

Fashion-Enter Ltd

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 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.

Fashion-Enter Ltd (FEL) is an independent learning provider established in 2006 that specialises in training technical skills for the fashion sector. FEL gained a contract to provide levy-funded apprenticeships and started training in September 2017. The company operates from large commercial premises in north London. It also provides apprenticeships and adult learning through subcontracting arrangements with local colleges. At the time of the inspectors' visit, seven apprentices had successfully completed their programme and a further 16 are currently in training. Most are following the level 3 framework in fashion and textiles with a few on the level 5 bespoke tailor and cutter standard. All the current apprentices are over the age of 18 years.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have developed a well-structured apprenticeship for the fashion industry. The chief executive officer uses her extensive experience in the sector to work with leading fashion firms and design bespoke programmes that meet the technical and traditional skills they need. This has provided apprentices with a range of levels and pathways into different roles within fashion design and production. FEL is set within a busy garment production factory and this provides an inspiring training environment where apprentices gain hands-on experience and exposure to all aspects of the design to production cycle.

Programmes fully meet the requirements set down by the funding body. Apprentices are appropriately employed in relevant job roles with levy-paying fashion and retail employers. They receive the full entitlement to off-the-job training through attending a weekly training day at FEL and extensive coaching in their workplace.

Leaders and managers work very well with employers to create and fill apprenticeship vacancies. They accurately assess apprentices' prior skills and knowledge, including in English and mathematics, and adjust the length of programme to allow for their prior experience. Apprentices who are required to take qualifications in English and mathematics are supported well by the specialist tutor through taught sessions and online resources and most pass at the first attempt.

Quality assurance arrangements are effective. Managers and tutors meet weekly to review apprentices' progress and plan actions to help those who are at risk of falling behind. Of the seven apprentices that have successfully completed to date, all have done so within planned timescales. Those currently on programme are all making good progress. Appropriate performance management processes are in place.

Employers invest in their apprentices and benefit greatly from the value that the apprenticeship programme brings. They create a clear career structure for apprentices, several of whom have been promoted while undertaking their apprenticeship. All apprentices are offered permanent contracts upon completion. Tutors and technicians are practising industry professionals and use their sector knowledge to provide apprentices with good advice and guidance about their next steps. Apprentices are made aware of how each element of the apprenticeship relates to the skills and knowledge required for specific roles.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Significant progress

Apprentices make significant progress in developing traditional and technical tailoring skills. They competently undertake technically demanding tasks such as covering hooks and eyes with matching thread and understand how to work with fabric grain to avoid twists in trouser legs. Apprentices are proud of their work, they practise in their own time to improve and perfect their sewing and tailoring skills. They produce work of a high standard.

Employers contribute significantly to the skills, behaviours and attitudes which apprentices gain while undertaking their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices working within the alterations department of a prestigious department store learn from a culture that 'everything is possible' when dealing with demanding clients. Apprentices regularly apply mathematical skills during on-the-job training where they use measurements, calculation, ratios and time management to analyse job requirements and estimate likely production costs.

Tutors make theory lessons highly relevant to apprentices' workplace. They relate the different working practices across employers to quality standards that affect production and contracts within the garment making and fashion industry. Apprentices learn and apply ethical and environmental awareness in their workplace. They explore standards around working conditions and sustainably sourced fabrics and research topical factors such as waste management and carbon emissions.

Apprentices benefit from access to a wide range of high specification equipment that is used within FEL's production unit. As a result, apprentices develop technical knowledge beyond that which is offered in their workplace and have a well-rounded understanding of technical equipment used within the industry. Apprentices develop their skills further through commercial training courses such as computer-aided design and manufacturing software and a range of masterclasses delivered by leading heads of industry from the fashion world.

Tutors provide good support for apprentices that helps them to progress. They carry out both the workplace assessments and off-the-job training, and this ensures very effective liaison with employers. The few apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships are well prepared for the requirements of end-point assessment.

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

Arrangements to safeguard apprentices are effective. Leaders and managers place high importance on the mental well-being and safety of learners and build a culture of trust that encourages openness. They have put in place appropriate procedures to record and act on incidents, including a comprehensive safeguarding policy and the 'Prevent' duty strategy that is reviewed annually. A national helpline that is open permanently is promoted to apprentices.

All staff undergo suitable pre-employment checks and complete mandatory training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. The designated lead has a level 4 qualification in safeguarding. Staff are vigilant to identify potential issues and apprentices know to whom they should report any concerns they may have. To date, no formal incidents have been reported.

Apprentices feel safe at work. Apprentices have basic awareness of how to protect themselves from radicalisation and extremism and have received guidance on how to identify people at risk of radicalisation. They receive useful guidance on a range of safeguarding topics from their tutors. All apprentices receive a comprehensive health and safety induction at the start of their programme.

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