

XTOL Development Services Limited

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.

XTOL Development Services (XTOL) is a private training provider specialising in the delivery of business administration and customer service qualifications. In 2017, XTOL secured a direct contract for the delivery of apprenticeships and adult learning programmes. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 47 apprentices. Over three quarters of apprentices study business administration or customer service at levels 2 and 3. In 2018/19, 439 adults enrolled on short employment-related courses such as customer service and contact centre operations. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 23 enrolments on adult learning programmes.

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 effective partnerships with local employers and Jobcentre Plus. They use these links well to design programmes that meet local employment and job market needs. Employers benefit from the training provided by XTOL as apprentices make a valuable contribution to their workplaces.

Leaders have sufficient oversight of apprentices' progress. They meet with tutors to review the performance of individual apprentices frequently. Leaders check that apprentices receive the off-the-job training they are entitled to and monitor apprentices' progress towards completing the activities in their training plan. They identify appropriate actions and set targets for tutors to support apprentices who need to catch up. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices are developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve their apprenticeship on time.

Leaders accurately evaluate the quality of programmes and take effective steps to bring about improvements. For example, they provide extra training for tutors to develop the skills needed to support apprentices to pass their functional skills

examinations in information communications technology. As a result, first-time pass rates have improved.

Leaders take appropriate steps to ensure that the programmes they offer meet all requirements of apprenticeship provision. They recruit apprentices with integrity, and almost all apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Leaders and managers discuss assessment plans with employers and apprentices at the start of the programme. It is too early to identify the impact of this, as only a small number of new apprentices are studying standards-based apprenticeships.

Leaders and managers do not systematically evaluate what learners and apprentices go on to do after their programme. As a result, they cannot judge the effectiveness of, or identify steps to improve, the readiness of learners and apprentices for their immediate next steps. Learners and apprentices too often rely on informal support provided by tutors after the completion of their programmes to help them secure employment.

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

Tutors give apprentices frequent and helpful individual coaching and support. As a result, apprentices quickly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, business administration apprentices perform complex searches in Excel spreadsheets and regulatory compliance apprentices develop policies for audit arrangements.

Tutors carry out an effective assessment of the subject-specific knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices have at the start of their programme. They use this information well to plan activities that meet the individual needs of apprentices. Tutors support apprentices who need additional learning support very well. As a result, apprentices improve their confidence and almost all apprentices are developing the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their apprenticeship.

Tutors provide apprentices with helpful feedback. Most apprentices use this effectively to make improvements to their work. All apprentices produce work of at least the required standard and many produce work of a high standard.

Tutors are well qualified in their subject areas. They use their skills and experience effectively to deliver high-quality off-the-job training. As a result, apprentices improve their skills and can perform increasingly complex tasks. For example, business administration apprentices conduct review meetings and use accounting software.

Tutors do not plan or deliver enough support for the development of apprentices' skills in English and mathematics. They do not make sufficient use of information

about the prior knowledge and skills of those apprentices who are not working towards English and mathematics qualifications as part of their programme. Consequently, these apprentices are not encouraged to improve their English and mathematics skills further.

Managers and tutors have not taken sufficient action to identify the prior skills of a very small minority of apprentices who are studying apprenticeships at level 5. Tutors support these apprentices to broaden their knowledge, but they do not develop the new skills and behaviours required in the workplace.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress

Leaders have developed an appropriate range of short courses that meet the needs of unemployed people and local employers well. Learners develop their confidence and self-esteem in readiness for their next steps. As a result, the large majority of learners progress into employment or further study at a higher level.

Tutors provide good support to learners who have experienced long periods of unemployment. As a result, most learners develop useful personal and social skills that help them to prepare for employment. For example, learners develop their ability to manage difficult customers.

Tutors are well qualified. They put their knowledge and skills to good use in their teaching. As a result, learners enjoy their studies and they have strong motivation to complete their work. Learners produce work of at least the required standard and almost all achieve their qualifications on time.

Tutors have a good knowledge of learners' strengths and weaknesses and use this information to plan learning effectively. They structure lessons so that all learners can contribute and complete tasks that become gradually more difficult and complex. Tutors provide highly effective support to those who are less confident when answering questions, so that they develop their understanding as well as their peers.

Tutors do not provide helpful feedback to learners on their written work. As a result, most learners do not know how to improve the standard of their work beyond the requirements of the qualification. The most able learners are not sufficiently challenged to achieve what they are capable of.

Tutors do not make enough use of the information they have about learners' skills in English and mathematics. Those with low levels of English and mathematics skills do not receive the support they need to make improvements. For example, tutors do

not correct errors in learners' written work and therefore mistakes are often repeated.

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

Leaders take appropriate steps to keep learners and apprentices safe. They have easy-to-follow safeguarding policies. Leaders use links to external agencies well to provide effective support for learners and apprentices when needed.

All staff have completed training in safeguarding, including radicalisation and extremism, that is appropriate to their role. They frequently update this through workshops and external training.

Leaders and managers have a good awareness of current local risks such as grooming and political extremism. However, this is not used well in action plans to mitigate future risks. For example, the 'Prevent' duty risk assessment is not sufficiently tailored to cover emerging local risks.

Learners and apprentices attend a range of helpful workshops in safeguarding at the start their programmes. They know how to keep themselves safe, including in the workplace and online. However, they are less confident in their understanding of the dangers associated with radicalisation or extremist behaviour.

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