Happy Computers

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	58502
Name of lead inspector:	Sue Hasty, Her Majesty's Inspector
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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 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Happy Computers is a training organisation based in east London specialising in information technology (IT) and leadership and management training, consultancy and coaching services. Happy Computers gained a contract in January 2018 to deliver apprenticeships to levy and non-levy-funded employers. At the time of this monitoring visit, 19 apprentices studied level 4 software development, 44 studied level 3 team leader/supervisor apprenticeship, and 55 studied level 5 operations/departmental apprenticeship. All apprenticeships are standards-based programmes.

Themes

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

Managers design effective apprenticeship programmes that incorporate the values and vision of Happy Computers. Leaders and managers have a strong commitment to work with employers from the voluntary, community and public sectors. They aim to recruit apprentices from under-represented groups onto their apprenticeship programmes. Consequently, the majority of apprentices who study on the software development course are from minority ethnic groups or are women.

Managers respond well to employers' requests for tailor-made course content on leadership and management programmes. They work with trade unions to plan and deliver specialist skills such as conflict management. Employers value highly the improvement in their apprentices' performance in the workplace.

Employers of software developer apprentices rightly appreciate the benefits to their businesses. For example, apprentices use the new specialist skills they learn in software programming to help their employers save money on staffing costs.

Apprentices appreciate the welcoming and inclusive environment that staff create. Trainers often give apprentices additional individual support which helps them to catch up when they fall behind with their work, and stay on the programme.

Leaders ensure that they meet all the principles and requirements of delivering apprenticeship programmes. Managers ensure that employers attend induction sessions with their apprentices. As a result, employers understand the requirements of the programme, such as time off work for off-the-job training and involvement in progress reviews.

Managers do not have an accurate oversight of apprentices' progress and too many apprentices do not complete their programme swiftly enough. Recent changes to systems for tracking and monitoring apprentices' progress have helped to identify when apprentices fall behind. It is too soon to assess the long-term impact on apprentices of completing their programmes on time.

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 receive high-quality off-the-job training that relates well to their job roles. Apprentices on leadership and management courses gain confidence in managing their teams. They learn effectively how to identify and use the different strengths and skills of people in their teams. Apprentices on team-leading courses gain promotion because of the new knowledge and skills acquired on their apprenticeship.

Managers of software development courses work effectively with employers to design the curriculum. They agree work-related projects for apprentices to carry out which bring benefits to their businesses. For example, apprentices are more confident in redesigning employers' websites as a result of the skills they have learned. The majority of apprentices gain permanent employment at the end of their apprenticeships.

Managers and trainers work closely with employers to plan and adapt the curriculum to ensure that apprentices learn skills and knowledge in sequence. As a result of changing the order of the course, apprentices on team-leading programmes know how to manage themselves and understand their own behaviours first, before developing their abilities to lead a team.

Trainers accurately identify apprentices' skills, knowledge and prior work experience at the start of their programmes. Trainers use this information effectively to teach new skills, knowledge and behaviours specific to apprentices' workplaces.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the arrangements for the end-point assessment and the grades they can achieve. Apprentices receive clear information about how trainers assess their work during the course, such as through professional discussions, online assessments and interviews.

Trainers and assessors benefit from good opportunities to develop their professional practice. Assessors advise apprentices about choosing the best evidence for their portfolios. Of the small number of apprentices who have completed the apprenticeship, a large majority passed with merit and distinction grades.

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

Leaders and managers provide apprentices with information to keep themselves safe. The safeguarding policy outlines the procedure for reporting safeguarding issues and names the designated safeguarding lead. Learners feel safe and know how to report a concern.

Leaders check thoroughly that staff are safe to work with vulnerable apprentices. All staff undertake online training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty early on in their employment. Leaders have established appropriate links with safeguarding partnerships and 'Prevent' contacts.

Leaders and managers provide effective training for apprentices in safeguarding and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation at the start of their course, and at progress reviews. Apprentices know whom to go to if they have a concern.

Leaders and managers have not identified all possible risks in the 'Prevent' action plan. As a result, apprentices cannot discuss in detail the dangers associated with extremism and radicalisation in their everyday lives.