

Fleetmaster Training 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 ESFA 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.

Fleetmaster Training Limited is part of the Strategic Workforce Solutions Group Limited. It received a contract to provide apprenticeship training funded by the apprenticeship levy in April 2017. Currently, 190 apprentices are in training within two distinct training arms. The larger is the services to business arm providing recruitment and administration apprenticeships to employers within the Strategic Workforce Solutions Group Limited. The majority of these apprentices are on the recruitment consultant standard at level 3 or the business administration level 2 framework. The other arm delivers supply chain apprenticeships, and 64 apprentices are on the large goods vehicle (LGV) driver standard at level 2 with a range of different employers.

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 strategy to provide apprenticeships in supply chain operations and in administration and recruitment. They have recruited experienced and well-qualified trainers in both these vocational areas.

Managers plan carefully and comprehensively the off-the-job training that apprentices receive as part of their programmes. Apprentices record their training in detail in their individual learning plans and almost all receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training.

Employers rightly value the way that leaders and managers plan and design the LGV training to meet the needs of haulage businesses. Staff adapt the training thoroughly to meet the needs of an employer whose drivers complete many short journeys at an airport, as well as for those employers whose drivers cover very long distances. Leaders have provided additional training for the employers who want their apprentices to be able to drive category CE vehicles as well as category C. This qualification is beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship standard and enhances the skills of the apprentices who successfully complete it.

Leaders have recognised the importance of strong governance. They have a board of governors, made up of directors from Fleetmaster Training Limited and the Strategic Workforce Solutions Group Limited, to provide challenge to managers. Governors demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the quality of the training. They provide useful support in terms of securing the resources required to engage high-quality staff.

Managers ensure that apprentices approaching the end-point assessment (EPA) are well prepared and ready to proceed through the gateway. The small number of apprentices who have taken the EPA have been successful.

Staff provide rigorous initial advice and guidance to almost all apprentices. The number of recruitment apprentices who remain in training is very high. However, too many of the first cohort of LGV apprentices at one company left their programme before the end. Managers have identified the reasons for this and have taken sensible actions to improve retention among current apprentices on this strand of the programme, but it is too early to judge the impact.

Managers demonstrate a broadly accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. However, self-assessment reports and improvement plans lack precision. Leaders have recently appointed a new quality manager to develop and improve quality assurance arrangements, but it is too early to judge the impact of this appointment.

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 develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours as a result of their programmes. For example, recruitment consultant apprentices learn valuable new knowledge about employment law and workers' rights, which they apply well in their workplaces. Apprentices on LGV programmes, who are new to driving LGVs, gain significant new knowledge and skills in driving safely and efficiently. This includes the ability to perform effective vehicle checks, to calculate fuel consumption and to drive in a manner that uses fuel efficiently.

Apprentices greatly increase their confidence and self-esteem as a result of their training. For example, recruitment apprentices deal confidently with new clients and LGV apprentices are rightly proud of their new skills and career prospects. Their training greatly enhances their skills in these areas.

In a few cases, the targets that trainers set during reviews are too generic. Trainers focus too much on unit completion rather than on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need. They do not track improvements in apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours well enough to enable them to identify more

precise targets. As a result, a small minority of apprentices do not make progress as rapidly as they should in all areas of their programmes.

The large majority of apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. For example, they spend time shadowing more experienced colleagues, attend dedicated workshops and work independently using high-quality resources in training rooms at work. However, in a few cases, time for the off-the-job training happens in an unplanned manner. For example, a few recruitment apprentices find it difficult to schedule times for training in advance and have to fit their training in when they are not busy with calls. A few LGV apprentices reschedule training because of a mismatch between their job schedules and their training times.

Trainers are highly knowledgeable about their curriculums and have appropriate experience in their industries. This enables them to ask probing questions to encourage apprentices to reflect on and deepen their knowledge. For example, trainers ensure that recruitment apprentices use their knowledge of equality legislation in their work roles. They provide them with appropriate study materials in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

Trainers develop their own skills and knowledge as a result of effective training and support from their managers and mentors. For example, they shadow more experienced colleagues and undertake online training to extend their knowledge. If needed, they take their assessors' qualifications soon after starting their employment. Trainers improve their knowledge of curriculum content as a result of individual training plans. Managers oversee new tutors' workloads and deployment carefully, so that tutors have the time and support to develop their expertise well before taking on new responsibilities.

Apprentices, including those who are exempt from taking examinations, develop their skills in mathematics and information communication technology well. For example, trainers ensure that LGV apprentices learn how to estimate driving times over different routes and that recruitment apprentices learn how to analyse data in spreadsheets. Recruitment apprentices also develop their English skills very well as a result of good feedback and resources from their trainers. Trainers help these apprentices to write well for different audiences and purposes. As a result, apprentices use rhetorical and persuasive devices well in their communication with clients. This helps apprentices to increase their sales volumes and enhances their career prospects.

Employers value highly the skills their apprentices develop because these skills bring great benefits to their businesses. For instance, an LGV employer no longer has to rely on agency drivers in his business. This is because the quality of his apprentices and the speed with which they gain their LGV licences now meet his employment needs.

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

Leaders demonstrate a deeply held belief in the importance of safeguarding. They use their professional networks to seek out ways to improve safeguarding practices. For example, staff have trained recently to become mental health first aiders and attended a suicide alert conference. Other staff have developed expertise on mental health issues in the haulage industry so they can provide expert advice to apprentices. Consequently, a very good safeguarding culture prevails in the company and in the apprenticeship training.

Apprentices have an exceptionally well developed understanding of safeguarding, especially of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. This is because their trainers go to great lengths to develop resources and activities that make safeguarding relevant to apprentices. For example, LGV apprentices discussed recent cases of terrorists using vans and lorries as weapons in attacks. Trainers also discuss fundamental British values in detail with their apprentices and relate these values expertly to the topic of migration. This is highly relevant to apprentices who drive lorries overseas. Trainers also discuss the responsibility of LGV drivers to safeguard their load and mitigate against human trafficking when they make their final vehicle security checks.

Apprentices in recruitment have a very good understanding of risks in their industry and apply their knowledge of safeguarding well at work. They have considerable knowledge of safer recruitment procedures. They are also very knowledgeable about the need to insist on equality in employment and can explain this need to client companies very competently.

Managers ensure that suitable pre-employment checks are made for all staff. They follow safer recruitment procedures when they recruit new staff. They provide staff with regular and comprehensive safeguarding training so that they have up-to-date knowledge. Staff record safeguarding incidents well and take appropriate action when apprentices raise concerns.

Managers have created comprehensive safeguarding policies that they review frequently. Employers are right to value the support that they receive from managers to develop their safeguarding policies for the apprentices they employ.

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