

Resources (N E) Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

This report is the outcome of a monitoring visit to Resources (N E) Limited (RENE) following the deferral of a planned inspection.

Themes

The effectiveness of self-assessment and quality improvement processes, including the use of data to make informed judgements

Despite rising success rates, the rigour of self-assessment is insufficient. The self-assessment process involves most staff. Managers use the self-assessment report to inform quality improvement plans. However, the report does not contain clearly identified key strengths or areas for improvement across the whole of the provision. Furthermore, managers do not evaluate a number of key aspects. For example, the self-assessment of RENE's approach to safeguarding and to equality and diversity is inadequate.

RENE's access to accurate management information and data relating to learners' performance has improved since the last inspection. However, managers make insufficient use of this information to monitor performance and drive improvements. Managers' weekly meetings provide an opportunity for this to happen but the focus of these meetings is on meeting financial targets rather than analysing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. In consequence, managers did not identify quickly enough the relatively poor performance in building and construction. In addition, as the managers' meetings are not minuted, there is no formal mechanism for ensuring that any necessary actions are carried out.

Although RENE is aware that there were significant achievement gaps between male and female learners in 2012 and 2013, there is insufficient monitoring of the performance of different groups of learners to allow managers to assess the extent to which this gap is closing.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that self-assessment addresses all the key criteria within the common inspection framework and that managers use the self-assessment process to identify clear strengths and areas for improvement.
- Ensure that managers make systematic use of data to monitor performance frequently in all parts of the provision. Included within this would be an analysis of the impact of actions to close any achievement gaps.

Safeguarding

Designated officers maintain a single central record that contains details of staff who have received clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) At present, the procedure for assessing the risks involved in employing staff for whom clearance from the DBS is still awaited are too informal. Arrangements have been made recently to ensure that staff receive training to update their knowledge of safeguarding. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this training on teaching, learning and assessment.

The policies governing RENE's approach to safeguarding are not fit for purpose. The policy for employees relates only to vulnerable adults and makes no mention of young people. The learner handbook does contain a policy relating to alcohol and drugs but there is no policy on safeguarding. A policy was provided during the monitoring visit which ostensibly addresses the needs of young people but in reality it refers to vulnerable adults. In addition, the language used is not appropriate for learners and abbreviations are not explained.

Priorities for improvement

- As a matter of urgency, introduce a formalised risk assessment arrangement to cover staff for whom DBS clearance is awaited.
- Introduce new policies for staff and learners which set out appropriately RENE's commitment and actions in relation to safeguarding.

The extent to which RENE plans for and meets the needs of local employers and local and national priorities; the progression and destinations of apprentices

Managers respond well to the needs of those employers served by RENE in the geographical locations and subject areas in which it operates. It responds well to newly identified needs that fit its area of competence. For example, it has developed provision in the development of social media. However, the extent to which RENE's programmes meet local and national needs is not easy to evaluate because of a dearth of destinations data for apprentices who have completed their programmes. Managers do not collect detailed information about what happens to successful apprentices or to those who leave their programme without gaining qualifications. They are therefore not in a position to judge whether they are successfully preparing apprentices for successful careers or to meet local or national employment requirements.

Priorities for improvement

- Develop a process for systematically collecting data about the destinations of apprentices. This should include both successful and unsuccessful apprentices and should enable RENE to determine whether their programme has led to sustained employment in the same sector as the apprenticeship, promotion, further study or another outcome, including unemployment.
- Implement this process for the remainder of the current academic year so that the outcomes of all 2014/15 leavers are known.
- Analyse these data to make judgements about the extent to which programmes are meeting the needs of local and national employers and developing apprentices' skills so that they are able to secure and sustain appropriate employment.

The extent to which assessors support apprentices to improve their English and mathematics skills

Apprentices are supported successfully to gain functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics if they do not already hold a GCSE at grade A* to C. A specialist member of staff teaches these subjects in discrete sessions. However, apprentices themselves report that beyond the acquisition of functional skills qualifications, they do little work that helps them improve their English and mathematics skills. Assessors do not routinely help apprentices by correcting spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors or provide them with appropriate guidance on how to improve their writing. In many cases, the quality of assessors' own writing sets a poor example.

There are no opportunities for those without a GCSE grade A* to C to study for these qualifications.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that all assessors develop their own English and mathematics skills so that they are able to embed these subjects within vocational training and are able to help apprentices develop these skills beyond level 2.
- Develop a strategy for ensuring that assessors successfully integrate English and mathematics within all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Develop plans to enable learners to gain qualifications to GCSE level and beyond in English and mathematics. Implement these plans as soon as is practical.

The extent to which assessment, marking and feedback helps learners to understand the progress they have made and how to improve

Assessors do not mark apprentices' work in sufficient detail. They provide little feedback on written work and in many cases it is not obvious that an assessor has read apprentices' work. The quality of a few apprentices' written work is not sufficiently high.

Assessors do not record workplace observations in enough detail for the apprentice to know what he/she has done well and where he/she needs to improve. Although observations are cross-referenced to the appropriate standards, assessors do not record in sufficient detail whether the completed work matched the selected criteria or was good enough. There are few examples of work products, or photographs of these, in portfolios.

Progress reviews do not identify the skills that apprentices have developed or the progress they have made in sufficient detail. Apprentices are therefore unable to see where they need to focus their attention. Learner comments on these reviews are cursory and give no indication that they understand their own progress. Targets are not specific or measurable and assessors do not review them at subsequent meetings.

Apprentices do not have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity or safeguarding, and progress reviews make little reference to these themes.

Priorities for improvement

- Ensure that assessors frequently mark all written work and provide clear and detailed feedback that helps learners develop their vocational knowledge and skills, and supports them to develop their writing skills.
- Ensure that assessors conduct enough workplace observations to make secure judgements about the skills of their apprentices. Ensure that assessors record the outcomes of these observations in greater detail so that the quality of the apprentice's work and the criteria it covers are clear within the text.
- Monitor the completion of progress reviews to ensure that these provide apprentices with a detailed understanding of the progress they have made and any areas in which they need to make improvements. Check that learner comments clearly demonstrate their full participation in these reviews and their understanding of the feedback they receive. Ensure that targets set are specific and measurable and that assessors check that these have been met during subsequent reviews.
- Ensure that all assessors fully understand equality and diversity and safeguarding topics, and that they incorporate them within teaching, learning and assessment. Ensure that assessors include these themes within progress reviews to ensure that apprentices develop their understanding of them.

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