

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Monitoring visit report

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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 '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.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) began to deliver apprenticeships in October 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, 434 apprentices were on level 4 standards-based apprenticeships in professional accounting/taxation technician. HMRC works with apprentices in centres across the country.

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 have a clear rationale for delivering professional tax apprenticeships. They respond to the demand for taxation professionals within HMRC by providing apprenticeships that develop the relevant skills and knowledge of staff who are recruited to programmes both internally and externally.

Managers ensure that apprentices are recruited into the right programme. They check apprentices' prior knowledge effectively in order to ensure that apprentices are able to complete and benefit from a level 4 apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers make sure that staffing resources are appropriate to deliver apprenticeships. Tutors and assessors have good industry experience and are appropriately trained to carry out training and assessments.

Leaders and managers have established good arrangements to assure the quality of apprenticeship delivery. They accurately identify weaknesses and take prompt actions to make improvements that benefit apprentices. For example, managers designed a skills checker to identify apprentices' starting points more accurately.

Managers and tutors provide apprentices with an effectively planned and sequenced curriculum that is clearly linked to the apprenticeship standard and to the apprentices' job role. Apprentices benefit from carefully planned off-the-job training that enables them to apply and practise their newly acquired skills in the workplace.

Managers ensure that apprentices develop the English and mathematics skills that they need in their job role. Apprentices improve their report writing and mathematical skills to professional standards, with support from their manager. Managers make sure that tutors successfully support apprentices who need to gain English and mathematics qualifications. Apprentices follow learning programmes that help them to improve their skills in these subjects, and most apprentices pass their examinations at the first attempt.

Leaders and managers have sufficient oversight of the progress that individual apprentices make. If apprentices fall behind, managers ensure that they receive support to improve. However, managers do not pay sufficient attention to the progress of the whole cohort of apprentices. This impedes their ability to develop the curriculum in response to an evaluation of how apprentices are progressing.

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 substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Mentors provide good on-the-job training that enables apprentices to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to their job roles. For example, apprentices improve their communication and teamworking skills.

Assessors ensure that apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills throughout their programmes. Consequently, apprentices produce accurate reports and carry out complex tax calculations confidently.

Apprentices benefit from a wide range of teaching strategies that help them to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, they attend classes, access e-learning, shadow colleagues in the workplace and carry out self-study.

Assessors carefully plan a curriculum that ensures that apprentices swiftly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. This enables apprentices to build on their previous experience and apply their knowledge and skills more effectively. For example, apprentices know how to check tax returns, how to undertake investigations and how to ask the most effective questions when interviewing a client.

Assessors provide helpful guidance and support that motivates apprentices well. Apprentices have frequent meetings with their assessors to review the progress that they make and to help them to catch up if they fall behind. As a result, most apprentices are on target to complete their programmes within the planned timescale.

Managers and assessors prepare apprentices for end-point assessment well. They provide a well-planned programme, including awareness raising, practice assessments and revision. Consequently, apprentices understand the arrangements for end-point assessment and how they need to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Managers and assessors do not use the outcomes of the assessment of apprentices' starting points well enough to address gaps in knowledge, skills and behaviours. All apprentices have the same length of stay on the programme. As a result, a few apprentices are not challenged to achieve their potential.

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

Managers ensure that policies, procedures and reporting mechanisms are in place to keep apprentices safe. Where safeguarding issues arise, managers take quick and clear actions to keep apprentices safe.

The national safeguarding lead and regional designated safeguarding officers (DSOs) are experienced and appropriately trained. All staff and apprentices are trained in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Leaders ensure that staff undergo thorough background checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with apprentices, including a civil service security check.

The national safeguarding lead accesses national information regarding safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism risks and cascades this to regional DSOs. However, local risks in different parts of the country are not consistently communicated to apprentices by DSOs.

Apprentices benefit from a helpful online safeguarding portal where they can improve their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, radicalisation and extremism. Consequently, apprentices feel safe and know how to report issues should they arise.

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