

The Electronics Group 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 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 Electronics Group Limited provides specialised training, mostly on a commercial basis, for the electronics industry. In 2017, the group began direct delivery of levy-funded level 2 and 3 apprenticeship frameworks in electrical and electronic engineering. They previously delivered apprenticeships as a subcontractor of the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance (Semta). At the time of the inspection, there were six apprentices on the performing manufacturing operations pathway of the improving operational performance level 2 framework. One apprentice was on the level 3 engineering manufacture framework.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers use their experience as a subcontractor of Semta well to deliver directly funded frameworks that meet the principles and requirements of apprenticeship provision. They provide useful information and guidance that ensures employers fully understand and comply with their responsibilities for apprenticeship delivery. Apprentices spend a minimum of one day per week in high-quality off-the-job training.

Leaders and managers place a high priority on apprenticeship provision within the wider context of the business. They ensure that apprentices benefit from training in well-resourced learning environments using industry-standard equipment. As a result, apprentices quickly develop the skills that they need for work.

Leaders and managers use their extensive industrial experience and expertise well to oversee the delivery of apprenticeship programmes. The managing director closely monitors the progress of all apprentices. He reports to the company's board of directors each month on apprentices' progress and the quality of provision. He and the non-executive directors provide effective challenge to trainers to ensure that apprentices complete their frameworks within planned timescales.

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices are recruited with integrity. The company's specialist recruitment team works closely with employers. They provide objective careers advice and guidance to applicants to ensure that the right candidates are recruited for apprenticeship vacancies. On the very rare occasions when an apprentice's placement turns out to be unsuitable, staff place the apprentice with a more appropriate employer. As a result, all apprentices remain in employment, often in promoted positions.

Leaders and managers rightly recognise the need to recruit more staff to support apprenticeship delivery. Apprenticeship programmes are currently heavily dependent on the commitment and expertise of a small number of dedicated key staff, supported by skilled workplace mentors. These staff provide teaching, learning and assessment as well as pastoral guidance, support for apprentices who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and safeguarding expertise. Leaders and managers have sensible plans in place to increase the capacity of the apprenticeship team.

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

Leaders, managers and trainers work well with employers to plan and deliver logically sequenced training that ensures apprentices develop substantial new knowledge and skills. Apprentices on level 2 frameworks benefit from a series of placements in different parts of their company. Carefully planned off-the-job training provides the underpinning knowledge needed to develop the right skills on each placement. For example, apprentices study wave forms in theory sessions before using oscilloscopes at work.

Managers and trainers undertake thorough initial assessments of apprentices' knowledge and skills, including in manual dexterity, mathematics and English. They use these assessments well to set targets and provide activities that enable apprentices to extend their knowledge and skills. For example, apprentices who have advanced mathematical knowledge at the start of their programmes are supported to develop and apply their knowledge in new contexts. The very large majority of apprentices fulfil their potential.

Managers and trainers monitor apprentices' progress carefully and intervene when necessary to provide further support. Apprentices receive extra tuition that helps them to catch up quickly if they miss a session. Apprentices who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate support so that they do not fall behind. For example, apprentices who have dyslexia receive coloured overlays and handouts in suitable fonts. Almost all apprentices make good progress in accordance with planned timescales.

Apprentices benefit from useful extra sessions that enable them to achieve IPC certification. This valuable electronics industry qualification further enhances apprentices' skills and career prospects.

Experienced, self-motivated tutors refresh and update their industry knowledge through informal contact with employers and through self-directed study. However, leaders and managers do not routinely use information from quality assurance activities to support trainers to improve their craft of teaching or industrial knowledge. Leaders have plans to improve and formalise staff development so that the quality of training remains consistently high.

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

Leaders and managers use their professional experience in the security sector and related occupations to promote a robust culture of safeguarding throughout apprenticeship provision. They ensure that appropriate pre-employment checks are undertaken when new staff are appointed. Suitable safeguarding policies and risk assessments are in place. Apprentices feel, and are, safe.

Leaders and managers provide appropriate safeguarding information to apprentices at induction. This includes information about online safety, grooming, drugs and gang activity. Trainers revisit this information, using topical examples, during reviews. Apprentices understand how to keep themselves and others safe at work and online. They know how to report any concerns that they may have.

Senior leaders have particular expertise in relation to the role of the electronics industry in the prevention of terrorism. They have ambitious plans to use this knowledge and experience to deliver bespoke training to apprentices addressing the specific risks and controls within the industry, such as the security of supply chains and military applications of electronics. It is too early to see the impact of these plans.

Senior leaders ensure that staff receive adequate safeguarding training. They circulate frequent updates in relation to current safeguarding issues. The designated safeguarding lead has undertaken adequate training for the role in previous employment and is currently undertaking further training at a more advanced level.

The designated safeguarding lead liaises well with employers and, where appropriate, parents to ensure that suitable actions are taken in response to any safeguarding concerns. Relationships with external safeguarding agencies, such as the local authority, are underdeveloped. Recording of actions taken in response to safeguarding concerns requires improvement so that senior leaders have ready access to records.

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