and operational and departmental managers at level 5. At the time of the monitoring visit, six learners were on programme of the 15 that started in 2017.

BlackRock Training informed the Education and Skills Funding Agency in early 2019 that it will no longer continue as a levy-funded apprenticeship provider. The final six learners are on track to complete their end-point assessments in April 2019.

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 have developed apprenticeships that prepare employees effectively for their supervisory and management roles. They have done this in conjunction with the employer. Leaders developed a distinct strategy for their apprenticeship provision by working closely with one employer. Apprentices develop new knowledge. They apply their theoretical skills and behaviours practically to make them more effective in their work roles. The apprenticeship training improves apprentices' confidence in the workplace. It makes them more capable in completing their day-to-day tasks, and in supporting others in their line management teams.

Managers make sure that their training meets the expectations of an apprenticeship, and that apprentices complete enough off-the-job training. Working closely with the employer's staff, BlackRock managers and coaches make sure that apprentices have

time to complete their studies and to take part in relevant off-the-job training. Managers communicate successfully with the employer's managers to make sure that off-the-job training is useful. They ensure that they tailor this training to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need for employment. At the frequent progress reviews, the workplace coaches check and record that this training takes place.

The employer recruited the apprentices for the programmes. Apprentices did receive a detailed induction that explained what their commitment to the programme should be, but several apprentices did not realise the time required to complete their training while working in a high-pressure sales environment. Three quickly left the programme because of pressure of work and personal commitments and four left the company. Managers' analysis of apprentices' exit interviews showed that their apprenticeships did not suit learners in this industry and so they stopped recruitment. Directors have no intention of continuing apprenticeship programmes.

Directors and managers have implemented an effective strategy to ensure that all apprentices achieve the expected skills levels in English and mathematics. Their actions have supported apprentices at levels 3 and 5 in receiving training and gaining appropriate functional skills qualifications.

BlackRock managers use their management information system well to understand thoroughly the progress of all their apprentices. They work collectively on any concerns to make sure that apprentices continue to make good progress. Directors and managers work hard to evaluate how well apprentices understand their training. They gain useful feedback by conducting frequent surveys with apprentices and their employer.

Managers pay good attention to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their self-assessment. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the training programme that enables them to improve its quality. They accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in the performance of coaches and in the development of apprentices' skills, knowledge and workplace behaviours. Quality improvement planning has an appropriate focus on improving learning and ensuring that the remaining apprentices successfully complete their training.

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

Apprentices are enthusiastic about the skills and behaviours they have developed during their apprenticeships. They enjoy their learning and understand how to apply the theories they learn in the workplace. For example, they apply time management theories in organising their work priorities and those of their subordinates. Alongside

their apprenticeship, apprentices gain accreditation for units towards the award or diploma of the Chartered Management Institute.

Coaches are well qualified and have relevant management expertise. They provide encouragement and motivation to their apprentices. Staff work well together and share their practice to monitor and standardise apprentices' work. All apprentices receive challenges to extend and deepen their knowledge, relevant to their job roles. However, apprentices' managers had insufficient involvement in the early stages of apprentices' reviews or in planning their assessments.

Managers have developed a very effective and intuitive online learning programme that provides apprentices with high-quality learning materials. Apprentices like the system that directs them to reading materials. It also provides video and audio learning materials that help apprentices to fit their learning between work and family commitments. Well-managed coaching workshops provide discipline to apprentices. These run face-to-face or online, and they allow apprentices to work together and receive focused coaching support. This helps them to understand the more complex topics. Coaches make good use of these short online training sessions to engage apprentices fully and to help them make progress.

Apprentices receive good focused support from coaches that prepares them very well for their end-point assessments.

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

Directors have made safeguarding a priority for staff and apprentices. They have implemented inclusive safeguarding policies and procedures, which they review in team and management meetings. Leaders have effective arrangements in place to deal with apprentices' concerns and to make sure that apprentices stay safe. The coach and quality manager, who have contact with apprentices, received appropriate safeguarding training.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report concerns in the workplace or to coaches. They learn about safeguarding as part of their induction, and coaches integrate more detail into their learning.

Directors operate safe recruitment practices when employing new staff. Managers carry out appropriate background checks on staff and ensure that they undergo an appropriate vetting and security check.

Managers are right to recognise that they need to do more to extend the knowledge of coaches and apprentices. This is to provide them with greater awareness of the dangers they might face from those with radical or extremist views.

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