

WhiteHat Group Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1276443

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Inspection date(s): 14–15 June 2018

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was carried out as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers funded through the apprenticeship levy. Ofsted's intention to carry out monitoring visits to these new providers was announced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in November 2017. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

WhiteHat Group Limited (WhiteHat) is an independent training provider. The company offers a range of apprenticeships in roles previously open to graduates only. In May 2017, WhiteHat became a prime contract holder. The company currently has 188 apprentices funded through the apprenticeship levy. Most of these apprentices are on standards-based programmes at level 3 in business and human resources, accounting and finance, and digital technology. WhiteHat also trains aspiring managers who are more experienced and usually older. These apprentices follow the team leader/supervisor standard.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have worked very effectively to make sure that employers and apprentices understand apprenticeship requirements. Leaders have a clear and highly developed vision for the company that is successfully raising apprentices' aspirations, developing their skills effectively and leading to high-quality provision and outcomes. Their current apprenticeship offer places a very strong emphasis on improving learners' social standing. Leaders and managers have developed an effective alternative route for apprentices to gain professional employment other than by going to university. The courses allow learners without degrees to move into areas of employment that more traditionally needed a university education and would otherwise have been closed to them. Strong links with high-profile and prestigious employers lead to very good opportunities for apprentices. Managers work very closely with employers, who value the robust relationship they have with WhiteHat staff. A newly formed board of highly qualified and widely experienced advisers provides a strong and effective system of governance.

Leaders and managers make sure that employers understand and fully meet the requirements of apprenticeship standards for on- and off-the-job training. All apprentices receive at least their full entitlement of work time devoted to off-the-job learning. Staff track and record learning systematically so that they can make sure all apprentices are making good progress, gaining new knowledge and learning new

skills. Managers and employers work closely with apprentices to make sure that their off-the-job learning supports and enriches their work.

Apprentices benefit from a well-planned programme of practice end-point tests that prepare them well for their final assessments. Staff give apprentices detailed and constructive feedback on their performance in these practice tests, so that they know how to improve. Pass rates for those apprentices who have already taken mock assessments, functional skills examinations and units of their qualification are very high. Many apprentices are working at distinction level.

Leaders and managers assess the quality of their training accurately and correctly. They identify in detail the strengths and weaknesses of the company and develop highly effective strategies to improve training. They recognise concerns quickly and act swiftly to correct weaknesses. For example, leaders and managers recognised that a week-long training session in computer programming proved too intensive for some apprentices. They rapidly changed the structure of the course to give apprentices more time to reflect on their learning. Leaders review the detailed quality-improvement plan frequently and thoroughly. They make very good use of this to hold managers to account for the progress they are making towards improving the quality of training.

Coaches are well qualified, highly enthusiastic and widely experienced. A detailed weekly programme of professional development makes sure that they develop and refine their teaching skills. All coaches complete an accreditation course that improves their session planning and delivery, their English and mathematical skills, and their commitment to professional development. Where coaches are not able to meet the demands of the programme, they receive good support from managers. If they do not improve, they leave the company.

Coaches and managers check apprentices' progress thoroughly and often. They know which apprentices are most at risk of not achieving their qualification. They intervene quickly and successfully to remedy slow progress and to support those who need more help. All current apprentices are on track to achieve their qualification by their planned end date.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Significant progress

Applicants for apprenticeships go through a rigorous and very carefully constructed selection programme. Staff use this to make sure that they place applicants on the correct course and that they are well matched to their employer. Apprentices receive very effective support throughout the recruitment process. This support includes extensive pre-interview practice so that all applicants know what to expect at interviews with employers.

Staff give apprentices detailed information about the format and structure of their apprenticeship programme. Apprentices understand fully the high expectations that WhiteHat and their employers have of them. As a result, they are realistic about the commitments needed from them.

Apprentices benefit from high-quality teaching and highly effective progress reviews. Coaches plan reviews very carefully and set high expectations from the outset, focusing apprentices on distinction criteria. Useful, relevant and interesting extension activities help many apprentices to meet and exceed the requirements of the distinction criteria. Coaches teach stimulating sessions that challenge apprentices to analyse critically and evaluate their work. They set detailed and demanding assignments for apprentices to complete after these sessions, which extend their learning very effectively.

Coaches set apprentices challenging targets and review these often. They make sure that targets are closely linked to apprentices' job roles. In meeting their targets, apprentices develop relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours. Coaches, employers and apprentices hold detailed discussions about progress in on- and off-the-job training and personal development. Apprentices work very hard to meet and exceed the challenges set by coaches and employers. Most develop high levels of relevant knowledge and skills, and almost all make rapid progress.

Coaches use questioning very effectively to extend apprentices' thinking and understanding. They encourage apprentices to consider carefully their ideas, assumptions and motivation. They summarise main learning points clearly at the end of taught sessions and relate them very well to apprentices' employment contexts.

Apprentices develop their English, mathematics and digital skills very effectively, regardless of their prior achievements and levels of ability. For example, apprentices quickly develop understanding of complex and technical language relevant to their industries. They learn about currency exchange rates and taxation and calculate the cost effectiveness of a range of quotations from suppliers. They also develop their information technology skills, for example by learning to use pivot tables in Excel spreadsheets. All apprentices complete a 'future leaders' foundation course as well as their main qualification. This helps them develop wider leadership skills and learn about topics such becoming global citizens and developing their own personal brands.

Apprentices receive detailed and impartial careers information, advice and guidance. They fully understand the options available to them at the end of their apprenticeship. Staff organise 'Industry days' with prestigious companies to help apprentices understand career opportunities and widen their horizons.

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

Leaders and managers have highly effective arrangements in place to make sure that apprentices are safe. They make safeguarding a very high priority for all WhiteHat staff, apprentices and employers. Leaders and managers carry out detailed checks to make sure that employers' premises are safe, and complete comprehensive risk assessments when needed. They make sure that employers know how and when to contact them if they have any concerns about safeguarding.

Leaders have clear and comprehensive guidelines for the referral of any concerns, including those related to extremism or radicalised behaviour. All staff receive frequent training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. Staff know how to identify concerns and how to make a safeguarding referral. Leaders and managers have produced an effective 'Prevent' duty action plan and risk assessment. However, they do not identify in enough detail possible threats that are specific to apprentices' workplaces or their local communities.

Designated safeguarding staff are well trained and knowledgeable. They use their good relationships with specialist agencies very effectively to support vulnerable apprentices. Safeguarding officers promptly investigate and resolve any concerns raised. Records of actions are clear.

Apprentices feel safe in their workplaces and in training sessions. Coaches check thoroughly on apprentices' safety and well-being when they visit them in their workplaces, and check apprentices' understanding of safeguarding often. Leaders and managers carry out detailed and very thorough recruitment checks before they appoint new staff, including Disclosure and Barring Service checks

Managers review the progress and well-being of at-risk apprentices each week. They act quickly to support those in danger of falling behind. Leaders and managers ensure that employers contact them quickly if apprentices do not arrive at work.

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