

# PBC Associates Limited

Monitoring visit report

---

**Unique reference number:** 58536

**Name of lead inspector:** Elaine Smith, Ofsted Inspector

**Inspection dates:** 15–16 May 2019

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** 13 Heath Road  
Congleton  
Cheshire  
CW12 4LF



## 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.

PBC Associates Limited (PBC Associates) was established in 1994. It received a contract to deliver apprenticeships directly in October 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were four apprentices on programme. Three apprentices are on framework qualifications in level 2 customer sales, level 2 sales and telesales and level 3 business administration. PBC Associates has one apprentice on a level 2 customer service practitioner standard. Two apprentices achieved their level 3 framework qualifications, in January 2019, in sales and telesales and customer service respectively. PBC Associates works with two employers to deliver apprenticeship programmes.

### Themes

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

#### **Reasonable progress**

The directors of PBC Associates have extensive knowledge, skills and expertise in learning and development. They use these well to provide high-quality apprenticeships to the small number of apprentices and employers with whom they work. The two directors plan, deliver and assess the apprenticeship programmes. They have a detailed understanding of the apprenticeship frameworks. They use their understanding to ensure that apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Directors rightly acknowledge that they need to increase their understanding of standards-based apprenticeships.

Directors have established highly effective partnerships with employers and are right to be proud of their reputation and long-standing relationships. They work collaboratively and carefully with employers to plan and design personalised apprenticeship programmes, that support each apprentice's job role. Directors cooperate effectively with managers from each apprentice's employer to make training current and relevant, and to provide job-specific expertise. As a result, apprentices make good progress and perform confidently in their job roles.

Directors' approach to recruitment and induction is comprehensive and they carry it out with integrity. Employers value their own role and involvement in the recruitment and induction of apprentices. Apprentices and their line managers agree objectives and training needs which they match carefully to an apprenticeship framework or standard. They individualise programmes to meet the agreed outcomes formulated during purposeful induction. Consequently, apprentices remain on their programmes and complete them.

Directors ensure that they follow the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Directors and employers have a good understanding of each apprentice's off-the-job requirements. They carefully plan off-the-job activities to meet individual apprentice's needs. Directors monitor these monthly, and review and respond to variances quickly. As a result, apprentices benefit from purposeful training to support the knowledge and skills they are developing in their workplaces.

Directors are rightly reviewing the future strategy for the business. They are clear about their areas of expertise, vision and values. Directors understand that the current cohort of four apprentices is not a sustainable model. They are in the process of considering what revisions to the structure and business model they need to make, if they decide to increase apprenticeship provision. It is too soon to make a judgement on the impact of the review.

Directors support the small numbers of apprentices well, through almost daily communication and frequent contact with them. Directors have clear operational oversight of apprentices' development and apprentices are making good progress. However, they are not helping the one apprentice on a standards-based apprenticeship programme sufficiently to plan and prepare for end-point assessment and to achieve high grades.

Directors have self-assessment processes in place. They acknowledge that these are not yet rigorous enough. The current self-assessment report is too descriptive, and does not focus sufficiently on teaching, learning and assessment.

Governance arrangements are informal, and directors recognise that external oversight is not yet sufficiently developed to provide the senior team with support, challenge and scrutiny. Directors benefit well from the support of the prime providers with whom they subcontract.

**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**

Apprentices receive a highly effective induction that prepares them well for their apprenticeship programmes. Directors use assessments of initial starting points and skills tests to identify what apprentices know and can do. They use this information well to place them on the correct level of apprenticeship. Apprentices receive

frequent and valuable support from directors and employers and, as a result, they enjoy and are proud of their apprenticeship programmes. Apprentices benefit from the opportunity to achieve additional qualifications such as higher-level units at levels 3 and 4 and functional information communication technology qualifications. As a result, apprentices' learning programmes match their job roles and career aspirations well. They develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Apprentices benefit from an individualised curriculum that provides appropriate challenge. Directors design and sequence the curriculum to meet employers' needs. Directors plan and monitor the extent to which they deliver and maintain apprentices' off-the-job entitlement well. Consequently, directors develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours, and apprentices make good progress.

Directors and employers develop apprentices' understanding of the behaviours they need in a work setting. Apprentices recognise their employers' values and expectations when they manage customers. They demonstrate high levels of communication skills and appropriate behaviours. For example, they adapt communication styles and tone of voice effectively. They learn how to manage challenging situations effectively. Consequently, apprentices are more confident and professional in their job, and customer satisfaction is high.

Apprentices make invaluable contributions to their workplaces. For example, they chair employee forums, implement employee reward schemes and work with colleagues to deliver effective staff training. Apprentices are self-assured and so deal incisively and efficiently with a diverse range of customers' needs. As a result, one employer has achieved a much greater decrease in customer complaints than expected.

Directors ensure that apprentices who need to study English and mathematics, to achieve the minimum requirements of the programme, do so. However, directors do not always use the information from the assessment of apprentices' prior knowledge to plan for the development of English and mathematical skills. They do not encourage apprentices sufficiently to extend and practise these skills.

Apprentices benefit from regular and responsive contact with their director and line managers, through frequent and effective progress reviews and assessments. Directors intervene swiftly when necessary, and provide additional support. Apprentices receive extra tuition to help them catch up if they miss a session. Staff monitor progress and achievement thoroughly throughout apprentices' programmes. As a result, apprentices are on target to achieve their apprenticeships by their expected completion dates.

Apprentices' work is of a high standard, at the appropriate level and is well presented. Apprentices take pride in their portfolios. Feedback to apprentices is developmental and constructive. It shows clearly what apprentices have done well, and how they can improve. Apprentices receive encouragement to reflect on their practice and know what they need to do to make progress. Consequently,

apprentices can apply the knowledge, skills and behaviours they have acquired into their job roles.

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

Apprentices feel safe and are safe. Apprentices know to whom they should report safeguarding concerns. They are confident that directors will deal with their concerns sympathetically and swiftly. Apprentices understand the 'Prevent' duty and how to keep themselves safe from extremism and radicalisation.

Directors develop apprentices' understanding of British values and safeguarding well through induction, reviews and training sessions. Apprentices value the opportunity to discuss and debate topical and sensitive topics, such as recent high-profile bullying cases. As a result, apprentices develop a deeper understanding of issues and a greater awareness of risks.

Directors are right to acknowledge that their safeguarding policy and procedures lack detail; however, directors oversee effective safeguarding processes to ensure apprentices safety. One of the directors is the designated safeguarding lead and has received appropriate training. Directors attend safeguarding update training annually. They use this knowledge to keep apprentices safe. The two directors have received appropriate recruitment checks.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Learner View**

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to [www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Employer View**

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to [www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2019