

Wiser Academy Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1278659

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Inspection date(s): 24–25 July 2019

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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.

Wiser Academy Ltd is an independent training provider specialising in financial services. Since 2017, it has been offering apprenticeships at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 nationally. At the time of the monitoring visit, approximately 110 apprentices were in training, nearly all of them aged over 19 years old. Apprentices study a wide range of standards-based apprenticeships in finance subjects. Over half are studying senior financial customer adviser or insurance practitioner training programmes.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers do not plan the apprentices' training programmes well enough. Apprentices' programmes of study are not planned sufficiently well to meet their individual needs. They all complete their apprenticeship in the same amount of time irrespective of their previous knowledge, skills and experience.

Leaders and managers do not have an effective process in place to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They complete observations of teaching, learning and assessment, but do not use the findings from these to support improvement or inform staff development. Managers who report on training sessions focus too much on what the trainer is doing and not on the learning and progress of apprentices. They do not identify actions for improvement and do not use their reports for staff development or appraisals. Because of this, any attempts to improve the quality of teaching and learning are unsuccessful.

Leaders and managers have not been effective in the quality assurance of the apprenticeship programme. Managers pay insufficient attention to the teaching of English and mathematics, so apprentices do not gain qualifications and improve their work skills. Quality improvement planning is not sufficiently evaluative and, as a result, managers do not deal with identified weaknesses swiftly enough.

Trainers do not set and record detailed development targets for apprentices linked to their work. Individual objectives focus on completing modules only. Apprentices are not aware of the requirements of the end-point assessment or the different grades they could achieve in their qualifications. As a result, they do not aim for higher levels of achievement.

Managers work successfully with employers to establish what professional qualifications they require. Employers benefit from the opportunity for their staff to complete industry-relevant qualifications. Trainers are appropriately qualified and they keep up to date with industry practice.

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

Insufficient progress

Too few apprentices are developing substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their apprenticeship programme. Most apprentices have significant experience in their existing job roles prior to starting their training.

Managers' tracking of off-the-job training is not sufficiently rigorous or consistent. They do not make sure that all apprentices are getting their entitlement to support their development of new knowledge and skills. Managers have invested in an online monitoring package, but this is not used effectively to support apprentices' learning.

Managers plan the curriculum in detail. However, the delivery schedule does not make sure that all apprentices are able to complete the activities and assessments within the planned timescale. Consequently, apprentices struggle to manage their learning, prepare for examinations and fulfil their work obligations.

Tutors complete initial assessments of apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours at the start of their programmes. However, they do not use the results of these effectively to plan learning. As a result, trainers do not create learning plans to meet apprentices' individual needs.

Most apprentices' line managers are not sufficiently involved in the apprenticeship programmes. They do not attend the one-to-one meetings to review apprentices' progress or agree their further development needs in the workplace. As a result, they are not aware of how to support the apprentices or what apprentices need to do. Managers do provide detailed monthly reports for apprentices' senior managers to inform them of their progress overall.

Trainers do not emphasise the importance of developing good English and mathematical skills linked to the apprentices' work. The planning and delivery of training to develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills are poor. Apprentices that need to complete functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics as

part of their apprenticeship do not receive enough support or tuition. Trainers do not pay enough attention to developing English and mathematical skills. Therefore, apprentices do not improve their English and mathematical skills that they need for work.

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

Leaders and managers make sure that safeguarding arrangements are effective and that all apprentices are safe. They place a high priority on the safeguarding of apprentices and have suitable policies and procedures in place.

All staff complete training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to make sure they fully understand their responsibilities about how to keep apprentices safe and protect them from harm.

Managers investigated the three incidents that were reported in sufficient detail and recorded their actions and the outcomes effectively. They took appropriate and swift action to resolve any concerns.

Trainers explore and reinforce safeguarding and 'Prevent' topics well. They include them in apprentices' six-weekly reviews and discuss recent news articles that are a part of modern-day life. Consequently, apprentices are made more aware of how potential radicalisation and extremism might apply to them at work or in their everyday lives.

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