

Adalta Development Ltd

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 themes set out below.

Adalta Development Ltd was established in 2001 by the two current directors. The company is a national independent learning provider of leadership and management programmes. Adalta Development Ltd began delivering levy-funded apprenticeships in July 2017. There are currently 94 apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships. Forty apprentices are on level 3 team leading/supervision apprenticeship programmes and 54 on level 5 operations/departmental apprenticeship programmes. Adalta Development Ltd works with four national employers based in the north and south of England.

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 developed a clear and well-informed strategy to provide high-quality apprenticeships in leadership and management. They use their extensive commercial experience and well-established relationships with employers to develop flexible programmes to meet employers' individual business needs.

Directors use their specialist knowledge, skills and experience in leadership and management to design programmes that benefit apprentices and employers. Apprentices benefit from comprehensive individual learning plans. They receive structured off-the-job learning which includes high-quality master classes, personal coaching, online learning and reviews. Apprentices and employers value this approach and the frequent contact between the assessor, apprentice and the apprentice's line manager.

Directors recruit and retain highly skilled assessors with significant vocational and specialist experience. Employers value the high-quality training that apprentices receive and the benefits this brings to their businesses. For example, apprentices take more independent roles in the workplace. They become more skilful in planning and leading team meetings and more confident in managing people.

Recruitment of apprentices is thorough and comprehensive. Directors have clear oversight of the recruitment process. They work closely with employers to ensure that the apprenticeship standard is the most suitable programme for the apprentice and will benefit the organisation. Employers are fully committed to, and value, the off-the-job training. Directors and assessors record and monitor carefully the details of apprentices' off-the-job training and the impact it has in the workplace.

The planning and management of end-point assessment is highly effective. A 'gateway readiness' programme is introduced early in the apprenticeship. Frequent communication between assessors, line managers and apprentices ensures a managed timeline of pre-gateway activity and support for each apprentice. Consequently, apprentices are thoroughly prepared for end-point assessment.

Directors have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the programmes they deliver. They frequently gather the views of apprentices and employers to monitor the quality of the delivery of the apprenticeship programmes. They take prompt action to address any issues that arise. Appropriate processes are in place to check that assessment of apprentices' work meets the standards required for the programme. However, the current process used to monitor apprentices' progress is not sufficiently rigorous in accurately identifying when apprentices are at risk of making slower than expected progress. As a result, a few apprentices fall behind and do not complete their activities in a timely manner.

Directors have accurately identified in their quality improvement plan the need for more robust governance. They have arrangements in place for 'critical friend' support to share practice and seek advice. Currently, there is no independent support or scrutiny to inform or challenge directors on future plans to ensure the highest standards of education and training.

What progress have directors made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?

Reasonable progress

Almost all apprentices develop substantial new vocational knowledge, skills and behaviours. They benefit considerably from attending the monthly master classes. As a result, they improve their leadership and managerial practices. For example, apprentices now coach and performance manage staff more competently and with increased confidence. They have a greater understanding of team members' individual differences and the impact those differences have on their occupational efficiency and effectiveness.

Directors and assessors do not give sufficient attention to apprentices' prior learning, qualifications and experience when they plan their individual learning. Although they ensure that the apprenticeship standards are covered fully, they do not include apprentices' personal development needs in their individual learning plans. Apprentices' planned end dates do not take into account each apprentice's unique situation.

Assessors have good technical and commercial experience of leadership and management. They draw on their experience successfully when they tutor, coach and assess apprentices. Directors and assessors have produced high-quality workbooks for the master classes. They combine theory and practice successfully and focus on specific aspects of leadership and management. These include different leadership styles and how to lead and manage teams proficiently. Apprentices make good use of these workbooks in, and between, master classes to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, assessors do not always make sure that all apprentices are challenged fully and produce work of the highest possible quality. Apprentices at level 5 require further guidance to help them to analyse, synthesise and evaluate leadership and management theories, principles and techniques more effectively.

Apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training time during working hours. Directors and employers monitor carefully the extent to which apprentices' off-the-job entitlement is maintained throughout the apprenticeship programme. They take immediate action if there is any reduction, for example because of increased work pressures. They make sure that any lost time is made up as soon as possible.

Apprentices without English and/or mathematics qualifications at level 2 receive good support to prepare for functional skills examinations. Directors mainly ensure that apprentices receive tuition early in their apprenticeship programme. Assessors ensure that employers are aware of what their apprentices have completed and what they still have to achieve before their planned end date. They send apprentices and employers informative monthly reports. However, assessors do not place enough importance on the need for all apprentices to improve their mathematics and oral and written English. Apprentices who have English and mathematics qualifications at level 2 do not develop these skills to higher levels. Assessors do not identify routinely apprentices' spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in their written work. Consequently, apprentices repeat their mistakes.

Directors, managers and assessors have a good awareness of assessment and end-point assessment requirements. However, a small proportion of apprentices do not have enough information about how they can complete their apprenticeship with a merit or a distinction grade.

How much progress have directors made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?

Reasonable progress

Directors have put in place effective safeguarding arrangements. They ensure that staff are trained in safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and British values. Training is reinforced through annual updating events, team meetings and scenario-based training. Staff have a good awareness of how to keep apprentices safe. Directors maintain detailed training records.

Directors carry out thorough risk assessments for training sessions that take place at venues external to the apprentices' workplace. They provide employers with training and support so that they understand their responsibilities for keeping apprentices safe.

The designated safeguarding lead and deputy are suitably qualified. They respond swiftly and sensitively to any concerns raised. They have established effective links with wider agencies, for example the local authority safeguarding team and police. This increases their understanding and awareness of safeguarding issues.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns they may have. Apprentices receive a comprehensive induction in the 'Prevent' duty. However, the majority of apprentices are insufficiently aware of the threats of radicalisation and extremism because they are not reinforced throughout the programme. Assessors frequently promote safeguarding and British values and encourage apprentices to model these behaviours in the context of their workplace.

Apprentices regularly use the internet to support their learning. They are made aware of e-safety and the risks social media can present. However, leaders and assessors do not routinely reinforce the dangers during reviews to extend apprentices' understanding of e-safety.

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