

Education and Skills Training & Development 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.

Education and Skills Training & Development Limited (ESTD) was established in 2015 as a specialist training provider in education and childcare. It has offered apprenticeships to levy-paying employers since 2017. Currently, 128 apprentices are on programmes, with around two thirds on apprenticeship standards and a third on frameworks. Apprenticeship standards include teaching assistants and early years education programmes at level 3 and school business professionals at level 4. Frameworks include level 2 and level 3 programmes in supporting teaching and learning in schools. A few apprentices are on business administration, team leading and operations/departmental management standards programmes. Apprentices work in schools and nurseries throughout England and the vast majority are over the age of 18.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Directors have implemented a clear strategy for apprenticeships that builds on the company's experience as a specialist training provider in education and childcare. The provision meets the workforce development needs of schools and nurseries that employ the apprentices. It offers clear career progression routes, such as from teaching assistant to school business manager.

Leaders and managers ensure that all apprentices, including those who are experienced in their roles, develop significant new skills, knowledge and behaviours. As a result, apprentices become more accomplished in their roles and contribute more extensively in their settings.

Leaders and managers have established effective quality assurance arrangements. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and are

implementing improvement plans. They act swiftly on feedback from apprentices. For example, they have increased the support for apprentices in the use of online learning platforms.

Leaders and managers monitor the progress of apprentices closely through monthly meetings with assessors. They identify those who are falling behind with their studies and ensure that tutors prepare action plans to help them catch up. However, in a minority of instances, they do not implement these action plans swiftly enough.

Leaders and managers identified that one group of apprentices did not start their English and mathematics learning early enough. Consequently, these apprentices did not finish their programmes on time. Leaders and managers restructured the curriculum to ensure that apprentices complete their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics in good time.

Leaders and managers monitor programmes to ensure that tutors provide monthly support and that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job learning. However, they do not ensure that records of off-the-job learning are sufficiently accurate. In a few instances, employers and apprentices are unclear about which activities they should include.

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 make good progress in developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours, and they contribute more fully at work. Teaching assistants enjoy learning theories, such as child development and behaviour management. They apply their learning when facilitating children's play. Apprentices on the school business professional programme benefit from learning about funding, budgeting and payroll.

Tutors are well qualified and have considerable vocational experience that they use very well to support learning. They have in-depth knowledge of apprentices' job roles and help apprentices to apply their learning to real work situations. Tutors respond quickly, between scheduled monthly meetings, to apprentices' questions and requests for help. Workplace mentors also provide good support.

ESTD provides a range of high-quality learning materials, including textbooks and online resources, to support learning. Apprentices use these to study vocational subjects and to develop their English and mathematical skills.

Tutors mark apprentices' written work promptly and provide helpful feedback on how they can improve. Apprentices act on tutors' feedback and raise the standard of their work.

Apprentices benefit from good on- and off-the-job learning provided by their employers. For example, they attend training in topics such as safeguarding, food hygiene, and autism spectrum disorder. They contribute to staff meetings and observe more experienced colleagues carrying out activities, such as holding discussions with parents. However, in a few instances apprentices do not receive enough time during working hours to complete written work, and so they do it at home.

Tutors explore apprentices' career plans and assess their starting points appropriately. They enrol them onto a suitable programme at the right level. For a few apprentices who have prior experience, however, tutors do not use the information on apprentices' starting points well enough to provide a sufficiently challenging curriculum in the early weeks of the programme.

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

Staff ensure that apprentices are aware of ESTD's wide range of safeguarding policies that they review and update appropriately. Through monthly newsletters, leaders and managers provide topical updates on safeguarding issues, such as those reported in the national media.

Apprentices develop a good understanding of safeguarding through their vocational studies and the high priority that their employers place on safeguarding in their settings.

Leaders and managers have completed a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and prepared an action plan that contains suitable measures to safeguard apprentices from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Staff have completed appropriate training in safeguarding to enable them to fulfil their roles, including delivering safeguarding topics as part of apprentices' learning programmes.

Leaders and managers are thorough in carrying out a range of background checks on new staff, including those who are freelance tutors, to ensure that staff are suitable to work with apprentices.

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