

Lean Engineering and Manufacturing Academy Limited

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 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.

Lean Engineering and Manufacturing Academy Limited (LEMA) is an independent learning provider based in the West Midlands. LEMA has two engineering training academies, one located in Dudley and a second one in Birmingham. At the time of the monitoring visit the company had 177 apprentices in learning. Of these, the large majority are studying towards a level 2 apprenticeship in improving operational performance. The remaining apprentices are working towards level 3 apprenticeships in engineering maintenance or mechanical manufacturing. All are working towards framework qualifications. Around 80% of the apprentices are aged 16 to 18. LEMA is a subcontractor to another provider. This provision was not considered as part of the monitoring visit.

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 ensured that their curriculum is responsive in meeting the needs of employers and of apprentices. They make good use of regional labour market intelligence to inform their understanding of engineering and manufacturing skills needs in the geographical areas in which the company operates.

Leaders have ensured that the range of the training provision offered is carefully tailored and reflects local skills priorities. Leaders make good use of their experience working as a subcontractor to provide a suitably planned and coordinated learning pathway for prospective learners. Leaders have developed suitably detailed plans to support the introduction of level 2 and 3 standards-based apprentices in identified key employment sectors, such as for technical support, machinists, mechatronics and maintenance.

Managers give high priority to ensuring that their engineering and manufacturing skills development programmes meet the requirements expected of an

apprenticeship. For example, leaders ensure that off-the-job training classes take place at times and in locations to suit apprentices' capacity to travel. As a result, apprentices' attendance at work and at the training centres is high and few leave their programme early. Leaders ensure that the training centres provide apprentices with good access to specialist learning environments in which they can hone their engineering and manufacturing skills.

Leaders ensure that trainers have suitable industry knowledge and expertise in engineering and manufacturing techniques. Managers provide trainers with effective continuing professional development to update their knowledge and develop their expertise, for example in preparing trainers for the planned introduction of standards-based apprenticeships.

Leaders do not routinely analyse apprenticeship destination data to inform their understanding as to how effective the curriculum has been in ensuring that apprentices remain in sustained employment. Some internal observers' judgements as to the quality of learning focus too much on compliance and process-related matters. As a result, some judgements as to the quality of provision are over generous.

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

Leaders ensure the correct sequencing of apprentices' knowledge and vocational skills development to allow the staged development of their technical knowledge and manual dexterity skills. Most trainers provide good support to apprentices that helps them further develop their English and mathematics skills. Managers ensure that learning programmes are flexible and responsive in meeting the needs of the apprentices and the industry in which they work. For example, apprentices employed in the jewellery sector undertake additional specialist units in foundry work and casting. This enhances their employment prospects and effectiveness in the workplace.

Most apprentices benefit from the good-quality training which they receive when attending the engineering training centre. Apprentices develop their skills well, which enables them to become better employees and understand the theory behind the practice.

Managers have developed helpful schemes of work that employers use as their guide for sequencing the skills training when apprentices are at work. As a result, apprentices move quickly into completing commercial tasks. Trainers and workplace mentors provide further training for those apprentices who are not yet fully confident. As a result of the training which apprentices receive, employers rightly value their contribution to their businesses.

Apprentices hone their technical skills well by working alongside highly skilled machinists and engineers in the workplace. Most workplace supervisors closely monitor the vocational skills that their apprentices are developing. They provide generous time allowances for their employees to complete skills training and to reflect on their learning targets.

A few employers do not actively contribute or provide additional time in the working week to meet and review the knowledge and skills their apprentices have gained. As a result, a few apprentices are unclear on the value of the review process or the progress they are making. Leaders do not ensure that trainers consistently promote and extend apprentices' fluency when using specialist engineering terminology such as 'interoperability'.

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

Managers place a very high priority on keeping apprentices safe. Leaders undertake appropriate background checks on all staff prior to the start of their employment to assure their suitability to work with young apprentices.

Leaders carry out suitable checks to assure the health, welfare and safety of apprentices when at their place of work and in the training centre. Apprentices have a secure understanding of how to report safeguarding issues and are confident that the issues will be investigated thoroughly.

A team of three suitably trained designated safeguarding officers closely monitor and swiftly investigate any concerns that apprentices may raise, when necessary escalating such matters to a range of external agencies.

Leaders have very recently developed an informative 'Prevent' duty action plan that sets out their ongoing determination to keep apprentices safe from the risk and the dangers associated with terrorism and extremism.

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