

Skills4Stem Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Gerard McGrath, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Address:	The Innovation Centre Stannard Way Priory Business Park Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 3RZ

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.

Skills4Stem Ltd received a direct contract to be a provider of apprenticeships in May 2017. It offers learning programmes that are a combination of online learning modules and individual coaching to apprentices working in the construction industry across England. At the time of the inspection, Skills4Stem Ltd had 82 apprentices. Half the apprentices are on construction management apprenticeship framework programmes at level 4, the rest are undertaking apprenticeship standards programmes in associate project management and building services engineering at level 4 or leadership and management at level 3. Three apprentices are aged 16–18.

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 managers have a clear rationale for the development and provision of apprenticeships. They work successfully with universities and employer groups to develop qualifications and training programmes that meet the needs of the construction industry. Leaders and managers have planned effectively for the introduction and provision of standards-based apprenticeships.

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices have appropriate learning resources to support high-quality training. Teachers and assessors are specialists in their subjects. They hold relevant vocational qualifications and have significant experience of working in the construction sector. Leaders and managers provide a wide range of high-quality online resources for off-the-job training.

Employers and managers advise apprentices appropriately about careers in construction. As a result, apprentices often progress to more senior roles and take on additional responsibilities in their work places.

Apprentices' career aspirations are discussed throughout their training. Teachers offer effective advice and guidance about progression routes to higher education.

Leaders' and managers' evaluation of the quality of their provision is accurate and results in improvement in the quality of learning. For example, senior managers took decisive, swift actions to remedy the under-performance of quality managers. Consequently, apprentices, whose progress had slowed, have now accelerated in their learning and make the rate of progress expected of them.

Leaders and managers ensure that all employers and apprentices understand clearly the requirements of the apprenticeship at the start of the programme. As a result, apprentices routinely complete all aspects of their off-the-job training. Leaders and managers have recently improved their analysis and use of the accurate data they collect so that they can closely monitor and manage apprentices' progress in their learning.

Governance arrangements are appropriate. Directors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision that enables them to effectively support and challenge managers.

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, substantial and occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours. Employers recognise how this improves their ability to do their jobs effectively and progress to higher levels of responsibility. For example, apprentices understand and can apply quality assurance methods when casting in-situ concrete.

Teachers work effectively with employers to provide flexible on- and off-the-job training. As a result, employers are routinely involved in monitoring and supporting apprentices' progress. Workplace supervisors help apprentices to appreciate the practical applications of their theoretical learning. For example, apprentices learn the different methods of programme management and how these can be used across the life cycle of a project.

Teachers offer a mix of online and face-to-face delivery with flexible start times and locations that meet the needs of apprentices and their employers very effectively. Teachers use their high levels of knowledge and good industry experience to motivate and enthuse apprentices. As a result, almost all apprentices remain on their programme.

Teachers and assessors assess apprentices' starting points in English and mathematics accurately. Apprentices understand the relevance of these skills in their work roles. They develop their skills in English and mathematics to support them in

their employment and personal lives. For example, apprentices improve the way that they structure formal reports and improve their use of technical vocabulary.

Many apprentices already have the required level of qualification in English and mathematics when they join the programme. Feedback from assessors enables apprentices to practise and apply these skills appropriately. As a result, apprentices produce written work of an appropriate standard to their level of study and include useful examples from their work settings.

Apprentices have an adequate understanding of British values and of equality and diversity. Apprentices recognise the relevance of these issues to their workplace. For example, they can apply what they have learned about modern slavery when dealing with subcontracting companies.

Leaders' and managers' understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is accurate. They have introduced appropriate actions to bring about further improvement.

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

Leaders and managers have developed effective safeguarding arrangements. Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in their workplaces and online. Leaders and managers ensure that the safe recruitment of staff. All staff are subject to appropriate pre-employment checks. The designated safeguarding lead is suitably trained and experienced. All staff complete appropriate training in related topics.

Leaders and managers have ensured that they meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. Apprentices understand the general risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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