

Digital Marketing Mentor Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Russ Henry, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 2nd Floor
9 High Street
Lutterworth
LE17 4AT



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 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Digital Marketing Mentor Limited became a levy-funded apprenticeship provider in May 2017. It currently works with nine employers and has 15 apprentices following standards programmes. The level 3 apprentices follow junior content producer and business administration programmes. The level 4 apprentices follow data analyst, and public relations and communications assistant programmes.

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 rationale for the range of apprenticeship programmes they offer. Since becoming directly funded, they have cautiously introduced a small number of standards apprenticeships in disciplines related to digital marketing. They base their choice of standards on their own professional experience and extensive knowledge of the training requirements of business and industry. The apprenticeship programmes they offer comply fully with requirements, including those for 20% off-the-job training.

Leaders and managers are careful to recruit only apprentices who will benefit substantially from an apprenticeship programme. Although apprentices are not always new to their roles, they all need to develop a substantial range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours to perform effectively in their jobs. Managers work with employers to ensure that apprentices' job roles cover the range of activities necessary to meet the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standard. However, managers do not capture sufficient information about apprentices' existing skills. This limits the ability of mentors to tailor the curriculum to the needs of individual apprentices.

Managers and mentors rely too much on the published standards to define their curricula. They have not done enough work to develop their own clear programmes

for apprentices that identify the most useful knowledge, skills and behaviours for them to learn. Nor have they determined how apprentices will develop these in a logical, systematic and explicit way. Managers have acknowledged this in their own standardisation meetings and are working on improvements.

Managers have been careful to recruit mentors who have appropriate skills, experience and qualifications in their vocational areas. As a result, they are well equipped to provide training at the appropriate level and standard.

Quality assurance processes are basic but adequate for the size and scope of the business. Activities include self-assessment, standardisation meetings and lesson observations. Managers use these mechanisms to identify appropriate improvement actions.

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

Managers and mentors have developed a range of effective training activities that help apprentices to develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours that enable them to be more effective in the workplace. These include web conferences, classroom sessions, online learning, textbooks and work shadowing. Mentors provide useful feedback on marked work that ensures that apprentices understand how they can improve. As a result, apprentices' written work is of a good standard and it makes appropriate links between theoretical training and what happens in the workplace.

Mentors have frequent meetings with apprentices in which they review their progress and provide useful coaching. Apprentices' managers often participate in these reviews, and this allows them to contribute effectively to apprentices' programmes.

During these meetings, mentors set apprentices targets and tasks for the following month. However, a lack of detailed curriculum planning means that targets are often vague and give no indication of how apprentices might achieve them. Mentors do not provide apprentices with enough guidance to help them make the most of their considerable amount of independent study time. This lack of explicit tuition and guidance slows apprentices' progress.

Mentors prepare apprentices well for their end-point assessments. Apprentices know how they are going to be assessed and understand how to gain the different grades that are available to them. Mentors understand end-point assessment clearly and have suitable plans in place to review learning before apprentices reach that stage of their programmes.

Staff assess the English and mathematical skills of apprentices when they commence their programmes. They use the information this provides to direct all apprentices to useful online resources to improve those areas in which they are less competent. The

nature of apprentices' programmes also affords opportunities for them to develop these skills in the context of their jobs. Mentors make effective use of these opportunities.

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

Apprentices feel safe and are safe both during training sessions and in the workplace. They receive appropriate safeguarding guidance during their induction sessions and through their handbook. They undertake online training in safeguarding topics, including radicalisation and extremism. They know to whom they should report any concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead understands his role. He ensures that staff have appropriate training. He has established suitable mechanisms for staff and apprentices to raise concerns, and procedures for dealing with any that arise.

Mentors have a good understanding of safeguarding themes. They undertake online training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead understands the need for frequent updating and has plans to provide this.

The safeguarding policy and other related documents are adequate. Managers responded quickly to comments from inspectors about some necessary, but minor, amendments to these documents.

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