

# Grey Seal Academy Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Name of lead inspector:** Harmesh Manghra, Her Majesty's Inspector

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**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Unit 3, Heritage Business Centre  
Derby Road  
Belper  
Derbyshire  
DE56 1SW



## 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.

Grey Seal is a national provider of apprenticeship training. It secured an apprenticeship contract in May 2017. During the monitoring visit, 123 apprentices were on standards-based apprenticeships in horticulture at level 2, facilities management at levels 3 and 4, customer service at level 2, and business administration at level 3. Of these, 46 apprentices started their learning in 2018 and the rest started in the current year. Grey Seal works with 23 levy-paying employers. The largest numbers of apprentices are in facilities management and horticulture. Almost all apprentices are existing employees of these companies. All training takes place on employers' premises, using six trainers.

### 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 implemented an effective strategy to develop the provision in a short space of time. Nearly two thirds of the apprentices enrolled in this academic year. Leaders have managed this substantial growth well. Building on the skills and knowledge of their trainers, managers have developed their training programmes very effectively with employers in niche sectors such as horticulture and facilities management.

Managers and training staff work alongside employers to understand their businesses first and then devise a tailor-made package of training.

Managers have invested heavily in employing an appropriate number of highly knowledgeable experts from horticulture and facilities management. They train them extensively to deliver learning to apprentices.

Training meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. All employers are enthusiastic ambassadors of apprenticeship training. They support their employees well.

Trainers, employers and apprentices understand accurately the requirements of the end-point assessment. Apprentices are highly motivated and have high expectations of themselves.

Managers have established effective quality improvement arrangements. They make prompt changes to the quality of training in response to any feedback from employers and apprentices. Managers provide helpful feedback to trainers after lesson observations. This helps trainers to improve their skills for future sessions. Managers recognise the need for external scrutiny, support and challenge to improve the provision. Currently no one fulfils this function. Therefore, staff do not benefit from learning from the sector outside the company.

Managers monitor the provision and the progress of apprentices, but they do not have enough oversight of apprentices who are making slow progress. They leave much of this work to the trainers.

**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**

Trainers support apprentices very well in the workplace to develop new vocationally specific knowledge that is valuable to them in their jobs. Long-standing employees who join apprenticeship programme on facilities management gain more detailed knowledge about procurement, security, buildings and asset management. This enables apprentices to become multiskilled and more valuable to employers.

Managers and trainers plan the curriculum carefully to meet the needs of employers and apprentices. Trainers provide high-quality training on employers' premises, fitting in with the shift patterns of apprentices. They integrate theory training seamlessly with on-the-job training. Horticulture trainers plan and sequence theory learning according to the seasons.

Highly knowledgeable and skilled trainers pass on their knowledge and skills to apprentices through interesting and engaging sessions, often delivered online. They have worked diligently to adapt learning resources to ensure that theory sessions complement their apprentices' practical job roles. This helps apprentices to apply their knowledge more effectively in their jobs.

Apprentices make expected or better progress towards completing their programmes. When needed, trainers provide effective and timely support to apprentices to catch up if they fall behind with their studies. Employers provide apprentices enough time at work to complete their apprenticeships.

Apprentices develop their English and mathematical skills very well alongside their main programmes. Trainers carefully devise assignments that show English and mathematics in the context of apprentices' work. Apprentices clearly appreciate the implications of reading instructions accurately for applying pesticides. They know the risks of measuring chemicals incorrectly and the subsequent impact this would have on costs for employers. Apprentices gain confidence in researching their projects on the internet. They use their electronic portfolio competently to upload their assignments and receive feedback to make improvements.

The standard of apprentices' theory and practical work is high. Trainers provide detailed and specific feedback that supports apprentices to improve their written and practical assignments.

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

The responsibility for safeguarding rests with a senior manager. Leaders and managers deploy safe recruitment practices to employ the most suitable staff to work with young children and vulnerable adults.

All staff have a good awareness of a range of safeguarding topics such as radicalisation and extremism from extreme left- and right-wing organisations. Apprentices become aware of potential dangers in society. They become vigilant in looking out for signs of radicalisation among their peers. All staff and managers update their knowledge of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty on an ongoing basis. They work well with their employers to protect apprentices. For example, trainers discuss topics, such as trolling on social media, that contribute to the mental well-being of apprentices.

Apprentices rightly feel safe. Apprentices know how to protect themselves by taking appropriate precautions and know who to contact, in case of incidents.

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