

AWC Training Ltd

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.

AWC Training Ltd (AWC) is a small independent learning provider based in St Austell, Cornwall. It started to deliver levy-funded apprenticeships in September 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, 10 apprentices were on a standards-based retail management programme at level 2 and four were on a standards-based hospitality programme also at level 2. All the apprentices are full-time employees of a large retail company with retail outlets in south west England.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

AWC's leaders combine their extensive experience of delivering apprenticeships with a very good working knowledge of the retail and hospitality sectors to successfully deliver and develop the standards-based programmes they offer. They have good access to continued professional development and have good links with other organisations that keep them up to date with current practice. Senior leaders use their expertise very effectively.

Leaders use their good awareness of the challenges businesses in the region face to ensure that their programmes fit the area's plans for workforce development. Over the past year, AWC's leaders have become much more closely involved in determining which type and level of programme apprentices should follow. Therefore, they very effectively meet the workforce training and development needs of the single large employer with whom they work. Apprentices stay on their programmes and make good progress.

AWC's leaders and the employer's staff work closely together to plan and deliver the programmes. This ensures that apprentices have very good opportunities for on-the-job and off-the-job learning which meet the requirements of their apprenticeship programme. Apprentices receive effective information, advice and guidance from their employer and AWC's assessors to plan their career paths.

AWC's leaders' very clear vision and mission focus very strongly on helping each apprentice to overcome any personal barriers to learning and achievement. Their caring and supportive ethos is at the centre of the provision. Apprentices value and benefit from the individualised approach and practical support they receive. Improvements to paperwork and guidance make it easier for apprentices to understand and make progress through their programme. However, leaders do not have sufficiently detailed data which will allow them to monitor apprentices' progress in sufficient depth.

Leaders' formal evaluation of the quality of the provision is not rigorous enough. They do not identify its strengths or weaknesses that ensure action planning for improvement is systematic and effective. They lack effective external challenge through governance arrangements. Leaders are considering ways of providing appropriate, proportionate and objective oversight.

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 are highly motivated by their training and recognise how completing it will advance their careers through progression routes into more senior roles and management.

Assessors tailor their intensive, individualised training and guidance by considering each apprentice's personal and professional needs. Apprentices receive very good learning support that helps them to overcome any concerns, such as understanding the meaning of written questions. Almost all apprentices are making at least the progress expected compared to their starting points and stage on the programme. They develop new sector-specific knowledge, skills and behaviours to become more confident in their job roles. For example, hospitality apprentices pay careful attention to the presentation of food and drinks. Retail apprentices create attractive shop displays and all apprentices have a better understanding of the importance of recycling and reducing waste.

The standard of apprentices' written work is above that typically seen. Assessors encourage apprentices to research thoroughly. Consequently, the great majority produce detailed work which includes much original and perceptive observation and analysis. Assessors monitor apprentices' progress carefully and intervene promptly when they require support.

Almost all apprentices who stay on their programme achieve functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. However, in 2017/18, too few apprentices achieved their qualification because the level of programme was too high for them. Leaders and the employer revised their approach to selection and allocation to programmes. Almost all current apprentices are still on their programme and making good progress.

Assessors identify apprentices' starting points in functional skills English and mathematics routinely. They make good use of them to determine who needs to improve their knowledge and skills in these subjects. However, this assessment does not explore in depth how well apprentices can express themselves in writing. A minority of apprentice struggle with this aspect as a result.

Some monitoring lacks impact. For example, leaders' observations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment do not focus enough on the impact of teaching on learning. Assessors' written records of reviews do not provide apprentices with sufficiently challenging or clear targets, or specific timescales in which to complete them.

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

Leaders ensure that the safeguarding of all apprentices has a high priority. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and have a good understanding of their responsibilities. They use their knowledge to check carefully that apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding and know how to keep themselves safe.

Apprentices receive appropriate safeguarding training. They feel safe at work. They know who they can report any concerns to and feel confident that staff will listen to them. Leaders use appropriate systems and procedures for complaints and appeals should the need arise.

Assessors check apprentices' understanding of aspects such as discrimination, safe use of the internet and equality of opportunity regularly. They integrate discussions about safeguarding, fundamental British values and the 'Prevent' duty successfully in apprentices' training. As a result, most apprentices can recall the key messages about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Employer's staff are confident about asking AWC's managers for advice and guidance about safeguarding concerns in the workplace.

Leaders record and investigate safeguarding incidents thoroughly and know what procedures to follow in relation to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Managers are well aware of the local authority and police referral systems so that they know who to report to should the need arise.

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