

# Mitre Group Limited

Monitoring visit report

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| <b>Unique reference number:</b> | 53403  |
| <b>Name of lead inspector:</b>  | Russ Henry HMI   |
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| <b>Type of provider:</b>        | Independent learning provider  |
| <b>Address:</b>                 | Riverside Business Centre<br>Foundry Lane<br>Milford<br>Derbyshire<br>DE56 0RN |

## 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 this visit is on the four themes set out below.

Mitre Group Limited (Mitre) began providing apprenticeships in its own right in May 2017. It had previously provided apprenticeships through subcontracting arrangements with Nottingham College and Babington Business College Limited, which it continues to do. Mitre works with apprentices from a number of professional sports clubs and a large textiles firm. It also uses its links with professional football clubs to provide a small number of programmes for unemployed adults. At the time of the visit, it had 89 apprentices following a mix of framework and standards apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5 in activity leadership and coaching, sports development, management, customer service, business administration, and team leading. It had 51 adult learners following programmes in customer service, and employability skills.

### Themes

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

#### **Insufficient progress**

Leaders have developed a sensible strategy focused on developing apprenticeships in areas that they perceive to be their strengths, especially with professional sports clubs. Although managers wish to increase the scale of their activities, they recognise the potential risks to the quality of the programmes if they expand too rapidly. As a result, they are proceeding with caution. However, they have failed to recognise that the quality of current provision is not good enough.

Managers have not ensured that apprentices benefit from well-organised programmes that meet all the apprenticeship requirements. Specifically, they have not made adequate arrangements to secure apprentices' full entitlement to off-the-job training. Although managers enjoy productive relationships with employers and contracts state their expectations clearly, employers find it difficult to release apprentices from the workplace. As a result, apprentices do not complete enough off-the-job training. Most of the training they complete in their own time and not during their working hours as required. Although staff plan and structure some elements of learning competently, they plan other activities less carefully and consequently these are less beneficial to apprentices.

All apprentices complete initial assessments in English and mathematics. Apprentices who do not already hold appropriate qualifications in these subjects study for functional-skills examinations. Their vocational assessors provide training and support to help them to pass these examinations. Not all assessors have suitable knowledge and skills in these subjects. In a few cases the quality of assessors' own written work indicates that they lack the knowledge and skills to support their apprentices effectively.

Despite the incomplete structure in English and mathematics teaching, a number of apprentices achieve their functional-skills qualifications. Since the beginning of August 2017, just over half of apprentices who have taken examinations in mathematics have passed them, most at the first attempt. Just over three quarters of those who have taken English examinations have also passed, most at the first attempt. However, managers do not track the progress of apprentices in English and mathematics rigorously enough. They are not clear about how successfully those apprentices who have yet to take examinations are progressing.

Most apprentices work in suitable full-time roles. At the start of their programme they analyse their job and self-assess their knowledge and skills. Assessors make good use of this information to ensure that apprentices will benefit from the programme. They provide good opportunities for apprentices to develop and demonstrate the full range of knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the apprenticeship. Where apprentices have substantial existing knowledge and skills, staff take them into account and adjust the duration of their programme so that their time is spent developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Most apprentices are in permanent roles or expect their employment to become permanent once they complete their apprenticeship. However, a small number of apprentices work on a sessional basis and do not always have enough work. A few apprentices have little prospect of becoming permanent employees at the end of their programme and must pursue alternative education or employment.

### **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**

Assessors help apprentices to gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, sports coaches become more confident, develop their coaching skills and improve their communication with pupils and parents. Customer-service apprentices learn how to use slide shows effectively and team leaders learn how to work more effectively with different types of people. As a result, apprentices increase their professionalism and confidence in the workplace.

Assessors know their apprentices intimately. They assess all apprentices thoroughly to identify their strengths, weaknesses and starting points. Staff make good use of this information to ensure that apprentices are placed on the correct programme. Assessors plan carefully each stage of learning with apprentices at monthly

meetings. However, they do not develop an overall plan for teaching, learning and assessment for the whole apprenticeship programme and this prevents apprentices from understanding their progress fully. Apprentices are aware of the requirements of end-point assessments and, where appropriate, have commenced preparations for the practical elements.

Those apprentices who need to pass English and mathematics qualifications study functional skills at the appropriate level. However, assessors do not help those apprentices who already have the relevant GCSEs in English and mathematics to develop their knowledge and skills further. Assessors integrate information and communication technology into programmes skilfully. For example, apprentices who learn how to use pivot tables in spreadsheets save themselves and their employers a lot of time.

Assessors are well qualified, the majority to level 4 or above. However, managers do not yet have effective arrangements in place for their continuing professional development (CPD). The CPD programme consists largely of ideas for lessons around personal development, behaviour and welfare, British values, the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding, together with monthly updates on these themes.

Managers have not yet implemented effective quality-assurance arrangements. They observe assessors' lessons annually. Managers record what takes place and they identify the strengths and weaknesses. However, after observations managers do not produce clear action plans to help assessors improve their practices. Actions are not specific enough and are of limited use to assessors. Managers do not monitor the extent to which assessors' teaching and management of learning improve. Staff quality-assure apprentices' work in the middle and at the end of programmes. However, their 'findings' are not documented clearly and their recommendations for improvement are not implemented routinely.

Apprentices benefit from frequent progress reviews with their assessors. In these reviews, assessors record the learning that has taken place and plan activities for the following month. However, assessors do not share these reviews with employers routinely. Assessors use a cumbersome tracking system that makes it difficult for managers to identify and resolve problems relating to apprentices' progress quickly.

Apprentices receive relevant information, advice and guidance to ensure that they are on the correct programme. However, they do not receive impartial information, advice and guidance regarding future career pathways towards the end of their programme

**What progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals?** **Reasonable progress**

Managers have built on their good relationships with professional football clubs to provide a number of relevant programmes for adults seeking employment.

Learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to secure employment through focused taught classes and work experience that are of a good standard. Learners are guaranteed interviews with employers at the end of their programme. Their progression into employment is high.

This provision is organised appropriately. Learners are enthusiastic about the knowledge, skills and understanding they develop and the progress they make. For example, they learn how to deal with difficult customers while remaining calm. They participate in presentations and role plays that help them to develop their confidence and communication skills.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Apprentices and learners are safe. Managers have developed a clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy that staff know and understand. Staff can describe, for example, types and signs of abuse, how to deal with a safeguarding disclosure and to whom they should report concerns. They understand their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.

Those staff who were interviewed do not know that the organisation has a staff code of conduct. However, all staff are clear about how they are expected to behave. Their understanding aligns closely with the actual code of conduct. For example, they know that being a social-media friend of apprentices and learners is not acceptable.

The designated safeguarding officer receives appropriate and regular training. She participates in the local authority's safeguarding group and has a good understanding of her responsibilities. She has undertaken a training-facilitator programme and trains other staff appropriately. All staff who have contact with apprentices and learners undertake suitable safeguarding training and receive regular updates.

Leaders and managers follow safer recruitment practices. All those who are likely to have contact with apprentices and learners are subject to enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Applicants' identities, professional qualifications and work histories are verified thoroughly.

Managers acknowledge that some staff find it difficult to integrate themes related to safeguarding and British values into their lessons. They attempt to remedy this through newsletters that include guidance and discussion topics but these contain too little helpful information. However, in a few cases trainers demonstrate considerable expertise in this area and use it to good effect in lessons.

Staff take safeguarding concerns seriously. They conduct risk assessments for vulnerable learners and investigate carefully the rare safeguarding concerns that arise, referring to outside agencies when appropriate.

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