

The National Logistics Academy

Monitoring visit report

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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 training 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.

The National Logistics Academy Limited (The Academy) was established in 2015 to provide training courses for the logistics industry through a network of members across the country. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Mantra Learning Limited, which is an established independent training provider. The Academy became a levy-funded training provider in May 2017. The Academy operates on a mostly subcontract model for the delivery of levy-funded apprenticeships. Of the 25 members of The Academy, only five are subcontracted currently to deliver apprenticeships. These are Mantra Learning Limited, South Essex College, Gateshead College, Automotive Transport Training and JLD Driving Training Limited.

At the time of the monitoring visit, 107 apprentices were enrolled on standards-based programmes and 21 were enrolled on frameworks. One hundred and ten apprentices are enrolled on large goods vehicle (LGV) driver programmes at level 2. Twelve apprentices are enrolled on warehousing and storage programmes and six apprentices are enrolled on team-leading programmes.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Senior leaders have a clear and purposeful strategic ambition to be the leading national provider of high-quality training for the logistics industry. They have managed the selection and addition of subcontractor members to The Academy carefully. The thorough due diligence process ensures that subcontractor members deliver and support apprentices to be successful in their programmes.

Senior leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the requirements of apprenticeship-standards programmes for on- and off-the-job training. They ensure that employers understand the off-the-job training requirements and provide apprentices with sufficient time away from their job. Where there are any concerns or issues about off-the-job training, these are quickly identified and resolved.

Senior leaders have invested significantly in the resources and capacity to ensure that subcontractor members are supported to deliver the programmes to the required high standards. Managers have developed a range of high-quality learning resources. The resources are industry specific and they also embed English, mathematics, safeguarding and British values into the vocational training successfully. Apprentices develop good oral communication skills and debate topics such as the impact of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union on the logistics industry and their company.

Senior leaders and managers have developed rigorous quality-assurance processes to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The current self-assessment of the overall quality of the apprenticeship programmes identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses. The quality processes help managers to identify areas for further improvement quickly. For example, they have identified that development coordinators do not plan individual learning based on apprentices' starting points consistently.

Managers use their long-established working relationships with high-profile employers in the industry to plan apprenticeship programmes successfully to meet their individual business needs. They ensure that apprentices are placed on the appropriate programme. Employers value the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices develop and the impact on their business. For example, LGV driver apprentices develop knowledge and awareness of safe and fuel-efficient driving and how to deliver excellent customer service.

The senior management board meets regularly and monitors closely the quality of the training that the apprentices receive and the performance of subcontractor members. Board members have a good awareness of the requirements of apprenticeship programmes and The Academy's current strengths and weaknesses.

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

Tutors, development coordinators and functional skills coordinators are highly qualified and have relevant industrial experience. Managers and staff use their skills and experience effectively to plan and deliver the apprenticeship programmes. They have high expectations of apprentices. Managers ensure that on- and off-the-job training is coordinated appropriately. Staff use a range of high-quality workbooks and online resources to facilitate apprentices' learning.

Most LGV driver apprentices make good progress towards achieving their driving-related qualifications. The proportion of current apprentices who have completed and passed their functional skills qualifications is high.

Apprentices' English and mathematical skills are assessed prior to enrolment to ensure that they have the required level of knowledge and skills to be able to meet the demands of the apprenticeship programme. If their knowledge and skills are lower than required, they are signposted to alternative local providers for training before being enrolled onto the apprenticeship programme. Managers have recently introduced a more rigorous assessment of apprentices' vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours at the start of the programme so that they can monitor their progress accurately. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this development.

Development coordinators monitor the progress of apprentices regularly. During reviews they encourage apprentices to reflect on the knowledge, skills and behaviours they have developed. For example, apprentices appreciate how driving efficiently has a positive impact on reducing business costs and on environmental protection. Apprentices also demonstrate a good awareness of how efficient customer service strengthens employer–customer relationships. Apprentices receive regular feedback from tutors and functional skills coordinators. Employers attend helpful quarterly reviews. However, development coordinators do not help apprentices who are exempt from functional skills English and mathematics to develop their knowledge and skills further.

Managers monitor apprentices' attendance at master-classes and reviews systematically. They provide senior leaders with monthly reports based on progress reviews so that they can identify when apprentices are falling behind. Managers focus too much on qualification achievement and not enough on apprentices' personal development from their starting points.

Managers monitor regularly the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and progress reviews through observation. They provide tutors and coordinators with feedback to help them improve their practices. However, feedback is not focused sufficiently on the impact of teaching and learning on apprentices' progress from their starting points.

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

Significant progress

Senior leaders and managers have made safeguarding a high priority for staff and apprentices. Comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures have been approved by the board and implemented. The designated safeguarding officer has had appropriate training to be able to carry out the role very effectively. The designated safeguarding officer is a member of the local safeguarding board for further education in one of the regions in which The Academy delivers apprenticeships. As a result, staff are provided with up-to-date and relevant training and information on safeguarding practices.

Staff, including those who are employed by subcontractor members, have a clear understanding of their responsibility to safeguard apprentices. Staff report all incidents and concerns to the safeguarding team, who record, action and monitor the impact of actions carefully so that apprentices are kept safe and can remain on their programmes. The board receives regular reports and monitors all safeguarding issues raised.

Senior leaders' safe recruitment processes ensure that appropriate checks are made to assess the suitability of staff who deliver the apprenticeship programmes, including staff working for subcontractor members.

The designated safeguarding officer has developed effective links with external agencies across the regions to ensure that subcontractor members are supported locally. These are expanded continually as the areas in which apprenticeships are delivered increase. There is a comprehensive 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan in place. Managers are working with subcontractor members who require support and guidance to help them to develop and implement their own 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan. The risk assessment and action plan are regularly monitored by managers. Apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

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