First Intuition Chelmsford Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements, and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

First Intuition Chelmsford Limited is a small independent learning provider and part of the wider First Intuition Group. The Chelmsford centre started providing private training courses to the finance and accounting sector in 2013 and gained approval as a prime contractor to provide publicly funded training in June 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, 54 apprentices were studying standards-based apprenticeships in accountancy and finance, two thirds at Level 3 and the remaining apprentices at Level 4. Around half of the apprentices were aged 16 to 18 and the remainder were aged 19 and over.

Themes

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

Leaders and staff have a good understanding of the needs of the finance and accounts sector. They plan training and the content of apprenticeships to meet the needs of employers and the wider sector. Leaders effectively promote apprenticeships within the sector in their local area to respond to the growing need for accountancy and finance apprentices within local businesses.

Leaders and staff work productively with employers. As a result, leaders ensure that the skills the apprentices gain meet the needs of the businesses in which they work and align to the apprenticeships standards they are studying. Leaders and staff make sure that apprentices understand the requirements of their end-point assessments and prepare them well from the start of their programmes.

Staff at all levels provide effective information, advice and guidance that ensure that apprentices are on a suitable level of programme for their ability. They use a range of tools such as a skills scan, mapped to the apprenticeship standards, prior attainment and experience of the work place to aid enrolment and ensure that apprentices develop substantial new vocational skills, knowledge and behaviours.

Apprentices study additional units at lower levels to fill gaps in their knowledge where required.

Leaders effectively monitor the progress apprentices make in developing the vocational skills and knowledge required to be successful in their work roles. They act swiftly to intervene when an apprentice falls behind and work successfully with employers to ensure that they make progress. Employers are well informed of the progress of their apprentices, and line managers are routinely involved in reviews of apprentices' progress. As a result, employers help them in the work place to develop further the skills required for success in the apprenticeships programmes.

Leaders do not ensure that there is sufficient focus on the quality of apprenticeships provision at board meetings. Apprenticeship provision is discussed on an ad hoc basis and challenge of directors is infrequent. Leaders have started to strengthen governance arrangements through involvement of the board of directors from the wider First Intuition Group. Leaders now have plans in place for board meetings that will focus on apprenticeships provision in order to challenge leaders more robustly.

Leaders do not routinely set or implement actions for improvement, although they accurately identify areas for development within the apprenticeship provision. For example, their self-assessment and observations of teaching, learning and assessment records are evaluative and critical. However, where actions are identified, leaders do not effectively monitor or follow them up to ensure that improvements are made. There is an over-reliance on informal discussions between leaders and staff. Leaders do not use annual appraisals to discuss teaching practice with tutors and skills coaches and plan improvements.

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**

Staff communicate effectively and promptly with apprentices and employers throughout their apprenticeships programmes. As a result, apprentices improve their contribution in the workplace and employers value the new skills they have acquired. For example, after only six weeks on programme, apprentices can effectively apply knowledge of VAT and depreciation to real work tasks.

Staff provide effective advice and guidance to apprentices on their next steps after completing their programme. From an early stage in their learning, apprentices are well informed about the next level of apprenticeship and opportunities within the sector. Apprentices benefit from opportunities provided by employers for sustained employment. For example, apprentices have been promoted to work in their organisations' tax and compliance departments as a direct result of the good progress made on their apprenticeships.

Staff use technology well to enable apprentices to learn effectively and make good progress in both their classroom sessions and when working independently. For example, apprentices use their mobile phones to contribute well to learning during classroom-based sessions.

Tutors and skills coaches have a good understanding of their apprentices' vocational abilities. Most use this well to provide incisive feedback that enables most apprentices to produce a good standard of work and improve their vocational knowledge and skills.

Staff work flexibly and effectively to enable apprentices who require additional help with their studies make good progress. They put in place specific support, including a broad range of online resources to help them grasp relevant theory. As a result, a high proportion of these apprentices realise their potential, achieve and make swift progress.

Leaders ensure that apprentices receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training. Skills coaches track and review this training well and set targets with employers to help meet this requirement.

Staff have considerable up-to-date expertise of the finance and accounts sector. Tutors work effectively with each other, through peer observations, to identify how they can improve their own practice. Skills coaches work closely with one another to share support and ensure that apprentices make swift progress during one-to-one sessions.

Apprentices effectively develop the behaviours required for their work roles through a well-planned programme of skills development days. Tutors use feedback well to further improve apprentices' resilience. For example, apprentices grow their confidence in the workplace though classroom activities, such as group debates and sales pitches. Employers value the behaviours which apprentices demonstrate.

Staff ensure that most apprentices effectively develop the mathematical skills required to be successful in their work roles. For example, tutors enable apprentices to apply concepts such as ratios in their work context. Staff place an effective emphasis on apprentices developing good communication skills within the learning programme.

Apprentices have high prior attainment in English and mathematics. However, staff do not effectively identify apprentices' starting points of English and mathematics when they commence on programme. Their assessment is over-reliant on apprentices' prior attainment at GCSE and A Level. As a result, staff do not provide teaching that meets some apprentices' needs and enables them to make substantial progress in these essential subjects, particularly in English. Tutors' feedback on apprentices' written work does not enable apprentices to improve their standards of written English. As a result, they continue to make the same mistakes and errors.

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

Leaders' arrangements to safeguard apprentices are appropriate. Leaders follow safer recruitment procedures and ensure that appropriate checks are in place for all staff employed. All staff have undertaken recent training in safeguarding and in the 'Prevent' duty. The designated safeguarding lead and designated safeguarding officer have completed relevant training for these roles. Staff follow clear guidance on how

to safeguard apprentices through the organisation's well-formed and established policies and procedures.

Apprentices are safe, both at work and in the learning environment. They know how to report concerns at their workplaces and through the provider. However, managers do not ensure that all employers have a robust understanding of safeguarding arrangements.

Staff refer all disclosures to the designated safeguarding lead, who appropriately reviews any arising concerns, intervenes where necessary and informs employers where relevant. Apprentices benefit from additional sessions to support their progress. For example, staff organised sessions with input from a mental health charity to raise apprentices' awareness of how to cope with high levels of anxiety.

Apprentices and employers are aware of safeguarding requirements and the specific risks associated within the finance sector. They have a good understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. For example, apprentices coherently described the need to be aware of money laundering and how this can be linked to terrorism. Staff effectively promote this understanding from the beginning of the apprentices' programmes. Skills coaches ensure that apprentices' knowledge of risk, linked to the sector, is discussed in all reviews of learning to ensure a good understanding of most aspects. However, too many apprentices' understanding of online safety is superficial.

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