

First Intuition Cambridge Limited

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 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.

First Intuition Cambridge Limited received a direct contract for providing apprenticeship programmes in 2017. It specialises in finance and accounting qualifications at levels 3, 4 and 7. First Intuition Cambridge Limited currently has 73 learners on advanced apprenticeships, and 59 on higher apprenticeships. All apprenticeships are on standards-based apprenticeships. First Intuition Cambridge Limited works collaboratively with a number of other independently owned 'First Intuition' branded companies. This enables it to provide economies of scale for central services, such as management information services.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Directors and senior leaders have developed a very effective curriculum strategy that meets the needs for accountancy skills, in a range of sectors, exceedingly well. Directors have established a flexible programme that provides apprentices the opportunity to mix with those studying other accountancy programmes. It also enables them to attend training at different locations, sometimes closer to home, in order to meet their personal needs well. This contact with accounting students working in a wide range of settings enhances apprentices' understanding of the finance sector and where they might work.

Directors monitor the quality of the apprentice provision rigorously, including that which they subcontract. Senior leaders provide directors with detailed and informative monthly progress reports which directors use to effectively review and challenge quality improvement actions. Directors have good governance arrangements through frequent meetings with managing directors from all of the First Intuition companies. They review and share information that enables them to challenge each other appropriately to improve the quality of learning.

Directors and senior leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Directors have arranged for external scrutiny of the lesson observation process, so as to ensure consistency and accuracy of judgements and feedback to tutors. Tutors regularly undertake peer observations to identify good practice in order to enhance their own teaching.

Directors and senior leaders routinely set clear and incisive actions for improvement, which they monitor closely. They accurately identify what they need to improve within the apprenticeship provision through their self-assessment and observations of teaching, learning and assessment. However, senior leaders recognise that they have not established measurable success criteria for all key actions, and cannot therefore gauge the efficacy of their work.

Senior leaders have recruited and retained staff with high-level specialist skills and experience in their vocational areas. Managers use staff appraisals and observation findings well to inform the training needs of staff. Senior leaders have been effective in ensuring that staff have teaching qualifications, and many now hold a level 3 award in teaching and learning.

Directors ensure that employers meet stringent recruitment standards. Senior leaders work well with employers to ensure that employees will benefit from the apprenticeship programmes and develop substantial new skills and knowledge. They ensure that employers and potential apprentices fully understand the requirements of the apprenticeship programme before working with them.

Senior leaders are meticulous in ensuring that programmes meet all the requirements of apprenticeships. They are particularly diligent in ensuring that employers give apprentices the required time to carry out off-the-job training.

Leaders' work has a very positive impact on the lives of apprentices. Those who have completed their programmes have achieved very well. The large majority of apprentices who recently undertook the final test passed first time. Of these, two thirds have already progressed onto higher level study.

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

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Employers particularly value the development of professional behaviours, such as communicating clearly with clients and contributing effectively with other team members. As a result, apprentices play a big part in helping employers attract and retain clients. Employers confirm that these skills prepare apprentices well for development within their job roles. Apprentices recognise and value these skills.

Tutors and skills development coaches provide high-quality on- and off-the-job training. Apprentices attend extremely effective workshops and training sessions.

These are both day-release and block-release, to meet the varying needs of apprentices and the programme. Apprentices make good use of comprehensive, high-quality learning materials and online support to develop their knowledge. As a result, apprentices make very good progress with their apprenticeships.

Managers and tutors work very effectively to integrate on- and off-the-job training. Skills and development coaches often set apprentices additional assignments, skills and knowledge questions, and tasks to complete while at work. Apprentices use real work activities and work collaboratively with their employers and peers to complete these tasks.

Skills and development coaches work well with employers to accurately identify apprentices' starting points. Apprentices complete a detailed assessment to identify their current level of knowledge. Skills coaches and employers use this information well to ensure that apprentices start on the correct level programme. In addition, they use it effectively to plan training which meets apprentices' individual needs.

Skills and development coaches monitor apprentices' progress very effectively. They support apprentices to catch up when they fall behind. They help apprentices to improve their learning skills, for example by developing their confidence and preparing them well for examinations.

Apprentices' knowledge in mathematics, speaking and listening, and digital skills are developed well. Tutors also provide good support to develop apprentices' English skills, for example in reading and comprehension. This includes the correction of technical errors, and the development of higher-level skills, such as improvement in writing style and the framing of an argument.

Tutors prepare apprentices well for the final test. For example, tutors arrange for apprentices to undertake a series of preparatory interviews with an independent assessor. Apprentices receive helpful feedback based on their performance against the set criteria. However, they do not receive direction on achieving high grades in their final tests. Nor do they have specific feedback on how to meet the criteria to achieve these grades.

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

Directors and senior leaders ensure that they safeguard apprentices well. Safer recruitment processes are thorough, and staff and apprentices adhere to them fully. All staff have Disclosure and Barring Service checks, including staff who have no contact with apprentices. Two well-trained designated safeguarding officers are in place. All staff receive annual training to ensure that their knowledge is current and they use this well to ensure that apprentices are safe.

Apprentices have a very good understanding of how to stay safe. Skills and development coaches ensure that apprentices have a detailed knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and the potential risks of extremism and radicalisation. Tutors regularly reinforce apprentices' understanding through meaningful discussion during learning reviews. Apprentices benefit from well-thought-out 'hot topics', which staff use to develop apprentices' understanding and knowledge. These topics cover a wide range of current social issues, such as gang culture and violence towards young people.

Apprentices have a good appreciation of British values and can relate these well to their personal and working lives. They respect each other's views and opinions. They fully understand how the rule of law applies to their working and social lives.

Senior leaders have ensured that staff, apprentices and employers have a very good awareness of how to report concerns. Staff take extremely swift and effective action to help apprentices deal with related issues that have arisen, such as anxiety and depression. Staff record this work in detail and confidentially.

Senior leaders go far beyond their statutory responsibilities to ensure that apprentices are safe within their workplaces. Leaders strongly enforce their policy of not working with employers who fail to comply with the stringent standards they set. These include the requirement that employers support and safeguard apprentices fully. Leaders check that employers use strong health and safety policies, prior to working with them, to deliver apprenticeships. As a result, employers are knowledgeable about their duties to help keep apprentices safe.

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