

Hybrid Technical Services 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.

Hybrid Technical Services Limited (HTSL) was awarded a direct contract to provide apprenticeships in March 2017 and started training apprentices using levy funding in November 2017. HTSL currently provides training for 39 apprentices, most of whom study on standards-based programmes and the remainder on frameworks. There are 28 apprentices following the level 3 standard in gas engineering and three following the floorlayer standard at level 2. Eight apprentices follow a level 2 framework in floor covering. HTSL does not currently subcontract any provision to other training providers.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have formulated a clear strategy to provide training for levy-funded apprentices for floor coverings at level 2 and gas engineering at level 3. Staff have extensive specialist expertise in these vocational areas and use their expertise well to promote learning. Managers and staff work closely with employers to ensure that programmes meet the needs of employers and the requirements of apprenticeships.

Leaders and managers have established highly effective links with employers and with manufacturers. Employers are involved closely in facilitating effective training for their apprentices with the provider, and in the workplace. Employers meet frequently with their apprentices and with HTSL assessors. This helps to keep apprentices engaged and motivated to achieve their qualifications.

Employers benefit from the close relationships and good communication with HTSL. These effective working relationships have a positive impact on the good progress that apprentices make. For example, one employer wanted a gas engineering apprentice to practise on a specific piece of industrial equipment that was not part of the requirements of the framework. Managers were able to accommodate this request.

Leaders and managers maintain useful links with sector manufacturers and employers. This enables them to provide a broad range of guest speakers who share

their specialist knowledge to increase the sector-specific knowledge and understanding of apprentices. As a result, most apprentices benefit from additional training outside the requirements of their apprenticeship programmes. This includes specific training for working at height, asbestos awareness and e-learning courses for those working with housing associations and local authorities.

Apprentices, across all programmes, develop substantial new knowledge, skills and understanding throughout their programmes. Trainer/assessors prepare apprentices well for their end-point assessment. To date, no apprentices have come to the end of the planned time on their programmes, so have not yet progressed to their end-point assessment.

Recruitment of apprentices is rigorous. Leaders and managers ensure that potential apprentices and employers fully understand the requirements of the apprenticeship programme, including apprentices' entitlement to off-the-job training. Managers only work with employers who are committed to providing apprentices with their full entitlement to off-the-job training.

Managers carry out observations of staff delivering training sessions as well as apprentices' progress reviews. Detailed observation reports correctly identify the strengths and areas for improvement in observed sessions. However, too often, the outcomes from the observations of trainer/assessors' performance are not followed up with action plans to drive improvement in performance. Where actions have been identified, they have not been monitored to measure improvement in teaching practices.

Leaders and managers do not have enough oversight of apprentices' progress. Although information is held by trainer/assessors on the progress of individual apprentices, no overview is provided for managers on the performance of all apprentices. As a result, managers are unaware of the proportion of apprentices who are making appropriate progress and how many are falling behind. Hence, managers cannot plan interventions with trainer/assessors to provide additional support for those apprentices who need to catch up.

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

Planning of the apprenticeship curriculum is effective. Prior to enrolment, assessors discuss with employers and with prospective apprentices how the programme will help them develop the skills they need and what they hope to achieve on completion of the programme. Block release programmes are well structured and designed to meet employers' needs, building gradually on apprentices' increasing knowledge. Managers arrange additional industrial short courses to complement apprentices' learning programmes and provide apprentices with further knowledge and qualifications beyond those required for their qualification.

Trainer/assessors are well qualified and experienced in their specialist sectors. Trainer/assessors benefit from regular update training from industry experts to ensure that their product knowledge and industrial practice are up to date. Staff are

strictly regulated within the gas industry, so they are supported to update their own certification in key aspects of safety and compliance.

Apprentices benefit from working in well-equipped training workshops that reflect current as well as older equipment. This helps gas engineering apprentices to develop the skills that they need for installing and commissioning new equipment and in finding faults and repairing older equipment.

Apprentices develop good knowledge, skills and behaviours that they require in the workplace, actively contributing to their employers' businesses. This includes installing new boilers and commissioning central heating systems. In floor covering workshops, apprentices practise setting out herringbone floor patterns and designs, forming corners and scribing around domestic/commercial features, which is over and above the standard required for the apprenticeship. They fit sheet vinyl floor coverings using state-of-the-art equipment such as floor welders and filleted corner systems. Apprentices take pride in their work.

The off-the-job training is well planned through attendance at the training centre on block release programmes. However, managers and staff do not accurately monitor the off-the-job training being carried out in the workplace and its impact on developing learners' skills and knowledge. Poor attendance at the training centre by a minority of apprentices is not sufficiently followed up by managers.

Apprentices develop their vocational mathematical skills well. For example, gas engineering apprentices learn about air-flow rates and combustion formulas to test the effectiveness of chimneys and exhaust systems. They calculate volumes, and the requirements for different capacity ventilation chimneys, and adapt their findings based on the type of premises. Floorlayer apprentices develop a strong understanding of calculating and ordering quantities of vinyl coverings, including the percentage of waste for jobs of all sizes. Apprentices bisect angles and learn to set out ellipses, arches and arcs using trammels, as well as constructing tangents.

Managers rightly recognise that the development of apprentices' English skills requires improvement. In too many instances, trainer/assessors do not develop apprentices' English skills well enough for those apprentices who are not required to complete functional skills qualifications.

Trainer/assessors do not provide sufficient detailed and helpful feedback that supports apprentices to improve their work. For example, unit end tests or written evidence sheets state 'complete', 'well done' rather than what specifically could be done to improve. Trainer/assessors do not plan learning based on individual needs. Apprentices' existing knowledge and experience within their sector are not routinely considered in the planning of learning and assessment. In theory sessions, too often, all apprentices progress at the same pace. Planning does not take account of what apprentices already know and what they need to learn.

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

Safeguarding policies and protocols are current and are updated regularly. The appointed designated safeguarding lead (DSL) holds suitable qualifications and undertakes appropriate training with the local authority safeguarding board. The DSL has established very close links with the local safeguarding board. Although there have been no safeguarding referrals to date, appropriate processes are in place for the reporting of safeguarding issues and concerns. Staff have a good understanding of the referral process.

All staff receive safeguarding training to level 2. Apprentices, as part of their induction and during their programme, receive in-depth training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. As a result, staff and apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding and the threats of radicalisation and extremism, including the potential local risk factors within their region. For example, apprentices discuss issues such as knife crime, 'county lines' criminality and the direct impact that these have in their own lives. Apprentices discuss the potential issues associated with online safety and which content is appropriate to share online.

The DSL has very recently completed safer recruitment training and ensures that leaders and managers follow safer recruitment processes when employing staff. They check thoroughly the suitability of prospective staff to work with apprentices. They ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to make sure that guest speakers pose no risk to apprentices. All staff complete enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

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