

Apprenticeship Learning Solutions Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Roger Pilgrim, Ofsted Inspector

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Address: Ocean Park House,
East Tyndall Street,
Cardiff
CF24 5ET



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.

Apprenticeship Learning Solutions Ltd (ALS) is an independent learning provider of apprenticeships. It works mainly with apprentices in Wales, who are not in scope for this monitoring visit, but has a small contract for levy-funded apprentices in England. The 13 apprentices in England are undertaking the team leader apprenticeship standard at level 3. All apprentices on this programme are employed by the same national motorcar dealership and are located across England.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear vision to provide high-quality apprenticeships. Leaders use their considerable experience of providing such programmes in Wales successfully to plan and implement this new programme. They ensure that it fully meets the requirements of an apprenticeship in England. They also make sure that the apprenticeship meets the standards of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

Leaders work effectively with the employer to ensure that the training they offer meets the employer's and apprentices' needs. They focus on providing a programme to develop the people management skills of the employer's middle managers. Leaders plan the programme carefully so that the team leadership skills being developed align with the management principles of the company. Consequently, the board of the motorcar dealership are fully committed to the programme and plan for the significant amount of time managers need to spend learning off-the-job.

Leaders and managers ensure that appropriate arrangements for the end-point assessment are in place and are communicated to staff, apprentices and the employer.

Leaders, in collaboration with the employer, take care to ensure that the staff selected to undertake the apprenticeship are suitable for the programme.

Consequently, most apprentices have realistic expectations of the commitment required for successful completion.

Leaders and managers have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship programme. They monitor the quality of off-the-job training closely and adjust plans in response to their findings. For example, they recognise that the first unit covered in the CMI course is very theoretical. This was very challenging for apprentices, many of whom have been out of education for a considerable time. For the next cohort they will begin with a more practical unit.

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 make good progress in improving their knowledge, skills and understanding in managing teams. Apprentices improve their communication skills and become more confident in motivating their teams. They now run team meetings more efficiently than before they started the course. Apprentices have recently been applying Belbin's theories on situational leadership in their management role. The employer recognises the positive impact that this has had in a short time in the performance of their teams.

Managers accurately assess apprentices' prior attainment, knowledge and skills before they start their programme. This ensures that managers identify and meet any additional learning needs apprentices may have.

Leaders and managers coordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively. Off-the-job training is well-planned and is of a high standard. This training ensures that apprentices develop the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours they need. Apprentices value this programme highly, which is structured carefully.

Apprentices benefit from good quality online training resources and a very experienced skills coach. The skills coach provides high-quality support for apprentices. The training includes exercises that develop apprentices' mathematics and communication skills. For example, apprentices process data on trends on leads for car sales and are required to present the findings from their research to their peers.

Leaders and managers monitor apprentices' progress well. Apprentices have a clear understanding of the standard of their work and what they need to do to develop it further. The skills coach ensures that the employer is well informed about the progress apprentices are making.

A few apprentices are making slower than expected progress. When this happens, the employer is informed and appropriate interventions are arranged. For example, if

apprentices are slow to submit an assignment, the employer ensures that apprentices plan more time off-the-job. As a result, apprentices are able to catch up.

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

Leaders and managers place a high priority on safeguarding arrangements. A senior manager at ALS holds the role of designated safeguarding lead. This manager is qualified and very experienced in safeguarding. The manager also plays a prominent role at a national level in safeguarding in Wales and sits on key safeguarding boards. This experience is used well to ensure that staff are kept up to-date with developments in safeguarding.

Managers ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. They have a good understanding of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Staff update training on safeguarding frequently.

Apprentices are safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Knowledge of safeguarding is covered thoroughly during their induction and reinforced through reviews. However, apprentices' ability to describe the risks and dangers of radicalisation is not consistently good. This is because not all apprentices see the relevance of these risks to their role at work.

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