

Principal Skills Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1280354

Name of lead inspector: Cath Jackson Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 13–14 November 2019

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 48, 49 & 51 North East Business & Innovation Centre
Wearfield Enterprise Park East
Sunderland
SR5 2TA

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.

Principal Skills Limited was established in June 2014 and is based in Sunderland. It began offering a small number of employer and levy-funded apprenticeships in January 2018. Programmes include standards-based apprenticeships in adult care and business administration and a small number of framework apprenticeships in management. Principal Skills Limited has 11 apprentices on programmes at levels 2, 3 and 5. Almost all apprentices are above 19 years of age. Principal Skills Limited delivers its provision in care homes and in engineering and construction settings.

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 have not ensured that their provision meets the requirements and principles of an apprenticeship. Although leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, they have made insufficient progress in addressing these weaknesses.

Leaders do not ensure that employers fulfil their obligations to their apprentices. Employers do not provide enough time for apprentices to complete the off-the-job training element of their apprenticeship. Neither employers nor assessors have a good enough understanding of what off-the-job training entails. This means that they do not guide apprentices well enough to identify and record their training appropriately. Consequently, apprentices make slow progress in gaining new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Leaders work well with employers to plan a curriculum that meets the training needs of employers' businesses. However, the delivery of the curriculum does not take sufficient account of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices need in their job roles. Assessors concentrate too much on the accreditation of existing skills and not on apprentices' ability to develop new knowledge and skills for their job roles. As a result, apprentices fall behind in their programmes, do not develop the

new skills that they need and lack confidence in meeting the demands of assessments.

Leaders do not make satisfactory arrangements for apprentices to complete their end-point assessment before the deadline. Around half of the apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships have been unable to complete their qualifications on time and are significantly past their intended completion date. Leaders recognise this concern and have put steps in place to address it but it is too early to identify the impact of their actions.

Leaders recruit knowledgeable assessors with relevant industrial experience and teaching or training qualifications. Assessors accurately review and record the progress that apprentices make.

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

Leaders do not work well enough with employers to ensure that apprentices have sufficient support in the workplace to develop their skills. Assessors do not routinely involve employers in evaluating the progress that apprentices make in developing the new skills and behaviours that they need in their job roles. Therefore, apprentices do not receive first-hand guidance from their employers on their progress in the workplace. They do not develop their occupationally specific skills and knowledge swiftly enough.

Assessors use their industrial experience to ensure that apprentices gain generic work-related skills. However, they do not sequence their delivery of training well enough to enable apprentices to gain substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours. This means that most apprentices do not develop in their job roles beyond what they already know and can do.

Assessors do not use assessments well enough to check apprentices' understanding and to inform their teaching. Assessors' feedback and comments acknowledge the tasks that apprentices have completed and indicate what needs to be done next. However, they do not help apprentices to understand how to enhance their skills.

Apprentices on standards-based apprenticeships benefit from completing additional qualifications provided by their employers, as part of their training. For example, apprentices working in care homes receive training in infection control and manual handling techniques.

Managers ensure that internal quality-assurance processes meet the compliance requirements of the awarding bodies.

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

Leaders and managers take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of apprentices. They implement and apply a wide range of policies and procedures, including a detailed 'Prevent' duty risk assessment policy. All staff have completed recent professional updating on this policy.

Leaders have in place suitable processes to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. They maintain a strong culture of safeguarding and protection. Staff and apprentices are safe and feel safe.

Leaders have appointed a designated safeguarding officer who has suitable training to perform this role. Leaders have procedures in place for reporting and dealing with safeguarding incidents in a timely and appropriate manner.

Both employers and apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding. For example, apprentices working in an engineering setting demonstrate a good understanding of mental health issues through completing an awareness-raising session provided by their employer.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019