

Blue Sky Assessing & Consultancy Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2510872

Name of lead inspector: Linnia Khemdoudi, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 29–30 August 2019

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit B1
Framlingham Road
Earl Soham
Woodbridge
IP13 7SR



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.

Blue Sky Assessing & Consultancy Ltd received a direct contract for providing apprenticeship programmes in May 2018. It provides apprenticeships for levy-paying employers. Blue Sky Assessing & Consultancy Ltd specialises in human resources, management and business administration qualifications. Almost all apprentices are on standards-based qualifications. Blue Sky Assessing & Consultancy Ltd does not subcontract any provision. At the time of the monitoring visit, it had had 52 apprentices, 47 studying at level 3 and five studying at level 2.

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 developed an effective curriculum strategy. Leaders communicate effectively with potential employers and apprentices to ensure that they understand and commit to all the requirements of an apprenticeship programme before they agree to work with them. Leaders carefully assess apprentices' prior knowledge and skills before enrolment. As a result, apprentices quickly develop new skills and knowledge.

Leaders monitor apprentices' progress closely. Assessors and employers intervene quickly if an apprentice falls behind. As a result of assessors' frequent and accurate tracking, the large majority of apprentices are on target to finish within their set timeframe.

Apprentices understand the process and requirements for their final tests thoroughly. Assessors prepare apprentices effectively in advance of their planned end dates. As a result, the large majority of apprentices can explain what activities they need to complete to be successful. However, assessors have not developed apprentices' awareness of how to achieve the highest grades. Consequently, apprentices are often not working to their full potential.

Leaders employ suitably qualified and experienced assessors. Staff have high-level vocational qualifications. They are working towards, or already have, teaching and assessing qualifications. Leaders invest time and resources to ensure that staff stay up to date with sector changes and requirements from awarding bodies. Apprentices benefit from assessors' expertise.

Leaders communicate effectively with their staff. Frequent team and group meetings ensure staff are well informed about all aspects of the business. However, leaders do not keep sufficiently detailed records of the content and impact of the discussions that take place in these meetings. Consequently, they cannot identify the impact these activities have on improving standards.

Leaders' arrangements to check the quality of provision lack rigour. The links they have developed with managers at the local college and other similar training providers are not sufficiently effective to provide enough challenge to hold leaders effectively to account.

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
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Apprentices make a positive contribution to their employers' business. They develop the vocational skills they need to be successful in their chosen profession. They quickly establish themselves as valuable team members. Apprentices take on additional responsibility, such as mentoring new staff or leading small teams. They are responsive to instruction from their supervisors.

Leaders and assessors closely monitor apprentices' completion of the off-the-job requirements of their apprenticeships. Employers receive monthly updates from assessors, which enable them to monitor closely the progress of their apprentices. However, assessors do not ensure that apprentices know how they apply the new skills and knowledge they learn from the off-the-job activities to their job roles.

Assessors plan well-structured learning activities that develop apprentices' knowledge and skills. Apprentices benefit from the developmental feedback they frequently receive from assessors. As a result, most apprentices make appropriate progress towards completion of their apprenticeship.

Assessors engage apprentices in frequent, high-quality, detailed discussions on their progress. However, assessors do not always accurately record the specific actions that apprentices need to take to improve. Consequently, apprentices have too little information to reflect on to help them recall what they need to do next.

Assessors carefully assess apprentices' prior skills and knowledge at the start of their apprenticeship. Assessors use the results to enrol apprentices onto the right level of programme to meet their employment goals. The ongoing advice, guidance and

support that apprentices receive from assessors result in highly motivated apprentices.

Most apprentices develop their mathematical and English skills. Those that require formal qualifications receive appropriate training and guidance. Apprentices improve their communication skills. For example, they develop their confidence to present information clearly to their peers and colleagues. Most apprentices develop their mathematical skills appropriately. They apply these skills through budget planning, controlling finance and human resources, and keeping track of daily tasks.

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

Leaders have appropriate processes to keep staff and apprentices safe. They recruit safely and use the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe, whom to report concerns to, and understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding.

An appropriately trained, designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff complete mandatory training at the start of their employment. This is reinforced through external events and workshops.

A monthly newsletter that highlights safeguarding, health and safety, and equality and diversity is used by assessors as a prompt for detailed discussion with apprentices at monthly reviews. However, apprentices have little understanding of the regional threats they may face.

Leaders keep detailed and secure records of all issues that apprentices raise. They closely monitor all incidents until they are concluded appropriately. Leaders create a supportive environment that enables apprentices to raise issues that affect their progress. Staff refer apprentices to external support agencies to help them resolve problems quickly.

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