

Watertrain Limited

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Watertrain Limited was inspected in January 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Watertrain Limited specialise in delivering the Level 3 water process technician standard. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 87 apprentices. Watertrain Limited work with several large employers across the country.

Themes

What progress have learning and development coaches made in using the information of apprentices' existing knowledge and skills to plan programmes that help them develop new knowledge and skills, complete their apprenticeship and become successful in the workplace?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have reviewed and implemented changes to the planning and delivery of the curriculum. Feedback from assessment of apprentices' work identified that they did not have the necessary scientific knowledge or mathematical skills, such as using algebra or geometry, to fully understand key aspects of the water technician programme. A mathematical and science module has been introduced at the beginning of the programme to help rectify these knowledge gaps. As a result, apprentices gain a better understanding of the technical aspects of their programme. For example, apprentices understand the chemical and biological characteristics of water and wastewater. They confidently work out the chemical ratio of ammonia to water and the impact on the environment when this is not accurate.

Learning and development coaches make good use of their technical knowledge and expertise to identify what apprentices already know and can do. They use this information to plan programmes that extend apprentices' knowledge and skills. Apprentices and employers value the knowledge and skills they are gaining and how this helps them in their job roles. For example, apprentices develop a better understanding of the importance of measuring the clarity of water accurately prior to treatment. Learning and development coaches frequently review how apprentices are progressing on their programme. They quickly adapt apprentices' programmes to maximise their development. For example, if apprentices acquire their technical

knowledge quickly, learning and development coaches plan more time to work with them on-site, providing one-to-one practical coaching.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that training and development for learning and development coaches is effective in helping them deliver high-quality education and training? **Reasonable progress**

Learning and development coaches benefit from a range of support and training to help them improve their practice. Quality managers visit one-to-one and group training sessions to provide learning and development coaches with developmental feedback and coaching on how they can improve. For example, quality managers provide coaching on how to assess more thoroughly what apprentices can already do, to help coaches to improve their planning and delivery to meet apprentices' needs. Quality managers help learning and development coaches link off- and on-the-job training. Consequently, learning and development coaches help apprentices gain new knowledge and skills which they can apply in the workplace. Quality managers encourage learning and development coaches to learn from each other. Learning and development coaches value observing their peers to improve their own practice.

Training has helped learning and development coaches to plan and coach more effectively. They use their industry experience and coaching skills to plan and present information in a way that helps apprentices learn and remember more. They use examples, such as why a tennis ball would sink in an aeration tank, to illustrate the impact of water density on objects. They use this example to help apprentices understand the importance of personal safety and applying correct practices when working in high-risk areas. Learning and development coaches ensure that apprentices understand key concepts in relation to the processes they carry out in the workplace. For example, they provide clear explanations to apprentices on the impact of a milk tanker spill to help them understand nutrient removal processes. Problem-solving activities that learning and development coaches use in off-the-job training sessions help apprentices apply the technical knowledge they are gaining in a practical situation.

Learning and development coaches have not received training and development on what apprentices need to know and do to achieve high grades. Consequently, they are not able to plan activities or set apprentices challenging goals to help them make the best possible progress they can on their programmes and achieve their full potential.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learning and development coaches involve employers in reviewing the development of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours to set curriculum goals that **Insufficient progress**

challenge apprentices?

Following the previous inspection, leaders and managers put in place flexible arrangements to enable line managers to participate in reviewing their apprentices' development of knowledge, skills and behaviours. Arrangements were made for employers to be able to take part in reviews by telephone or internet. This was to try and overcome barriers that apprentices' line managers faced in accessing review meetings. Often, apprentices and line managers worked on sites that were significant distances apart. These arrangements have not been successful. Currently, line managers do not participate in reviewing their apprentices' development or in setting them challenging goals. Consequently, they are not aware of specific support that apprentices require to help them be successful in gaining their apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers have correctly identified that this is an area that requires swift improvement. Working with employers, they have put in place new arrangements. These include a comprehensive schedule of planned appointments to review apprentices' on- and off-the-job training for the duration of their programme. Leaders have established the expectation that employers commit to these arrangements. These arrangements have yet to be implemented.

What progress have leaders and managers made in accurately evaluating the quality of provision and in using improvement processes to bring about improvements? Reasonable progress

Following the previous inspection, leaders and managers reviewed their processes that quality assured and evaluated provision. In addition to revised practices, leaders have appointed a non-executive member to the board, with education and training expertise, to provide additional support and challenge to the senior team. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of education and training that apprentices receive are now more robust and accurate.

Leaders and managers make better use of the information and data they collate to identify areas of concern. This enables them to quickly put in place actions to address concerns, for example providing extra help and support for apprentices who are not progressing as well as they should. This ensures that apprentices are fully prepared for their final assessments.

Quality assurance managers use a range of activities to monitor the quality of education. They visit learning sessions and carry out individual reviews with learning and development coaches to identify areas for improvement. For example, through assessment feedback, they identified that misconceptions existed in apprentices' understanding and knowledge of the difference between sewage and sewerage. Managers put in place an additional learning session to apprentices' off-the-job training schedule. Learning and development coaches use their technical knowledge to plan and deliver the session to help apprentices acquire a deeper understanding of the differences.

In addition to the range of information and data collated, leaders and managers gather the views of apprentices, employers, staff and directors to evaluate and assess strengths and weaknesses of the provision to drive improvement. For example, leaders and managers have accurately identified that too few apprentices achieve high grades in their final assessments.

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