

# Ensis Solutions Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 1276475

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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 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.

Ensis Solutions Limited (Ensis) was established in 2014. The company operated as a subcontractor from 2015 until 2017 for several further education colleges. Ensis received its own contract for delivering apprenticeships in December 2017. The company started to recruit its own apprentices in May 2017. Ensis offers apprenticeships nationally throughout England. At the time of the monitoring visit, it offered apprenticeships in the south, south east, east midlands, west midlands, north east and north west.

Currently, there are 123 apprentices, of whom 16 are completing apprenticeship frameworks and 107 are on standards-based apprenticeships. A total of 60 apprentices are studying at level 2, 47 at level 3 and 16 at level 5. The majority are enrolled on a diploma for managers.

### 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 strong determination and ambition to fulfil the company's mission to 'develop talented and skilled professionals to their full potential and exceed their employer's expectations'. They have taken decisive action to enable Ensis to move from being a subcontractor to being a provider with the capacity to offer high-quality apprenticeships. As a result, the provision meets the requirements of an apprenticeship. Leaders have recruited new managers who are responsible for monitoring and improving the quality of the training that apprentices receive. Lines of communication, responsibility and accountability are clear. Leaders have also strengthened governance arrangements through the appointment of an appropriately experienced non-executive director who supports and challenges leaders to make improvements. However, the recording of senior management and governance meetings and follow-up actions is not rigorous enough.

Leaders, managers and other staff work effectively with employers, which range from large national organisations to small- and medium-sized companies. They ensure that employers take a proactive role in apprentices' training. Employers are positive about the benefits of the training to their organisations. Apprentices are

recruited with integrity and are on programmes at appropriate levels that meet their skills needs. As a result of their apprenticeship training, most apprentices improve their employment prospects. For example, they take on more responsibility and become more productive employees. Until very recently, initial assessment focused mainly on identifying apprentices' skills in English and mathematics. A revised and more robust initial assessment process now enables staff to identify a broader range of skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices arrive with, and design programmes that meet these specific needs. It is, however, too early to see the impact of this improved process.

Leaders and managers have an accurate and realistic understanding of the quality of the provision and the improvements that they urgently need to make, particularly in relation to the slow progress of too many apprentices and the quality of progress monitoring. In July 2018, they produced their first self-assessment report and quality improvement plan. Most of the weaknesses that were identified during this visit are identified in the report and plan, and leaders and managers have begun to implement improvement actions. Leaders now receive regular and useful reports on performance and quality. Their recent actions, together with the well-established and recently enhanced internal quality assurance meetings with tutors, are beginning to have an impact on tackling weaknesses. These include increased support and targeted training for tutors whose performance is not at the required standard.

Until recently, leaders have not focused sufficiently on evaluating the impact of actions that they take to improve the quality of training and accelerate apprentices' progress, or on identifying further actions that they need to take. This has meant that some of the more significant weaknesses have not been tackled quickly enough. Their revised and enhanced quality improvement arrangements enable managers to intervene more quickly and effectively, and this is beginning to have an impact on the quality of training.

Although leaders and managers plan the required hours for off-the-job training carefully, the amount of time that apprentices spend training off the job during working hours varies across employers. To address this issue, leaders have recruited a manager who visits employers to ensure that all apprentices have the required off-the-job training time during working hours.

Leaders recognised that their system for monitoring apprentices' progress on standards-based programmes was not fully fit for purpose, and that this was contributing to the slow progress of too many apprentices. They have enhanced this system so that they can measure more accurately the development of apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours. However, tutors and apprentices are not making consistently effective use of this new monitoring system.

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

Despite the many recent improvements that leaders and managers have made to ensure that they provide high-quality apprenticeships and the early impact that this is having on apprentices' progress, too many weaknesses remain in the quality of training, and the progress of apprentices is still not rapid enough.

Tutors have comprehensive information about their apprentices' knowledge, skills and experience. However, they do not make consistently good use of this information to plan individual programmes for each apprentice. Tutors do not set apprentices learning and development targets that stimulate and challenge them and ensure that they make good progress. For example, they do not set them demanding enough targets to achieve high grades in their end-point assessments. Consequently, too few apprentices progress quickly and develop to their full potential.

Apprentices receive appropriate advice and guidance about the range of programmes that they can join. Apprentices who have taken up new roles recently develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They become more productive in their work and of greater value to their employers. However, apprentices who have been in their job roles for some time do not extend their knowledge, skills and behaviours sufficiently. Although they become more confident and more productive, they make slow progress in developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours, and do not benefit sufficiently from their training.

Tutors visit apprentices regularly at their workplaces, but do not record accurately and routinely the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices develop. In their feedback to apprentices, tutors do not identify sufficiently what elements of their training apprentices have completed successfully and what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Tutors encourage and support apprentices effectively to develop their knowledge and skills in English and mathematics.

Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. Although managers and tutors have developed an extensive range of useful resources such as webinars and online study packs, too few apprentices are encouraged to use these resources to extend their learning and development.

Managers evaluate the quality of training through observing teaching, learning and assessment. However, in many of the evaluations following observations, managers do not focus enough on apprentices' learning, new skill development and progress. As a result, tutors often have an inaccurate understanding of how effectively they manage learning. They are not aware of their strengths and where their teaching practices require improvement. Managers do not consistently monitor improvements that tutors make to their practice following observations.

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

Leaders and managers have developed and implemented an appropriate range of policies and procedures for safeguarding apprentices. They have implemented a separate policy, risk assessment and action plan for the 'Prevent' duty. Apprentices have a good understanding of the risks of involvement with radical ideologies and how holding British values reduces the dangers of extremism. They have a good awareness of staying safe while using the internet.

Leaders and managers follow safer recruitment practices when employing staff. Staff files include checks of applicants' identities and eligibility for working with apprentices. Although there are no apprentices under the age of 19, all staff working with apprentices receive Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

Managers have made good progress in training staff on safeguarding. The designated safeguarding officer has completed the relevant safeguarding training at level 3. All other staff complete safeguarding training at level 2. Staff have completed first-level online training for the 'Prevent' duty and Channel.

Reporting processes for apprentices who have safeguarding issues or concerns are clear. As a result, apprentices know how to report any concerns and are certain that staff take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately. The designated safeguarding officer deals swiftly with safeguarding referrals. These referrals are recorded thoroughly and the agreed actions are clear. Suitable external referral processes are in place. Referrals to external agencies have not yet been needed.

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