

SECOM PLC

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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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.

SECOM PLC has held a contract to deliver apprenticeships since 2017. The company offers a standards-based apprenticeship in fire, emergency and security systems at level 3. Currently, there are 17 adult apprentices. Apprentices work throughout England and all attend off-the-job block-release training at the company's training centre in Birmingham.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders and managers have a clear vision for the development of multi-skilled apprentices with well-developed customer-service knowledge and skills. They have successfully devised a strategy for the provision that is responsive to national skills priorities. Leaders used their extensive knowledge to contribute to the development of the trailblazer standard. They have made good use of this involvement to devise a curriculum which successfully meets business needs and the requirements of an apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers set high expectations for apprentices, including for their standards of work and behaviour, and for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers ensure that apprentices benefit from well-planned training. Apprentices receive good preparation for their end-point assessment.

Senior leaders and managers acknowledge that too many apprentices left their programme early. They have identified accurately the reasons for this and have devised a new recruitment strategy. It is too early to judge its effectiveness.

Managers have established appropriately challenging performance targets for the apprenticeship programme that closely mirror those of the wider business. They draw appropriately on apprentices' and mentors' feedback to inform the current self-assessment report. It is broadly accurate and suitably informs the quality

improvement plan. However, it is not possible to evaluate progress, because the plan does not have impact measures.

Managers prioritise effectively the further improvement of apprentices' English and mathematical skills. Managers ensure that the online learning resources that apprentices use to improve these important employability skills are of good quality. Most apprentices use them appropriately.

Governance arrangements are effective. The board of directors receives detailed and informative reports from leaders. These enable directors to monitor closely the apprenticeship programme and challenge any aspects of underperformance. Directors' commitment to increasing the number of high-quality apprentices to support the needs of the business is strong.

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

Training staff plan the apprenticeship programme carefully. Managers and tutors provide apprentices with helpful information, advice and guidance before they enrol on the apprenticeship and during their learning. All apprentices complete a relevant initial diagnostic assessment and a vocational skills scan. Trainers use the results skilfully to identify precisely apprentices' individual starting points and to inform the planning of learning.

Training staff liaise particularly effectively with the company's operations teams to ensure that apprentices access and benefit from scheduled technical-training courses. Apprentices' attendance at off-the-job training courses is very high. Apprentices benefit from working with highly experienced and skilled service and installation engineers, who are positive role models. They actively support apprentices' knowledge and skills development.

Apprentices are enthusiastic, work hard and quickly develop high levels of personal, social and vocational knowledge and skills. They make a valuable contribution to their workplace, working to the exacting customer-service standards set by the company.

Trainers use their good industrial experience and expertise very effectively to provide apprentices with technically demanding and challenging learning tasks. As a result, most apprentices make good progress towards their qualification. Experienced service and installation engineers, who deliver specialist technical modules, enhance apprentices' enjoyment of their training. However, trainers do not yet challenge the most able apprentices to work towards high grades.

Most apprentices receive good-quality and relevant progress reviews that promote their achievement. However, trainers and mentors do not ensure that review arrangements focus sufficiently on the development of apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills.

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

Senior leaders are establishing successfully a strong culture of safeguarding across all aspects of the business. Managers ensure a thorough vetting process, including the completion of Disclosure and Barring Service checks, for all employees.

Leaders ensure that employees who work with apprentices receive specialist training to equip them with the skills and confidence to identify apprentices who may need help and support. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of the dangers associated within radicalisation, bullying and harassment and when online and using social media.

Managers have devised a suitable 'Prevent' duty action plan, which they keep under continual review. This reflects accurately the dangers in the geographical areas where apprentices work. As a result, managers and apprentices are highly vigilant. They have a good understanding of risks and the actions they should follow when at work and in their personal lives.

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