

ABM Training (UK) Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	1276416
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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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 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.

ABM Training (UK) Ltd (ABM Training) was set up in 2008, initially offering diplomas in health and social care. The company now offers apprenticeship programmes throughout the south east of England, with most based in Kent. The company started direct delivery of apprenticeships in November 2017, mainly in health and social care, but also offering apprenticeships in business administration, supporting teaching and learning, cleaning, information technology and team leadership. Currently, there are just over 100 apprentices enrolled at ABM Training under their prime contract, with slightly more than half of these funded under the levy. Most apprentices study at levels 2 or 3. Around two thirds of apprentices are on framework-based apprenticeships.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear and practical strategy for the development and growth of ABM Training. They use local and regional job shortage information effectively to plan new apprenticeships and understand the skills needs of the region. Leaders have aspirational but realistic targets for the number of new apprentices they wish to take on each month and make sure that they have the human and physical resources appropriate to support new enrolments. Leaders and managers have developed strong relationships with employers. Staff meet with new employers before taking on apprentices and discuss fully topics such as off-the-job training, the impact of standards apprenticeships and safeguarding. In this way, they ensure that employers understand the requirements of the apprenticeship. Employers rightly value the links with managers at the company and praise the effectiveness of their communication.

Leaders' assessment of their provision is honest and evaluative. They identify the strengths and most of the weaknesses in the apprenticeship provision accurately. A detailed and practicable quality improvement plan helps them to deal with weaknesses quickly. Leaders frequently review their progress, but do not have quantifiable success measures. This means that it is difficult for leaders and managers to judge easily the impact of the actions they have taken. No external

board or systems of governance are currently in place to hold leaders to account for delivering high-quality training.

Leaders and managers identify, discuss, and improve weaknesses in teaching, learning and assessment processes in frequent team meetings. They do not identify in enough detail what assessors need to do to improve apprentices' learning. Observations of teaching and learning focus too much on what assessors are doing and not enough on what apprentices are learning. Leaders recognise these weaknesses and intend to appoint a curriculum manager to oversee improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. Individual managers record learners' off-the-job training diligently to make sure that it satisfies the requirements of the apprenticeship. However, leaders do not have a clear overview of the amount of training that all the apprentices undertake to enable them to monitor compliance across the provision.

Suitably skilled and qualified staff with recent industrial experience work effectively with apprentices to develop their knowledge and practical skills. Assessors and employers work successfully together to make sure that apprentices develop new skills. Assessors check and record in detail the progress that apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships make in developing effective workplace behaviours. Leaders use a well-devised training programme to enable staff to support apprentices for their end-point assessments.

Leaders and managers monitor apprentices' progress effectively. Managers receive frequent reports on apprentices who fall behind and they track carefully the effectiveness of actions that assessors take to support these apprentices. Managers record fully the reasons for the small number of apprentices who leave their apprenticeships early. They use this information to inform and improve enrolment and induction. Most apprentices are on track to complete their apprenticeship by their end date and very few apprentices have left their apprenticeship this year.

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**

Learners are enthusiastic about their apprenticeships and enjoy their learning. They understand how developing theoretical and practical knowledge and skills will help them become more effective in their job roles. They can explain in detail what they have learned. Apprentices communicate confidently with assessors and employers and use what they learn in their off-the-job training to become better employees.

Most apprentices are aware of their completion dates and make good progress with their apprenticeship programme. Employers and assessors work effectively together to connect on- and off-the-job training. They provide useful opportunities for apprentices to extend their learning. Employers give many apprentices responsibilities that expand their knowledge and skills. For example, information and

communications technology apprentices develop company websites and troubleshoot technical problems. Apprentices on facilities management apprenticeships consult and liaise with school governors and contractors to arrange and sign off repair and maintenance work.

Staff use information about apprentices' prior learning successfully to help the apprentices improve their knowledge. Apprentices take a detailed initial assessment in English and mathematics. Staff use the results of the tests to provide comprehensive training plans that develop apprentices' skills. Functional skills tutors support apprentices' English and mathematics skills development successfully. They provide apprentices with clear and very detailed feedback to help them improve. Leaders need to engage more tutors to help all apprentices to develop their functional skills quickly and intend to recruit additional staff. Assessors have made limited progress in helping apprentices to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills. As a result, a minority of apprentices do not develop these skills quickly enough. Trained and experienced staff provide helpful assessments of dyslexia.

Leaders and managers make sure that they recruit apprentices with integrity. Staff provide apprentices with detailed information about all aspects of their apprenticeship before and at the start of their courses. A comprehensive induction prepares learners well for their apprenticeship. Assessors analyse apprentices' skills gaps successfully and plan their learning well. Employers and assessors provide good information and guidance that makes sure that apprentices understand their next steps. Leaders use suggestions from apprentices to improve their provision. For example, as a result of a recent apprenticeship survey, leaders and managers changed the questions assessors use during induction to make them easier for apprentices to understand.

Assessors meet with apprentices often to discuss progress. They provide apprentices with constructive and helpful feedback that helps them to improve their work. They carry out comprehensive assessments and make sure that evidence meets the qualification criteria. They make sure that employers are aware of the progress of their apprentices. Apprentices and employers work with assessors to choose suitable units for study that improve apprentices' vocational knowledge and their effectiveness at work. Although most apprentices know what they need to do to improve, assessors' targets for apprentices focus too much on the completion of assignments and units rather than on developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

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

Learners feel safe and are safe at work. Despite recent staff changes, leaders have maintained appropriate numbers of trained designated safeguarding officers. Staff, learners and employers know how to report safeguarding concerns. Assessors make

sure during induction that learners understand procedures for reporting concerns. They reinforce learners' knowledge during monthly visits.

All staff complete comprehensive online safeguarding training and update their knowledge frequently. Managers deal with safeguarding concerns quickly and effectively. They have good links with external safeguarding agencies, whom they involve when necessary. Staff discuss safeguarding procedures and concerns at frequent team meetings to make sure that they are of high importance. They use a comprehensive safeguarding action plan to record areas for development and actions to deal with them. However, leaders do not review the plan or update progress. As a result, they have not yet created a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment.

Managers visit employers to ensure that they understand their safeguarding responsibilities before they take on apprentices. Leaders require employers to complete comprehensive risk assessments to make sure apprentices are safe in work. They use thorough induction checks to confirm that employers and apprentices understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

Managers follow safer recruitment practices and carry out appropriate checks on all staff who work with apprentices. They keep detailed records of staff safeguarding training. Leaders have recently introduced mandatory online learning for all apprentices to develop their understanding of safeguarding topics, including the 'Prevent' duty, effectively. Although assessors question apprentices about safeguarding topics during monthly visits, they do not record how well apprentices' knowledge of these topics improves during their apprenticeship.

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