

The NVQ Training Centre Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	1278585
Name of lead inspector:	Victor Reid HMI
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Hastingwood Industrial Park Wood Lane Erdington Birmingham B24 9QR

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 NVQ Training Company Limited was established in January 2009. Its directors founded the company to deliver vocational training covering a wide range of sectors, including construction, transportation, warehousing and storage, business administration and leadership. In March 2017, the company successfully applied to join the register of apprenticeship training providers. The company has 98 apprentices in training, of which around a third are aged 16 to 18. Thirty-four apprentices are working towards recently developed standards-based apprenticeships at levels 2, 3, and 5. These are mainly in administration and supervisory management and leadership. The remaining 64 apprentices are working towards apprenticeship-framework qualifications at levels 2 and 3 in business administration, team leading, management, sales, and warehouse and storage.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Directors have high aspirations and a clear vision for the organisation. They use their wide range of relevant skills and business expertise gained as a subcontractor to inform the effective planning, organisation and delivery of their own directly held apprenticeship contract.

Leaders and senior managers set high expectations for their apprenticeship programmes. They have created an open and positive culture in which they share their ambitions for apprentices with staff through the detailed and challenging targets set out in the business plan.

Managers ensure that trainers have manageable caseloads of apprentices and work in small geographical areas. This means that they can visit apprentices in the workplace frequently and monitor apprentices' progress effectively. Training delivery staff have suitable qualifications, and a minority have an intermediate teaching qualification. All have relevant vocational expertise and experience in the subject areas in which they teach.

Performance management of staff is detailed and regular with monthly one-to-one review meetings and annual appraisals providing support and challenge as required. A well-considered programme of continuous professional development, which links to performance management, enables staff to benefit from access to suitable training that meets their individual needs. For example, vocational tutors have attended training sessions that have supported them to standardise their assessment practices, deepen their knowledge of standards-based apprenticeship specifications, and to extend their understanding of the principles relating to end-point assessment. This gives them the confidence to support apprentices with their learning and skills development needs.

The self-assessment process is suitably inclusive and has benefited from staff involvement and contribution. The quality improvement plan links to the main areas for improvement in the self-assessment report and is coherent. Arrangements for gaining feedback from apprentices are well established. Managers inform apprentices promptly of the actions they have taken in response to concerns and issues raised. Leaders know their organisation well, including its strengths and areas for development. However, records of observations of teaching, learning and assessment and subsequent actions do not focus sufficiently on the identification and reporting of apprentices' progress, both in lessons and over time. Similarly, the action plans developed by observers for tutors following observation do not consistently set out well-defined targets for those aspects of a tutor's delivery practice that need to improve.

The development of the apprenticeship curriculum to meet local skills priorities is good. Staff at all levels work very well with employers and stakeholders to ensure that the provision matches what is needed in the area. For example, directors and senior managers make skilful use of local partnerships and networks, including the local authority and the Chamber of Commerce, to understand and identify the key skills needs within the region. Tutors and business development staff have developed good working relationships and work closely with local and regional employers to ensure that vocational programmes meet employers' business priorities and apprentices' expectations.

Managers promote equality and diversity well throughout the organisation. They use monthly theme days, such as World Mental Health Day and religious festivals, to broaden apprentices' understanding of diversity in society. They translate appropriate policies and action plans into an inclusive environment which values individual differences. Tutors focus well on promoting British values at induction and during reviews. These extend apprentices' understanding of concepts such as the values of the rule of law, respect and inclusion, which prepare them well for life in a multicultural Britain.

Leaders and staff make frequent and timely use of a range of information systems to report and track the progress that apprentices make towards achieving targets for attendance, retention, and achievement. However, the way in which online tracking systems display information about apprentices' progress across all aspects of their

learning programme is inconsistent. This occasionally gives leaders a view of quality and of apprentices' progress that is too positive.

Governance arrangements are underdeveloped and require improvement. Directors have appropriate oversight of the provision and provide close support and challenge to senior managers. However, no independent scrutiny of the management of the provision is in place. Leaders have developed suitable plans to address this matter, but these are not yet in place.

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**

Apprentices benefit from good information, advice and guidance when they start the programme. A comprehensive induction to their programmes gives apprentices a good understanding of the expectations and demands of the qualification.

Staff use initial assessment well to provide an accurate assessment of apprentices' occupational skills and their starting points in English and mathematics. However, for the small minority of standards-based apprentices, the vocational-specific assessment used by tutors does not provide a sufficiently detailed analysis of apprentices' initial starting points regarding their workplace behaviours.

Apprentices work with high-quality employers who provide rich learning opportunities and promote high professional standards. Employers take a keen interest in the development of their apprentices. They support apprentices well to choose optional units that best match their interests and employment requirements. Employers give their time generously to support apprentices well in the workplaces. They jointly review the progress of their apprentices and coach and mentor them. This enables apprentices to learn their employers' business and culture, and so raises their aspirations to progress through the company.

