

The Portland Training Company 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 Portland Training Company was founded in 2014. The company provided education and training as a subcontractor prior to receiving a contract to provide apprenticeships and adult learning programmes in 2017/18. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 23 apprentices following standards-based apprenticeships. Eleven apprentices were following business administrator level 3 programmes, with the rest on programmes in customer service practitioner at level 2, customer service specialist at level 3, hair professional at level 2, operations/departmental manager apprentices at level 5 and team leader/supervisor programmes at level 3. There were two learners on adult learning courses in care.

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 work effectively with employers to design and deliver coherent programmes that are responsive to local and regional needs, and to deliver on- and off-the-job training that meets apprenticeship requirements. Apprentices benefit from specialist English and mathematics teaching, where it is required, as part of their programme.

Leaders and managers have put in place a rigorous process for recruiting apprentices. Staff receive training on providing applicants with appropriate impartial advice and guidance on choosing an apprenticeship. Trainers assess apprentices' starting points effectively. They use this information correctly to match apprenticeship opportunities with applicants' interests and abilities and to design individualised learning programmes. As a result, most apprentices stay on programme and make good progress.

Leaders and managers negotiate and implement well-structured agreements with employers and apprentices. As a result, apprentices get their full entitlement to training. Managers set up effective training plans that identify the role that employers play in delivering apprenticeship training. As a consequence, apprentices

receive good support at work and during off-the-job training. Trainers and employers monitor effectively the progress that apprentices make in developing knowledge, skills and behaviours. Apprentices also monitor their own progress effectively. However, managers do not have sufficient oversight of apprentices' off-the-job training, and they rely on trainers to keep them informed of issues and concerns.

Leaders and managers self-assess their provision accurately. Managers and staff set appropriate actions that lead to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have taken appropriate action to address weaknesses that have led to the current lack of challenge for apprentices. For example, they have redesigned assignment instructions to ensure that apprentices know what they need to do to attain high grades. However, it is too early to measure the impact of these actions.

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

Trainers use their vocational knowledge and expertise successfully to support apprentices to develop relevant workplace knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, apprentices improve their knowledge, skills and behaviours and make valuable contributions to their workplace. For example, apprentices in business administration learn to use software programs which enable them to take part in, and make a good contribution to, projects outside their main job role.

Employers are involved actively in supporting apprentices' learning; this includes ensuring that apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training. Apprentices, trainers and employers make effective use of an online system to monitor progress. Apprentices and trainers record precisely gains in work-related knowledge, skills and behaviours, assessment outcomes and off-the-job training activities. As a result, apprentices and their employers have a good understanding of the progress that they make towards achieving the apprenticeship standards.

The large majority of apprentices have a sound understanding of end-point assessment. Trainers prepare apprentices effectively for the tests at the end of their apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices feel thoroughly prepared for the tests and know what to expect.

Trainers visit apprentices in the workplace regularly. They provide constructive feedback that helps apprentices to improve their work and develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, most apprentices make the progress expected of them.

Managers evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment regularly. Their findings lead to high-quality professional development activities for staff. For example, trainers develop their knowledge and skills to teach topics such as equality

and diversity and British values. However, managers do not set development targets for staff that are sufficiently specific. Consequently, a small minority of the actions set do not result in improvements in trainers' teaching practice.

In a few sessions, trainers have low expectations of apprentices. They set tasks that are too easy and, as a result, apprentices do not reach their full potential. In a small minority of vocational sessions, trainers do not develop apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills. As a result, apprentices in these sessions do not continue to develop the English and mathematics skills that they need for work.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? Significant progress

Leaders and managers have high expectations for what adult learners can achieve. Managers provide excellent opportunities for long-term unemployed people and people with offending backgrounds to improve their employment prospects. Tutors and staff provide high-quality training and individual support to help learners recognise and achieve their potential. They carefully plan and use effective learning activities that improve learners' knowledge and skills for work. As a result, a high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications and improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Leaders and managers have developed very successful working relationships with local employers and Jobcentre Plus staff to deliver training programmes that lead to sustainable employment. Managers respond quickly to labour market trends and prepare adult learners for jobs that are available locally and regionally. As a result, the large majority of learners gain employment. For example, managers have designed a warehousing training programme in partnership with Jobcentre Plus staff and a large local employer. The employer offers guaranteed interviews for learners who complete the programme successfully. Consequently, most learners complete their programme, achieve their qualifications and enter sustained employment.

Tutors use their extensive experience and expertise to provide effective learning activities that prepare learners for their chosen next steps. They support learners successfully to develop their personal, social and employability skills. Tutors empower learners to use their new knowledge and skills to apply for local job vacancies. The large majority of learners are successful in securing these jobs.

In a small minority of one-to-one sessions, tutors and staff do not develop the thinking skills of vulnerable adult learners. For example, they provide instructions for travelling to job interviews rather than supporting learners to research and plan the route themselves.

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

Leaders and managers apply safe recruitment practices effectively to ensure that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable learners. All staff have Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Three appropriately trained designated safeguarding officers provide effective advice to staff, apprentices and learners to support them in recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns.

Apprentices and learners are safe and feel safe. They know to whom they should report concerns and feel able to raise any concerns that they have. Apprentices and learners have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe at work and online.

Leaders and managers provide appropriate training to staff to ensure that they are knowledgeable about safeguarding. Staff apply this knowledge effectively and take appropriate action to deal with any safeguarding concerns. They work with local agencies to offer timely support and intervention to apprentices and learners when needed.

Leaders and managers have an effective 'Prevent' duty action plan for managing the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Managers are properly informed about local issues and concerns through their attendance at local safeguarding boards. However, a small minority of apprentices are not fully aware of the dangers that radicalisation and extremism present to them in their workplace.

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