

# FE Business 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 three themes set out below.

In July 2017, FE Business contracted to provide levy-funded apprenticeships, enrolling its first apprentices in October 2017. At the time of this visit, 123 apprentices were on standards-based apprenticeships in business administration, team leading, human resource support, improvement techniques or unified communications at level 3, customer service at level 2, or management at level 5. Seven apprentices were on a framework-based apprenticeship in business improvement techniques.

### 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 a clear business strategy aimed at meeting employers' needs for training and development. They make suitable use of apprenticeships to develop existing or newly recruited staff so that they contribute more effectively to their employers' businesses. Leaders have been careful to recruit small numbers of apprentices to test arrangements for delivery. As the number of apprentices has increased, leaders are taking appropriate steps to recruit staff to support this growth.

Managers have suitable arrangements for recruiting with integrity so that almost all apprentices benefit from their training. Managers match employers' needs for skills against apprenticeship standards to ensure that apprentices are on appropriate programmes. Apprentices in team leading and management benefit from the knowledge and skills they gain and the difference these make to their effectiveness at work. Employers cite significant improvements in productivity, communication and teamworking as a result of their apprentices' training.

Leaders prepare employers well so that they contribute effectively to apprentices' training. They review employers' involvement in the apprenticeship regularly and take action if apprentices do not receive their entitlement to study time for their apprenticeships. Apprentices' line managers take a keen interest in the training that apprentices are given. They help apprentices to apply their newly learned knowledge, skills and behaviours at work.

Leaders monitor apprentices' progress systematically and arrange suitable help or support if apprentices are struggling or falling behind. They ensure that trainers help to prepare apprentices for their assessments, including the end-point assessment.

Although leaders have quality assurance arrangements in place, these are not yet sufficiently well established. Leaders have not yet made full use of the tools and systems at their disposal to ensure consistently high quality across their provision. Leaders correctly identify the improvements needed in their self-assessment report and improvement plans.

**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 make suitable progress in gaining substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Almost all enjoy their training, which is relevant to their job roles and helps improve their performance at work. As a result, team leading apprentices now use management techniques skilfully to solve problems, manage conflict or improve their teams' productivity. Apprentices make beneficial use of their apprenticeship projects and assignments to investigate relevant aspects of the work they do and to improve them.

Managers carry out suitable assessments to identify apprenticeship candidates' existing skills and where there are gaps. They use this information to work with employers to plan suitable training programmes that meet apprentices' and employers' skills needs. The process helps apprentices reflect on their development needs and enables trainers to provide company-specific training for employers.

Apprentices keep suitable records of the work they do towards their apprenticeship. Managers use these records to monitor apprentices' progress in learning and check that they are given the required time off for their apprenticeship. However, in a minority of cases, trainers do not give employers sufficient information on the progress that their apprentices are making.

Trainers do not give apprentices sufficiently useful feedback on their assignments. Their feedback does not explain clearly what apprentices have done well or what they need to do to improve. It does not explain how apprentices could achieve merit and distinction grades in their apprenticeships, if these are available.

Managers' arrangements for supporting apprentices who require English and mathematics qualifications require improvement. Trainers do not make sufficient use of the outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessment to plan learning in these subjects. Trainers do not give apprentices sufficient feedback on their use of English in assignments and projects.

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

Leaders and managers have suitable processes in place to ensure that staff are suitable to work with young people and vulnerable adults. A senior manager is trained as the designated safeguarding lead and carries out appropriate criminal records checks on staff. Leaders ensure that they fulfil the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty and liaise with local safeguarding boards to keep up to date.

Apprentices complete suitable online training in safeguarding and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism during their first few weeks on the apprenticeship programme. They feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about themselves or others. However, in their reviews and training sessions, trainers pay insufficient attention to developing apprentices' understanding further.

Team meetings of trainers refer to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty but do not do enough to improve trainers' understanding or use of strategies for developing apprentices' knowledge of these topics.

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