

Steve Willis Training 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.

Steve Willis Training Ltd (Steve Willis) was formed in 2000 to provide training for gas, plumbing and electrical engineers. In 2004, Steve Willis began working as a subcontractor with other providers to train apprentices, before securing its own contract for apprenticeships in 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, Steve Willis had 138 apprentices on advanced apprenticeship standards in gas and electrical. These include apprentices who are aged 16 to 18. Apprentices work across the south east of England. They attend the Steve Willis training centres in Burgess Hill or in Portchester, near Portsmouth, one day a week for their off-the-job training.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have a long and well-established relationship with the building engineering services industry. They have a clear strategy to provide apprenticeships that meet the training and skills needs of this sector. Awarding bodies have made use of the senior leaders' expertise in developing the new apprenticeship standards that apprentices now work towards.

Senior leaders, managers and staff fulfil the requirements of the apprenticeship programme and the standards specified by the trade bodies in the gas, plumbing and electrical industries. Senior leaders have invested significantly in staff and very high-quality training resources. As a result, apprentices benefit from very good training one day a week at the training centres. They develop the skills they need to install and maintain electrical and gas appliances effectively.

Managers' very good links with employers and manufacturers of appliances keep trainers well informed about developments in the industry. For example, manufacturers of appliances provide training to staff on the latest technologies being introduced, such as those for new boilers. They also sponsor the awards offered to apprentices.

Managers ensure that apprentices' job roles provide them with the range of experiences required to develop the essential knowledge, skills and behaviours for their qualifications. However, managers do not have a full picture of the range of apprentices' off-the-job training. For example, managers do not make sure that staff know about the training employers provide in their workplaces.

Managers do not make sure that employers are sufficiently involved in reviews of apprentices' progress. As a result, employers are not always clear about the skills that apprentices need to develop so that they can make progress.

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Managers' observations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment focus too much on teaching practice, rather than apprentices' learning. This hinders improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

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 make good progress in developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to install and maintain appliances. Apprentices work to high standards and meet industry and safety requirements. They do very well in passing the technical examinations required by the sector. Almost every apprentice passes these examinations at the first attempt.

Apprentices benefit by developing their practical skills in very high-quality off-the-job training facilities at the Steve Willis training centres. Managers have designed workshops very well in work bays that allow trainers to monitor and assess apprentices' practical work. Staff ensure safe working practices. These workshops are very well equipped with tools and have a wide range of appliances for apprentices to practise on.

Managers carefully select trainers who have a wealth of relevant industrial experience and appropriate teaching qualifications. Generally, the quality of classroom teaching is high. Trainers are also skilled in one-to-one coaching during skills development activities in workshops.

Managers make sure that their trainers benefit from appropriate continued professional development. In addition, managers arrange for trainers to benefit from frequent technical updates and observations that help them to meet new industry requirements.

Trainers' feedback on apprentices' written work is useful in helping them improve their written English. During taught sessions, trainers provide good support to help

apprentices develop the mathematical skills that the industry requires. For example, in a lesson on the ventilation required when installing gas appliances, trainers helped apprentices to calculate room volumes very well. They then worked out the most appropriate safe vents required for the heat output from the appliances.

Trainers provide clear oral guidance to apprentices about the areas they need to improve, such as how to pass a previously failed formative assessment. However, individual learning plans and progress reviews do not record what an apprentice needs to do to improve their skills, knowledge and behaviours. Apprentices cannot therefore remind themselves, when in the workplace, of the things they need to practise or the knowledge they need to gain.

Specialist functional skills trainers prepare apprentices well for functional skills examinations. However, managers do not make sure that staff provide enough support for apprentices who are exempt from functional skills examinations but who still need to improve their English and mathematical skills.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders and managers have established a strong ethos of health and safety that reinforces employers' high priorities for safe working practices. This results in apprentices following demanding health and safety practices, including adhering to the strict guidelines and risk assessments when working with gas and electricity.

Leaders provide apprentices with a wide range of additional short courses and qualifications that prepare them well for working safely in the sector. Additional courses include first aid at work, electrical safety, working in confined spaces, asbestos awareness, working at heights and fire safety.

Senior leaders have developed appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures, including the safe recruitment of staff, to ensure that apprentices and staff are safe. Staff and apprentices follow these policies and procedures well. Managers have suitable arrangements to record and investigate safeguarding concerns. To date, there have not been any safeguarding referrals.

Apprentices have a good knowledge and understanding of the risks and dangers from radicalisation and extremism. They know how these risks might relate to their lives and work. They have a sound knowledge of British values. They collaborate well together and show mutual respect. However, apprentices are less confident about how to stay safe online because trainers do not tell them about this clearly enough.

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