

# Alan Hester Associates Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 2526625

**Name of lead inspector:** Kathryn Rudd, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Inspection dates:** 7–8 August 2019

**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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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.

Alan Hester Associates Limited (AHAL) is based in Reading and has provided directly funded apprenticeships since 2018. Currently, there are 33 apprentices who work with employers based in Oxford, Reading and Slough. All are studying standards-based apprenticeships in team leading or customer service at level 3, or operations departmental manager at level 5. AHAL does not subcontract any of the apprenticeship provision.

### 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 make good use of their experience and knowledge to design highly effective training programmes that meet apprentices' individual needs.

Employers place a high value on the training provided. They emphasise the impact not only on their individual apprentices but across their organisation. For example, tutors lead highly effective group problem-solving sessions for apprentices and their colleagues. As a result of these sessions, employers change the way they recruit staff. They have increased significantly the number of staff in their organisation.

Leaders and managers work successfully with employers to recruit suitable apprentices. They select apprentices who are either new to their post or who will benefit fully from the substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours included in the apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have effective oversight of the progress which apprentices make on their apprenticeship. They review each apprentice's progress monthly. Managers provide additional support for those apprentices who do not make the expected progress. For example, they deliver individual mathematics sessions which have improved apprentices' ability to calculate percentages.

Leaders and managers do not always make sure that apprentices hand in work on time. Some apprentices are behind in completing their assignments. Leaders have recognised this and changed their management arrangements to ensure that deadlines are enforced.

The small team of tutors and assessors are highly skilled and experienced. They use a range of methods to develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. These include individual coaching and job shadowing. Some apprentices have shadowed senior leaders in their own and partner organisations. Apprentices report that this helps them to understand organisational decision-making better.

Leaders and managers make improvements to apprentices' training because of the helpful feedback from apprentices and employers. For example, they have changed diploma units to make sure they are more relevant to apprentices' roles.

**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 develop new, substantial and specific knowledge, skills and behaviours that directly benefit their employers' business. For example, team-leader apprentices learn how to run effective supervision sessions. Apprentices are highly motivated and keen to learn. They understand how their new knowledge supports their own practice in developing others. As a result, their managers and teams value them highly.

Leaders work closely with employers to plan apprenticeship programmes. This ensures that apprentices gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours quickly to be effective in their job role. In a recent survey, apprentices' team members fed back improvements across all areas of their work. Many apprentices have gained promotion or acquired new responsibilities since starting their apprenticeship.

The close working relationship between tutors and assessors means that new knowledge is effectively checked and reinforced in the workplace. For example, after a session on learning styles an assessor worked with apprentices to identify colleagues' learning styles and what training would best suit them.

The standard of apprentices' vocational work is high. For example, team-leader apprentices effectively analyse time-management theories and their use at work. Staff check frequently whether work meets the standard required for the apprenticeship. Staff feedback indicates routinely how apprentices can gain higher marks.

Tutors provide clear vocational feedback which identifies where apprentices need to improve their work. However, apprentices do not receive feedback routinely on spelling and syntax errors.

Leaders and managers recognise correctly that they do not develop apprentices' English and mathematics knowledge and skills early enough in their apprenticeship. This means that some apprentices have not completed their apprenticeship by the planned end date. Because of apprentices' feedback, leaders now provide valuable individual mathematics coaching. They have also recently changed arrangements to enable apprentices to take either online or paper-based examinations.

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

Apprentices feel safe and can talk confidently about how to keep themselves and their teams safe. Tutors explore the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding issues regularly with apprentices. Apprentices understand the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and how they apply in their work and everyday lives.

Tutors ensure that apprentices focus effectively on healthy and safe working practices. For example, apprentices know what personal protective equipment staff should wear and why this is important. Tutors work with apprentices to deal with safeguarding concerns in their own organisations, for example working with clinical staff to understand the impact of substance misuse.

Leaders have appointed a designated safeguarding lead who identifies local concerns accurately. However, directors would benefit from more regular safeguarding updates to ensure that their knowledge remains current.

Leaders follow safe recruitment processes when they recruit associate staff. They check carefully to ensure that they are suitable to work with apprentices.

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