

DiVA Apprenticeships Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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.

DiVA has offered apprenticeships as a subcontractor since 2011. In May 2017, it contracted to offer apprenticeships funded by the levy in business administration at levels 3 and 4, junior content production at level 3 and digital marketing at level 3. Since then, it has recruited 36 apprentices. Almost all apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships. In addition to its managers, DiVA employs development mentors to coach apprentices at work and tutors to provide off-the-job training. At the time of the inspection, 12 apprentices were in learning.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Managers have a clear strategy aimed at recruiting apprentices who might not otherwise have the opportunity to work in creative industries. Apprentices are all new to their positions and the work they are doing. They value the opportunity to gain a foothold in their chosen sectors.

Managers have established beneficial links with well-known and prestigious employers in music and broadcasting who are keen to develop their apprentices. Managers communicate with these employers effectively. Employers know what their apprentices need to learn and give them useful projects to develop their skills and gather evidence for their assessment. These include, for example, using specialist software or implementing new calculation logics and processes. Apprentices and employers are well prepared for end-point assessments and understand what they entail.

Apprentices' progression to employment is good. Of the 13 apprentices who have completed their apprenticeships since May 2017, 12 have gained employment in creative industries.

Managers make good use of recruitment days to motivate candidates for apprenticeships, improve their understanding of job opportunities in creative industries and develop their skills for employment. Employers value their involvement in the process and the way it helps them recruit candidates for their apprenticeship vacancies.

Managers have suitable arrangements for providing training and qualifications in functional skills for the few apprentices who need them. Employers and tutors pay good attention to the development of apprentices' English and mathematics. For example, they learn how to send appropriate email communications to clients or make good use of technical vocabulary.

Managers monitor learners' progress frequently and carefully. They identify quickly apprentices at risk of falling behind. Managers arrange suitable support, such as additional visits by a development mentor or additional time for study to help keep apprentices on track.

Since May 2017, 11 apprentices have left their apprenticeships before their completion. The majority of these withdrawals were because apprentices relocated or became ill. Managers correctly identify this weakness in retaining apprentices in their self-assessment, and plan to improve the assessment of candidates at the start of their programme.

Managers hold useful events to give apprentices information on careers or self-employment, or to enable them to network with employers. However, managers do not provide sufficient information and advice on further or higher education for apprentices who wish to progress to higher-level qualifications.

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

Employers are particularly effective in developing apprentices' skills at work. They give apprentices effective support to carry out the projects and activities they set. Apprentices quickly learn how to carry out research and analyse information for reports or develop specialist skills in, for example, editing broadcast media for publication online. They learn how to pay careful attention to detail in order to identify problems in data, or to prioritise tasks to achieve intended work outcomes. As a result, apprentices have increasing responsibility for projects of their own, for example running distribution lists or providing data for new clients.

Managers carefully plan off-the-job training so that apprenticeship projects build on one another and develop in complexity. For example, in the junior content production apprenticeship, apprentices begin by making personal video reports and progress to making promotional videos for business activities such as pop-up

recycling shops. Managers review the curriculum and its delivery at bi-monthly curriculum review meetings.

At the start of the programme, managers assess apprentices' vocational knowledge and their English and mathematics skills. They use this information well to prepare detailed individual learning plans that include deadlines for completion of learning objectives such as the use of specialist software. During their monthly reviews with apprentices, development mentors monitor apprentices' progress in achieving these objectives. Apprentices describe clearly the progress they are making; they are well prepared for assessment and the grade they are working towards.

Apprentices keep careful records of the time they spend in training off the job, with clear information on what they have done during this time. Managers monitor this closely and if apprentices do not receive, or make use of their entitlement, managers follow this up swiftly with apprentices' employers.

Apprentices produce a good standard of written work in their assignments and portfolios of evidence. Their reports are detailed and make good use of English and the projects they are doing to support their assessment. For example, an apprentice had incorporated British values into her writing and made good use of the impact of Brexit on music legislation. Development mentors' feedback on assessment gives useful information on how work can be improved.

Managers have sound arrangements for gathering feedback from apprentices and are responsive to their suggestions for improvement. Managers routinely observe workshops to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Their reports are detailed and evaluative. The activities that tutors provide in off-the-job workshops in business administration are not well matched to apprentices' job roles. Although tutors are technically well qualified, the activities they set are often too generic. A small number of apprentices have used coursework to fill gaps in learning that their workshops or job roles do not provide. In other instances, apprentices have struggled to fulfil learning requirements at work or have wasted time in workshops by repeating learning provided by their employer. Managers have identified these shortcomings and recently implemented an action plan to bring about improvements.

Apprentices' attendance at and punctuality to sessions are poor in business administration. Apprentices in business administration say that their workshops are not motivating and that the lateness of some apprentices and the noise at the centre are distracting.

Development mentors review apprentices' progress in achieving the learning objectives set for them in their individual learning plans. However, it is not easy for managers to find the records of this progress against individual targets to ensure that they are completed.

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

Employers pay careful attention to the development of apprentices' knowledge and understanding of health and safety. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe at work. They remember the training they have had on safeguarding and talk about this authoritatively.

Managers have sound processes for recruiting staff who are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults. They keep clear records of the checks they make on this suitability. Two senior managers are trained and designated as safeguarding leads. They ensure that staff receive regular training and updates on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Managers and tutors cover British values and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism during apprentices' induction. Apprentices recall the training but are not able to describe these concepts in sufficient detail. They cannot explain their relevance to work or their personal lives. Employers are not aware of the place of safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty or British values in the apprenticeship programme.

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