

Focus Training Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Focus Training Limited (Focus Training) was inspected in October 2018. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

At the time of the visit, 149 learners were undertaking health and fitness courses, mainly at level 3 with a few at level 4. Around two thirds of learners study the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing and personal training.

Themes

What progress have leaders and tutors made in developing and implementing effective arrangements to improve the quality of telephone support sessions, so that learners make the progress of which they are capable? Reasonable progress

The quality of telephone support sessions has improved since the previous inspection. As a result, most learners now make at least the expected progress on their courses. Most tutors use questioning effectively to challenge the most able learners and to support those who struggle to understand and complete their work. Tutors have developed strategies to deliver challenging topics in manageable segments.

Most telephone support tutors have made rapid improvement to their practice, because of the feedback and training they receive from managers. For example, tutors improve the quality of their questioning techniques and develop good technical knowledge.

Most tutors provide learners with appropriate feedback during telephone support sessions. Tutors do not share their written records of support sessions with learners, with the result that a minority of learners are not able to develop an action plan of work to complete before the next session.

During telephone support sessions, tutors do not routinely link theory to practice, and too often this inhibits learners' progress. For example, a minority of learners find it difficult to understand how their knowledge of topics such as muscle types applies to their work.

What progress have leaders and managers made in increasing the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications; and in reducing the proportion of male learners, and those on the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing, who leave their programme early? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders' and managers' actions have reduced the proportion of learners who leave their courses early. A greater proportion of learners remained on the level 3 diploma in fitness instructing course in 2018/19 compared to 2017/18. More male learners now complete their courses. Although the achievement of female learners continues to be better than that of male learners, the gap is reducing. Leaders' analysis of why male learners left their courses early led them to introduce a range of improvements for all learners. For example, initial advice and guidance now highlights the demands of distance-learning study. Leaders have recently introduced face-to-face revision sessions to improve learners' confidence and prepare them for their examinations. It is too soon to assess the impact of these initiatives on pass rates.

What progress has been made in developing and implementing an effective strategy to ensure that all tutors support learners to develop their English and mathematical skills? **Insufficient progress**

Leaders and managers have only recently begun to develop and put in place the strategy for English and mathematics. As a result, not all tutors support learners well enough to develop their English and mathematical skills. Tutors do not consistently or routinely identify or correct spelling or grammatical errors in learners' work. As a result, learners do not correct their work or improve their written skills. Managers do not ensure that tutors make effective use of initial assessment information to plan English and mathematical learning. Leaders plan to develop the key mathematical skills that learners need to become competent practitioners. The English strategy focuses on developing learners' understanding and spelling of technical terminology. The impact of these new initiatives is not yet evident.

What progress has been made to ensure that governors receive appropriate reports and relevant information that enable them to challenge leaders and managers effectively about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, managers have introduced a range of reports for leaders and governors. Governors, leaders and managers use the reports to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and target improvements. They have prioritised improving the quality of initial advice and guidance and of telephone support sessions, and review this regularly. As a result, initial advice and guidance and telephone support sessions have improved.

The reports that governors receive contain information which they use to challenge leaders and managers to improve the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and the progress learners make on their courses. For example, following a report on work sampling, governors challenged managers to make further improvements in the feedback that tutors give to learners.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners receive sufficient high-quality information, advice and guidance before they sign up to a course? Reasonable progress

Learners receive sufficiently high-quality information about their course before they enrol. Leaders and managers have improved the initial advice and guidance learners receive. The preliminary changes that leaders made had a limited impact on retaining learners who were due to complete in 2018/19, so they made further improvements. Staff now collect more detailed information about learners' academic backgrounds, along with their work and family commitments. The information is used to place learners on the most suitable course. Early indications are that a greater proportion of learners who are due to complete their course in 2019/20 understand the demands of their programme, and fewer learners have left early.

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