

Contracting Services (Education and Skills) Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1278664

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Inspection date(s): 28–29 March 2019

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 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.

Contracting Services (Education and Skills) Limited (CSES) is a new provider set up in 2017 to deliver apprenticeships for levy-paying employers. Two directors lead and manage the provision. At the time of the monitoring visit, CSES had 19 apprentices. Of these, 13 are enrolled on the level 3 team leader and supervisor standards-based apprenticeship. The remainder follow level 3 business administration and level 3 customer service standards-based apprenticeships. CSES works with two large levy-paying employers based in Wiltshire and Devon. All of the current apprentices are 19 years of age or older.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Directors have established a clear mission to provide apprenticeships to a small number of regional levy-paying employers. Their sensible and careful approach to growing the business is successfully maintaining a reputation for high-quality apprenticeships. They work collaboratively with employers in order to design learning programmes that meet employers' business and training needs well. Directors and tutors ensure that apprentices' workplace line managers and supervisors are well informed about the standards-based apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices benefit from well-considered opportunities to practise and apply new business and customer service skills and knowledge.

Directors and tutors work with employers well to ensure that new apprentices follow a robust pre-entry and induction programme that clearly sets out the requirements and expectations of the standards-based apprenticeships. Directors and tutors use resources such as managers from within the apprentices' employers to make training relevant. For example, human resource managers and financial managers teach apprentices as part of their off-the-job training.

Directors ensure that the learning programmes are well designed. Off-the-job training is carefully planned and coordinated. Apprentices also benefit from high-quality online learning materials which help them to work independently between off-the-job training sessions.

Experienced and well-qualified tutors get to know their apprentices well. They provide regular formal and informal feedback to help apprentices to improve their knowledge, skills and confidence. Apprentices are well prepared for their end-point assessment (EPA) tests they take at the end of their apprenticeships. Directors use monthly management reports that provide an overview of apprentices' progress to check on how well they are doing. Reports show that the vast majority of learners are making expected or better progress.

Directors meet regularly to monitor and evaluate the organisation's performance. Directors focus well on the quality of delivery but do not sufficiently consider important matters such as risk management and safeguarding. Directors recognise that their current leadership team is small, and they are seeking additional external expertise to provide them with additional challenge and support.

Directors' evaluations and assessments accurately identify the general strengths and areas for development of the organisation. However, directors do not act swiftly enough to make sure all key areas improve, for example in their arrangements for safeguarding.

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**

Tutors make excellent use of practice questions and papers to help apprentices prepare very well for their assessments. Recently, three apprentices completed their EPA and achieved distinctions.

The vast majority of apprentices are in employment before becoming apprentices. They gain extensive new knowledge and skills through their apprenticeship which improve their performance at work and significantly enhance their career progression opportunities. Careful analyses of apprentices' current practical and academic skills, before they start their apprenticeship, ensure that their job roles cover the specific skills and behaviours that their programme requires.

Leaders and tutors monitor the progress that apprentices make and work closely with employers and line managers to ensure that they are able to apply the new skills and knowledge they are acquiring. Apprentices make very good progress in all areas of their apprenticeship, including the development of their English and mathematical knowledge and skills. Monthly reviews of English and mathematics help tutors keep abreast of the progress apprentices make. Assignments are used

carefully to reinforce the development of functional skills and contribute very well to the high success rates in achieving these qualifications.

Apprentices develop a wide range of management and business skills and knowledge which they apply successfully in the workplace. They recognise the behaviours they are developing as part of their apprenticeship and how these are beneficial to their job role. For example, they feel much more confident when speaking with colleagues and managers. They adapt their communication style very effectively when giving feedback to their team.

Tutors set high expectations of their apprentices and provide very good levels of support to enable them to achieve. Detailed feedback indicates what apprentices are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Tutors set apprentices essays and project work which develop their written and oral communication skills very effectively. Apprentices give presentations and hold discussions within their learning groups that improve their communication skills and confidence markedly. Tutors use their expertise and industry knowledge in learning sessions very well. This enables apprentices to practise and then apply new learning in their job roles for more advanced management techniques. Apprentices enjoy the challenge of their training. As a result, a very high proportion of apprentices stay until the end of their programme and complete their apprenticeship on time.

Employers provide their apprentices with opportunities to implement their ideas, which significantly help improve the work of the organisation. For example, an apprentice was invited to an off-site senior management meeting to present their idea for a new product as result of the project module. Another apprentice has researched the use of electrically powered vans as part of his project module. He has presented his findings to the board and is now going to Amsterdam to visit a factory which is developing electric vans.

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

CSES' safeguarding arrangements are not effective. Apprentices are unclear about who to go to within CSES if they have a concern, or how to go about it. Apprentices feel safe and do know how to report concerns to their line managers or supervisor within the workplace.

Directors have failed to put in place an appropriately qualified safeguarding lead. The provider's safeguarding policy and procedure do not make clear to staff and apprentices the process for reporting concerns or who the designated safeguarding lead is. The safeguarding policy does not take account of local priorities and risks. Arrangements to check the suitability of directors to work with children and vulnerable adults are incomplete.

Tutors are knowledgeable about the topics of safeguarding and 'Prevent'. The majority of apprentices understand the principles of the 'Prevent' duty. The 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan identify a largely appropriate set of risks but are too generic. They do not contain any references to risks in the local area or the contexts in which apprentices work.

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