

Skillcert 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 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 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Skillcert Limited is a private training provider that was founded in November 2015. It has a history of delivering partnership work in prisons. It has extended this activity to work with employers in supporting offenders into apprenticeships, as part of its overall work in apprenticeships. Skillcert Limited delivers apprenticeship qualifications within the recycling, manufacturing and business services sectors, and with service clients on a national basis. It works with levy-paying employers.

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 developed a clear and effective business strategy, by working predominantly in niche sectors such as waste management.

Leaders recognise the importance of employing sector professionals who hold specialist qualifications, such as black belt in Six Sigma, used in the delivery of business improvement techniques. However, too few training advisors hold relevant teaching qualifications, to enable them to apply appropriate teaching strategies that enable apprentices to reach their potentials.

Leaders and managers recruit apprentices with integrity. For example, leaders have supported employers to hold detailed and thorough interview processes that ensure employees' suitability for their apprenticeships. This contributes to most apprentices staying on their programmes.

Leaders and managers hold training advisors to account for apprentices' performance. High numbers of apprentices are successful. However, leaders have not monitored learners' progress from their starting points closely enough to ensure that apprentices meet their potential. For example, apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships receive insufficient challenge to reach high grades.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all training advisors support apprentices consistently well to develop their skills in English and mathematics. Managers have planned staff development opportunities for training advisors, but it is too early to see the impact of these.

Leaders and managers have formed a governance board. It is in the very early stages of development, and so has not yet produced an impact on the quality of apprentices' experience.

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 benefit from receiving appropriate guidance, which ensures that they pursue the most relevant apprenticeship for their intended job role. For example, finance apprentices undertake a qualification that helps them to understand the insurance business, and that provides opportunities for moving into related roles.

Leaders ensure that apprentices' job roles are suitable to enable them to practise skills at the appropriate level. Consequently, most apprentices develop the new knowledge, skills and the behaviours that their employers need.

Most apprentices complete sufficient off-the-job training. Employers make sure that apprentices have adequate time to develop their learning and understanding in their workplaces. However, in a few cases employers do not identify enough opportunities for apprentices to undertake off-the-job learning activities.

Apprentices benefit from helpful feedback to improve their technical skills and master the use of new equipment. They undertake useful activities to enable them to develop specific work-related skills in English and mathematics, such as using formulae to calculate insurance premium tax.

Training advisors check apprentices' progress towards the completion of their qualifications. Training advisors provide the appropriate support to ensure that those who fall behind catch up with their work.

Training advisors do not use the starting points of apprentices well to influence learning. The sequencing of learning does not challenge all apprentices to meet their potential. Consequently, apprentices do not know the progress they are making towards achieving the grades of which they are capable.

In a few cases, advice and guidance are not sufficiently helpful to ensure that apprentices understand the career opportunities open to them, based on their potential.

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

The designated safeguarding lead and deputy are qualified and hold a senior position within the company.

Leaders and managers have embedded appropriate processes for dealing with safeguarding matters. For instance, apprentices identified as being 'at risk' receive support from the designated safeguarding lead.

Leaders have adopted appropriate risk assessments, and training advisors take the corresponding necessary steps. Leaders use apprentice review meetings to test health and safety and ensure that training advisors are aware of any issues relating to apprentices.

Leaders ensure that all staff and apprentices go through at induction training in safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values. Staff receive frequent updates through team meetings and go through a standardisation process to ensure that their knowledge is current. Most apprentices show a clear understanding of the main safeguarding topics. They are aware of the dangers and know how to protect themselves and promote the safeguarding of others.

The safeguarding policy does not reflect existing practice and does not detail processes and systems that are currently taking place.

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