

The Teaching and Learning Group

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Philip Elliott, Ofsted Inspector

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Address: 456–459 Strand
London
WC2R 0RG



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.

The Teaching and Learning Group is an independent learning provider that began delivering apprenticeships for non-levy funded programmes in September 2018 in business administration, retail and digital marketing, accounting and finance, and leadership and management. At the time of the monitoring visit, the company provides training for 24 apprentices studying mainly at level 3, with a small number of apprentices on levels 2 and 5. All apprentices are on standards programmes and all but one are over 19.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers have not ensured that apprentices receive consistently effective reviews and good, regular and well-planned off-the-job training. Managers have recently made significant changes to staffing, resulting in disruption to current apprentices' training. Although leaders and managers recognised that standards of delivery and assessment on some programmes did not enable apprentices to make good progress and took remedial action, this has not yet enabled all apprentices to catch up on lost learning. As a result, the majority of apprentices make slow progress.

Leaders, managers and assessors do not have sufficient oversight of off-the-job training. Managers do not ensure that employers provide all apprentices with their full entitlement to off-the-job training. Consequently, not all apprentices are provided with enough off-the-job training to enable them to make good progress.

Leaders and managers do not use information about apprentices' performance well enough to understand the progress they make. Data used by managers to identify apprentices at risk of failing are not sharp enough to promote rapid intervention. For

example, apprentices who have submitted no, or very little, work in several months do not appear on the managers' risk register. Managers do not gather information about apprentices' attendance at training sessions, so they do not know if attendance is improving or deteriorating. Managers' improvement strategies do not always use current, accurate data to improve the progress of apprentices.

Staff recruit and match apprentices to employers and settings with integrity. Experienced and skilled staff identify apprentices' skills and interests accurately before they start a programme, and match them to employers' needs. Managers use their extensive contacts effectively to provide employers with the apprentices they need and, as a result, all apprentices stay in learning.

Leaders and managers have recently made improvements to their quality assurance of the apprenticeship programme and identify the necessary areas for improvement. They have made progress in critical areas such as developing apprentices' understanding of how to stay safe. The detailed quality improvement plan sets out clear actions for improvement. The internal quality assurance team accurately assesses the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and assessment sessions. However, actions taken have yet to achieve the intended impact on the progress of all apprentices.

Leaders and managers have taken decisive action to address staff's underperformance by providing additional training for assessors and restructuring the senior leadership team. This has created clear lines of accountability. Specialist managers and new assessors have a sharper focus on their apprentices' progress. For example, as a result of staff absence and replacement, many apprentices' reviews were delayed or cancelled but recent staffing changes have enabled more frequent reviews and the backlog is reducing.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Insufficient progress

Too many apprentices make slow progress. Just over half of all apprentices are behind target for achievement. A very small minority of apprentices have not been visited at work by an assessor within the last year.

A minority of business administration apprentices have either submitted very little or no work and therefore have had limited or no feedback from their assessors. Recruitment consultant apprentices have been on programme for five months and have had no feedback and no work marked due to staff absences and changes to assessors. Consequently, these apprentices have little understanding of whether they are making progress or if their work meets the required standards.

Apprentices do not always have a sufficiently clear understanding of the apprenticeship standards and what is required of them, and many are not able to describe their new knowledge and skills relating to their apprenticeship. This slows progress towards their apprenticeship completion.

Employers are not sufficiently involved in planning the apprentices' programme, and are therefore not able to plan the apprentices' workload to align with the apprenticeship standards. For example, in some cases employers are unfamiliar with their apprentices' training programmes or are not adequately involved in the review meetings with the tutor.

Tutors and assessors do not provide apprentices with good enough support to develop their English and mathematics skills. A significant minority of apprentices require support and for too many apprentices this is not yet in place. As a result, apprentices do not always systematically develop the essential mathematics and English skills they need to progress in their work roles.

The large majority of apprentices are placed with appropriate and supportive employers who enable them to develop their skills during on-the-job training that builds their confidence. For example, management apprentices develop their use of positive body language in meetings so that they can maintain good working relationships with staff. Apprentices speak highly of the support they receive from their employers and how this enables them to gain confidence, and increase competence, in carrying out their work roles.

Apprentices enjoy their work and increase their confidence by being involved in the schemes such as 'apprentice of the month'. An independent panel of judges provides positive feedback which helps apprentices nominated for the award to develop confidence and improve their work and communication.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and effective in ensuring that learners are safe. Learners are taught how to do risk assessments for different types of work to keep them safe. For example, apprentices who work in environments such as estate agencies know how to stay safe when working alone with clients.

Leaders have established a safeguarding focus group that meets regularly and ensures that staff are kept fully up-to-date with their responsibilities. Safeguarding policies and procedures, including those related to the 'Prevent' duty, are regularly reviewed. Staff understand what to do if they have any concerns about their apprentices relating to radicalisation or safeguarding. Staff benefit from extensive training and are well-informed about safeguarding, aspects of equality and diversity and the relevance of British values to their apprentices.

Leaders and managers ensure that their staff are suitable to work with apprentices. All staff have current and relevant Disclosure and Barring Service checks. The safeguarding manager has strong links with external safeguarding partners and uses them effectively to refer apprentices where necessary. As a result, apprentices say they feel safe.

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