

Prospects Training International 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.

Prospects Training International Limited (PTIL), which trades as Geason Training, was established in 2008. The company offers apprenticeships and adult training through subcontracting arrangements with several large colleges and training providers across England. PTIL received a contract to offer directly delivered apprenticeship programmes in 2017. In December 2018, PTIL was acquired by the Speedy Group of companies.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 1,017 apprentices. Of these, almost all were adults. Around one in five study the recently introduced apprenticeship standards, while the remaining apprentices study legacy apprenticeship frameworks. The large majority of apprentices study construction-related programmes with around one quarter studying business-focused apprenticeships in disciplines such as digital marketing, administration, business management, and information and communication technology (ICT).

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 do not ensure that the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship are met. They do not ensure that the curriculum is congruent with the needs and requirements of the employer and those of the apprentice. Too many apprentices receive a poor standard of training and have insufficient opportunity to take part in off-the-job training. Poor leadership has been a key contributor to the fact that apprentices do not develop substantial new knowledge and skills and have merely focused on accrediting existing competencies.

The senior management team has been too slow to implement effective strategies to ensure that apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They have only very recently recruited a new management team, which has implemented a range of new strategies to improve apprentices' experiences. These

improvements include an extensive induction programme, rigorous information, advice and guidance, and working closely with employers to develop curriculums to meet the needs of businesses and apprentices alike. However, these improvements have only had a positive impact on the experiences of a very small minority of apprentices who started their programmes from January 2019.

Leaders and managers do not have a sufficiently accurate oversight of the progress that apprentices make on their programme. They do not know how well apprentices progress in developing the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in their job. Consequently, they cannot swiftly intervene when apprentices make slow progress to help them catch up. This has resulted in only one in five apprentices completing their apprenticeship on time in the current year, which is too low.

Leaders have recruited appropriately experienced non-executive board members to a supervisory board to hold senior leaders to account. The board members have appropriate experience of apprenticeships and the work-based learning sector, both at a strategic and operational level.

While members of an appropriate supervisory board have been recruited, the information that they receive to hold leaders and managers to account is not sufficiently rigorous to improve, swiftly, the poor experience that the vast majority of apprentices receive. The reports they receive focus too much on achievement rates and completed assessments as a proxy for progress. Consequently, they are unaware that apprentices do not receive their entitlement to off-the-job training or that they fail to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful in their current jobs and future careers.

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

Trainers do not collect detailed, and in many cases, accurate, information about apprentices' existing knowledge, skills and experience at the start of their programme. This leads to trainers not having a clear understanding of what apprentices know and what they need to learn. Trainers merely accredit existing knowledge, skills and experience as opposed to ensuring that apprentices learn new ones, contrary to the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.

Planning of apprentices' training is poor. Trainers do not plan apprentices' learning to ensure that they develop the substantial skills they need in their workplace. Furthermore, they do not consistently set targets that challenge apprentices to achieve at the start, or throughout their programme. This means that apprentices do not develop substantial knowledge and skills or make the progress of which they are capable.

Trainers do not ensure that the needs and requirements of employers are considered when planning apprentices' learning. Too many employers are not involved in the planning of the apprentices' learning programme, which in extreme cases leads to apprentices studying programmes that are inappropriate for their job role. This has a significant impact on apprentices' social mobility, as they cannot complete their apprenticeship or subsequently improve their earning potential.

Most apprentices do not benefit from appropriately planned or enough high-quality off-the-job training. This lack of training has a demonstrable impact on the progress they make on their programme, and the knowledge, skills and experiences that they acquire. A few apprentices rightly feel aggrieved at the need to study in their own time, which should be completed within their working week.

Progress reviews are ineffective. Trainers do not give apprentices accurate information on how well they are progressing on their programme or helpful feedback on how to improve their work. This results in apprentices not being clear about what aspects of their work are of a good standard, what they need to do to improve their work, and how well they are progressing.

Managers and trainers rightly recognise that the initial advice and guidance for most apprentices prior to January 2019 were poor. As a result, a significant majority of apprentices left their programme early and failed to achieve their apprenticeship. Recently, managers have implemented more rigorous checks before apprentices start the programme to ensure that they are placed on the right level and that employers are fully committed to supporting their apprentices. This has resulted in an improved experience for most starters from January 2019, which accounts for a very small minority of all apprentices. Far fewer of these apprentices leave their programmes early.

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

Leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding apprentices. They have developed a comprehensive range of policies, procedures and guidance documents that ensure that members of staff are clear on what they should do if they have any safeguarding-related concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputy DSL have received appropriate training to ensure that they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to execute their roles. All members of staff receive periodical update training on safeguarding, which assists them in supporting apprentices and ensures that if a referral needs to be made, they follow the correct processes and procedures.

Leaders and managers complete appropriate checks on new and existing staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Apprentices feel safe and are safe.

Most apprentices have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding and know whom to contact should they have any concerns. However, apprentices' understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism is less well developed.

Leaders have nurtured effective relationships with external agencies, particularly around the East Midlands region. They use these links to gain information on a national scale about the risks in localities where apprentices are situated, particularly in relation to the dangers in relation to radicalisation and extremism. Leaders use this information to inform training for apprentices and to inform their internal risk assessments.

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