

# Priory Apprenticeships

Monitoring visit report

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**Type of provider:** Employer

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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.

Priory Apprenticeships was established in 2016 by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust to establish sustainable training for its own employees in the Lincolnshire area. It began delivering levy-funded apprenticeships on a direct contract in 2017, and this provision was in the scope of the monitoring visit. At the time of the inspection, Priory Apprenticeships had 16 apprentices. All were working towards standards-based apprenticeships in team leading, business administration, human resources and infrastructure technician – all at level 3, and webs telecom at level 2. Apprentices, all of whom are adults, work in schools within the Priory Federation of Academies in Lincolnshire.

### 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 strategy for provision aimed at preparing apprentices for the needs of employers across the federation. The culture and ethos within the federation to nurture and develop the workforce are reflected well in the range of personal and professional support offered to each apprentice throughout their programmes.

All programmes meet the requirements of apprenticeships. A significant proportion of apprentices work term time only. In these instances, careful planning is prioritised to ensure that all apprentices receive their full entitlement of on- and off-the-job training. Managers monitor apprentices' progress closely, setting relevant targets and actions so that they achieve, in a timely manner, the skills, knowledge and behaviours they require to be successful in their workplace. Online recording systems are not easily accessible to apprentices, so it is difficult for them to track progress independently and to update information regularly. On the few occasions when apprentices fall behind on tasks, managers have worked closely with the employer to ensure that they take appropriate actions to get apprentices back on track.

Leaders and managers know the provision well and are aware of its strengths and those areas that require improvement. Following a short period of transition, the new head of training is now revising aspects within the training programmes to address issues identified in the self-assessment report. For example, retention has been a concern in previous years, when a significant proportion of apprentices had left early to take up higher-paid positions within or outside the federation. Recruitment processes are now more thorough and employers more cognisant of their responsibilities to support individuals to successful completion.

**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 are supported well by a team of experienced mentors. They have relevant subject knowledge and industry-specific experience that they share effectively through off-the-job training. Apprentices enjoy their learning, developing skills and knowledge that are appropriate to their occupational roles and gaining a clear understanding about the professional behaviours expected of them. As a result, apprentices soon grow in confidence and competence, working to consistently good standards, which employers value. For example, one apprentice in information technology (IT) has developed useful skills in working with switches to transfer data between systems and devices, as well as learning appropriate troubleshooting skills so that IT problems in the work setting can be quickly resolved.

The head of training regularly assesses apprentices' work to ensure that apprentices are applying their learning from on- and off-the-job training appropriately. Mentors are readily available to provide additional support and coaching when required.

Feedback is helpful and supports apprentices to improve. Most of the apprentices' written work demonstrates rapid improvement in the use of occupational and technical language, structure and presentation as they progress through their apprenticeship programmes.

Nearly all apprentices who are currently on programmes had the necessary English, information communication technology and mathematics qualifications from the start of their programmes, and additional functional skills support was in place for two apprentices. They receive little encouragement to further improve their skills in these subjects. Those apprentices preparing for their end-point assessments clearly understood the process but were not able to confidently explain the grading profile or whether, for example, they were working towards a distinction.

Apprentices are well prepared for their next steps within their current employment and regarding, for example, access to higher education. More recently, apprentices have received encouragement to attend careers events in the region. Their understanding of potential opportunities in the wider world of work, however, is cursory.

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

The provider's staff are highly aware of the importance of safeguarding. Safer recruitment practices are well established and are thorough. Training staff are subject to pre-employment checks and all employees, including apprentices, have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certification. Safeguarding training, including in the 'Prevent' duty, is mandatory for all employees and is regularly reviewed and updated.

Apprentices' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding is thorough. They know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of how to work safely online and of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They have a good understanding of British values and receive updates on local issues and concerns daily within their workplace. There were several examples in reviews and from discussions where apprentices had applied their knowledge to improve specific work practices or to address personal issues.

Leaders and managers pay good attention to apprentices' safety and well-being. Apprentices are aware of the support structures available to them, including access to mental health support, advice and guidance, as well as links through a central hub to external support agencies.

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