

Flight Centre (UK) Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

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

Established in the UK in 1995, Flight Centre (UK) Limited is a high street travel agent with 85 shops throughout the UK. Since May 2017, the company has been delivering apprenticeships to newly employed travel consultants within the company. One hundred and thirty-six apprentices are on programme. All of them are on a travel consultancy standard at level 3.

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 at Flight Centre (UK) Limited (Flight Centre) share a vision and ambition to provide high-quality apprenticeship training for the travel sector. They have implemented an apprenticeship programme that supports individuals to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to work in Flight Centre shops. Leaders and managers recruit individuals carefully for the apprenticeship programme and, because of this, very few apprentices leave the programme before completing it. Apprentices have a good understanding of the career options available to them within Flight Centre. A small number of apprentices have gained promotion to assistant manager roles within stores while on their apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. They have related the apprenticeship standards competently to their own business requirements. For example, coaches develop apprentices' geographical knowledge with a particular emphasis on Flight Centre's priority destinations. Leaders and managers monitor apprentices' off-the-job training effectively. They ensure that apprentices attend the 'welcome aboard' training as well as off-site training days. A majority of apprentices have time away from their desks to complete their learning. However, a small number of apprentices prioritise their work, such as closing a sale, over their learning, and this reduces their off-the-job learning time. Leaders and managers have recruited coaches from Flight Centre stores, all of whom have considerable experience in managing stores and within the travel industry, which benefits apprentices.

Store managers receive comprehensive information about their responsibilities when they recruit apprentices. Coaches work closely with apprentices' managers to link the off-the-job activities to apprentices' work. In addition, apprentices, coaches and apprentices' line managers meet regularly to ensure the managers' full involvement with the apprenticeship programme and to enable the apprentices to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to complete the apprenticeship successfully.

Leaders and managers have implemented an appropriate system to track apprentices' progress. Apprentices understand the progress that they are making towards completing their apprenticeship and which topics that they need to complete each month. As a result, apprentices make good progress. Leaders and managers meet frequently to monitor the performance of their coaches and to check that they comply with all the requirements of the apprenticeship programme. However, leaders and managers do not, when reviewing coaches' performance, monitor the progress that apprentices make towards completing their apprenticeship by the planned end date.

Coaches have limited experience of managing learning and there is no formal process in place to support them to develop their teaching skills. Coaches have participated in some in-house training, but there is not a clear plan for improving further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Leaders and managers have been slow to implement the requirements for teaching English and mathematics. However, they have recently subcontracted this out to another provider to support learners to develop their skills in these subjects.

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

Most apprentices are highly motivated, enjoy their apprenticeship and develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to their job roles. Apprentices develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in using the various booking systems as well as improving their sales conversion rates. Consequently, they are increasing the number of sales that they make.

Apprentices benefit from regular reviews with their coaches. During reviews, coaches set individualised targets for apprentices, which relate to their workplace and the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to develop before their next review. Apprentices value the support that they receive from coaches. As a result, apprentices make good progress towards achieving their qualification.

Coaches make good use of questioning to develop apprentices' knowledge and understanding further of the topics that they have learned. Coaches, through their discussions with apprentices, review and follow up on targets that have been set.

Coaches provide apprentices with frequent and helpful feedback. For example, apprentices receive guidance on how emails to customers can be improved. As a result, apprentices understand the progress that they are making and what they need to do to improve.

Apprentices have a good understanding of how to generate evidence against the apprenticeship standard. Coaches have high expectations, which apprentices meet, for apprentices to take responsibility for managing their own time in order to produce work of a good quality.

Apprentices are not clear about the requirements of their end-point assessment and what they need to do to achieve a merit or distinction grade. Coaches have started to prepare apprentices approaching the end of their programmes for their end-point assessment. For example, coaches use mock tests and professional discussion effectively in order for apprentices to experience a simulated end-point assessment. However, leaders and managers do not know whether coaches are adequately preparing apprentices for their final assessment.

Leaders and managers have not implemented a sufficiently rigorous system to monitor the quality of the apprenticeship programme. They are over-reliant on feedback from apprentices in judging the quality of the apprenticeship programme. As a result, leaders and managers do not have a comprehensive enough overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and what they need to do to improve it.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and effective.

Apprentices receive effective support in order to keep themselves safe and healthy. They receive support at the start of their programme on health-related issues and can access support on a range of mental health needs. Apprentices receive ongoing advice on the safe use of computers. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Apprentices receive appropriate safeguarding training at induction and they feel safe within their store. They feel confident about reporting issues to their manager.

A designated safeguarding lead has yet to receive appropriate training, although this is planned. The designated safeguarding lead records all incidents on a central register, which is reviewed monthly by senior leaders and directors. As a result, leaders and managers are able to identify trends and provide the appropriate support. Directors and all staff attend regular safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. As a result, staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities.

The designated safeguarding lead has established effective links with local safeguarding groups and knows what to do should there be a safeguarding incident with one of the apprentices.

Coaches do not integrate safeguarding, British values and the threats associated with radicalisation and extremism well enough into their training and their discussions with apprentices at progress reviews. As a result, apprentices have a limited understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and how these apply to them in their workplace.

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