Trainers help to develop apprentices' vocational skills well. They use their substantial industrial experience effectively to plan and deliver good-quality training. This develops apprentices' vocational skills, knowledge and understanding and prepares them for their next steps. Tutors and employers work well together to make learning relevant to work tasks. This enables apprentices to develop and hone their knowledge and skills to replicate industry standards.

Tutors use a wide range of coaching strategies. They are adept at making vocational learning relevant and meaningful to individual apprentices' roles and workplace settings. Individual workplace coaching sessions are productive and make full use of the available time when apprentices are away from their jobs. This assists apprentices to develop deeper understanding and relate their new learning and skills to their workplace. For example, in business administration, an apprentice works

extremely well to update the regulatory changes needed to supply products to customers when this country leaves the European Union.

The teaching of English and mathematics to apprentices is too focused on the completion of worksheets. Apprentices receive good support and preparation for their functional English and mathematics examinations. However, tutors do not explore alternative ways in which apprentices can learn, reinforce and apply these essential skills to their daily life. Apprentices do not improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar quickly enough, because tutors do not pay sufficient attention to the correction of spelling and grammatical errors in apprentices' written work.

Most apprentices prepare well for their training and review sessions. They make good use of online resources and naturally occurring evidence from the workplace to consolidate and extend their learning. They quickly learn new skills, develop confidence, demonstrate a strong work ethic and become valuable employees. They work well alongside their more experienced colleagues. They contribute effectively to bring new perspectives and ways of working that enrich the workforce. Employers are rightly very complimentary about the professionalism and the useful knowledge and skills that their employees gain as a result of the apprenticeship programme. For example, management apprentices become more thoughtful and are sensitive to how they need to apply different leadership strategies to different situations. This ensures that they motivate their teams to work productively. In warehousing and storage, apprentices contribute well to the development of standard operating procedures. These detail how best to store different goods and materials and so minimise waste and ensure cost-efficiency for their employers.

Assessment is good, tutors accurately assess apprentices' vocational competency through a range of approaches. Apprentices' portfolios contain a broad range of relevant evidence that confirms their increasing competency and developing knowledge and understanding. Apprentices are aware of how much of their apprenticeship they have completed, and what they need to do to finish successfully. However, in a significant minority of instances the feedback provided by tutors, while accurate, is too often limited to unit completion and does not identify or comment on the broader transferable skills that apprentices demonstrate.

Support for apprentices is good. Apprentices understand what they should do and how they can get help to resolve issues. Frequent contact with tutors ensures that they receive appropriate support to help them overcome personal difficulties that may hinder their progress or put them at risk of leaving their programmes. Trainers accurately identify those apprentices who would benefit from additional support. They ensure that they receive prompt and well-targeted assistance that supports them to make progress as well as their peers.

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

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Directors ensure that staff receive appropriate checks before they start their employment to assure their suitability to work with younger apprentices. Senior leaders ensure that they maintain appropriate and up-to-date records of staff.

The designated safeguarding lead receives appropriate training and ensures that prompt and effective action occurs to resolve any concerns. The safeguarding lead investigates and records the few individual cases well and, when appropriate, quickly involves relevant external agencies and organisations to provide additional support.

Leaders have ensured that all staff receive appropriate training in child protection and are aware of their responsibilities to keep apprentices safe. For example, suitably trained and experienced staff carry out detailed assessments of health and safety arrangements relating to each apprentice's workplace. They check that employers provide safe working environments.

Trainers utilise their considerable vocational experience to promote to apprentices the importance of adhering to safe working practices. They inform them about the wider safeguarding support available. As a result, apprentices have a clear understanding of arrangements to keep themselves safe. This includes an awareness of digital and online safety and what to do if they have a concern. Apprentices are confident that trainers will take their concerns seriously.

Directors and senior managers have made good and effective use of specialist external advice to inform and shape their understanding of their responsibilities to prevent extremism and radicalisation. A detailed and informative 'Prevent' duty policy and associated action plan set out a suitable range of initiatives designed to keep apprentices safe. For example, all staff have received training in the 'Prevent' duty and have a secure understanding of the signs that may indicate that an apprentice might be at risk of radicalisation. Tutors use informative case studies and scenarios confidently during induction sessions and workplace reviews to develop apprentices' understanding of the dangers associated with holding extremist views.

Leaders and managers have ensured that a range of suitable safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to ensure that apprentices are safe. However, very recently developed internal policies relating to e-safety are not yet sufficiently detailed. They do not make relevant linkages to the company's overarching safeguarding and data protection procedures.

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