

Pearson PLC

Re-inspection monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Steve Hunsley HMI

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Harlow
Essex
CM20 2JE

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This is the first follow-up re-inspection monitoring visit to Pearson PLC following publication of the inspection report on 27 January 2106, which found the provider to be inadequate overall. Inspectors judged all aspects as inadequate. At the time of this monitoring visit, 16 apprentices were undertaking training, and a further five were suspended from learning.

Themes

What progress has been made to ensure that all apprentices are safe and that robust procedures for safeguarding apprentices are in place?

Significant progress

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and managers have given safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty a very high priority. They have implemented a detailed and revised safeguarding policy covering all aspects of the organisation, including apprentices. A dedicated apprenticeship section of the provider's intranet allows apprentices and their line managers to find information and gives good links to internal policies and procedures as well as external resources. Those apprentices interviewed during the monitoring visit stated that they felt safe, well supported and protected.

A dedicated safeguarding lead is now in place for apprentices and has established good links with the responsible persons at the subcontractor and other external agencies. Managers have ensured that all staff and apprentices have undertaken specific and detailed training to raise their awareness of safeguarding and the threats of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices are very aware of their duty and understand well whom to contact in the event of any concerns. A very useful 'at risk' flow-chart simplifies the process for apprentices and their line managers.

Trainer/assessors use scenarios well to enable apprentices to explore issues around safeguarding, and the threats of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices talk confidently of their improved understanding around these issues and the organisation's ethics and the way they link to British values. Apprentices' line managers have all attended dedicated workshops to help reinforce their duty of care.

What progress has the provider made to improve the quality of provision and to ensure that the required components of the apprenticeship framework are in place? Reasonable progress

Managers, of both Pearson PLC and its subcontractor for training purposes Pearson TQ, now have a much more robust working relationship than at the time of inspection. Apprentices remaining in learning now benefit from having a much better understanding of the requirements of their qualification outcomes and what is expected of them in order to complete their apprenticeship.

All apprentices have agreed revised completion dates for their qualifications and the majority are making good progress towards meeting their deadlines.

The Pearson Apprenticeship Advisory Group (PAAG) monitors performance well and its focus has now been diverted into a task and finish group to develop and review revised key performance indicators. These indicators currently concentrate on apprentices catching up with their work to meet their revised deadlines. Managers make better use of a wide set of available information and performance management processes to check and monitor the impact of support for apprentices, and their progress and attainment. Very regular contract review meetings enable managers to have a much clearer view of the progress apprentices are making and where any interventions are necessary. For example, apprentices benefit from additional learning sessions in Manchester and Warrington, which help them further develop their English and mathematical skills in preparation for their examinations.

What progress has been made in improving teaching, learning and assessment and in developing apprentices' English and mathematical skills? Reasonable progress

The management of the apprenticeship programme now provides a clearer focus on ensuring that apprentices have effective teaching, learning and assessment processes that better meet their needs. For example, the introduction and development of an electronic portfolio and recording system supports apprentices well and has improved the communication channels significantly. As part of the performance monitoring process, managers now carry out regular formal observations of teaching, learning and assessment. Reports from these observations are detailed and focus sufficiently on the progress apprentices are making. Follow-up actions for trainer/assessors ensure that professional development opportunities are identified by managers. Trainer/assessors are developing their teaching skills in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship programme and they now provide group sessions for apprentices around specialist theory, English and mathematical development. One-to-one sessions and a selection of web-based learning packages

for apprentices to access prior to sitting examinations are readily available. It is too early to judge accurately the impact of these initiatives, as results of examinations have not yet been confirmed; however, a much higher proportion of apprentices than previously are making good progress.

Apprentices benefit from good support from their trainer/assessors and their line managers.

Line managers routinely schedule study time for apprentices to undertake learning tasks during the working week, with additional time for English, mathematics and information technology where required. Monitoring of the availability and use of this time is robust and effective.

What progress has been made in ensuring apprentices make good progress with their qualifications and skill development?

Reasonable progress

Managers recognise that previously a significant number of apprentices did not receive sufficient advice and guidance regarding their intended qualification outcomes. Following effective interventions since the previous inspection, apprentices are now more motivated and positive about their learning experience, and many aspire to gain promotion or improve their employment prospects as a result of completing their studies.

Apprentices regularly attend workshops and sessions designed to help them improve their levels in English and mathematics. Most line managers are now more involved with the review process and the setting of targets and goals for apprentices. Targets are now more meaningful, job related and achievable. However, a small minority of the targets do not sufficiently challenge apprentices to improve their performance or learn new skills.

A recently introduced work-based project is intended to enhance apprentices' understanding of their job role and to allow them to showcase their skills in preparation for professional and/or academic qualifications as part of their further development. However, to date too few apprentices have engaged with the project to consider the impact it may have.

Apprentices are clear about the improvement in their level of confidence as a result of their apprenticeship. For example, a level 3 apprentice gave a presentation to a large group of influential educational stakeholders at a recent event in London.

Managers are not yet clear of apprentices' destinations when they complete their qualifications.

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