

Quest Training South East Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Charles Searle, Her Majesty's Inspector

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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.

Quest Training South East Limited (Quest) had eight years' experience of delivering apprenticeships as a subcontractor before it received its own directly funded contract. At the time of the monitoring visit, Quest had 237 apprentices on framework programmes and 58 on standards-based programmes. Most apprentices on frameworks were on a children and young people workforce programme at levels 2 or 3. The apprentices on standards-based programmes were evenly split between those on the level 2 adult care worker and the level 3 lead adult care worker standards.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have developed a curriculum that meets effectively the needs of employers to upgrade the skills of their existing employees and train new staff entering the childcare and adult social care sectors. They have implemented a measured strategy to roll out new standards-based apprenticeships to small and medium-sized enterprises in Kent and other parts of the south east of England.

Leaders and managers ensure that programmes meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Apprentices are recruited into or are already employed in substantive posts. They develop new skills and knowledge while on programmes and receive their entitlement to good-quality off-the-job training.

The managing director has effectively tackled a decline in the quality of the provision in 2017/18 through a restructure of middle management positions in the company. This enables managers to identify and tackle staff underperformance more quickly. As a result, the quality of teaching and assessment practice has improved.

New governance arrangements are in place to provide external support and challenge to company directors. It is too early to see the impact of these new arrangements.

Leaders and managers do not have sufficient oversight over the progress that apprentices make on programmes. Although tutors have a good understanding of the progress that each apprentice makes, they do not have a reliable means of reporting this to managers. As a result, managers do not always intervene quickly enough to support the small minority of apprentices making slower than expected progress.

Leaders and managers rely too heavily on quality assurance arrangements that are not evaluative enough and do not focus sufficiently on the impact that teaching and assessment has on how much apprentices learn. As a result, leaders and managers do not identify some key areas for further improvement, such as the quality of written feedback or target-setting at reviews.

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

Managers and tutors have recently improved the way that they assess the starting points of apprentices entering programmes. Tutors work closely with employers to identify what skills and knowledge they want their apprentices to develop. When apprentices are on programmes, tutors continue to engage the great majority of employers well in progress reviews. As a result, employers provide apprentices with useful opportunities to apply at work what they learn through their off-the-job training.

Apprentices develop new skills and knowledge. In childcare, apprentices learn about the different theories of childhood development. This enables them to design play activities that are appropriate to children of different ages. In care homes, apprentices can apply their newly gained understanding of person-centred care to the ways they support residents.

Tutors support apprentices well with the development of their English, mathematics and digital skills. Apprentices improve their ability to communicate clearly with their colleagues at work and know how to calculate the correct dosages of medicines they dispense. First-time pass rates for apprentices taking functional skills tests are high.

Managers and tutors prepare apprentices effectively for their end-point assessments for the new standards-based programmes. They monitor apprentices' progress against clear milestones and have designed useful resources to enable apprentices to practise for their final assessments.

Tutors do not always provide helpful written feedback that enables apprentices to know what it is they need to improve. Too much feedback is overly complimentary and does not identify how apprentices could do better. Targets in a few reviews are not specific enough and do not have timescales for completion. As a result, a small minority of apprentices do not make the progress expected.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. As a result, apprentices feel and stay safe.

An experienced and well-qualified designated safeguarding lead officer ensures that all safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and communicated to staff and apprentices. Managers are trained in safe recruitment practices and all eligible staff have current Disclosure and Barring Service checks. All staff undertake mandatory training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. This is annually updated to include new developments, such as the risks posed by 'county lines' to vulnerable young people in rural areas.

Leaders and managers monitor safeguarding concerns at all their meetings. They constantly review and update the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan. Tutors use reviews effectively to discuss fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance, and relate these skilfully to apprentices' workplaces. They ensure that apprentices understand the risks involved in the use of social media, and how it can have a negative impact on future employment prospects.

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