

Gedling Borough Council

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Russ Henry, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Employer

Address: Civic Centre
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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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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.

Gedling Borough Council is a local authority. Its offices are in Arnold, on the outskirts of Nottingham city centre. At the time of the monitoring visit, 18 apprentices followed standards programmes at level 3. There were 14 team leaders, two business administrators, and two public service delivery officers. It had recruited apprentices in two separate cohorts. At the time of the visit, apprentices in the first group were approaching the end of their 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 have developed the apprenticeship programme as part of the overall package of training available to council employees. Almost all apprentices work for the council, except one who works for a neighbouring council. Managers and staff have identified the specific knowledge and skills that apprentices need to learn to make them more productive members of staff. They have devised coherent off-the-job training programmes that meet the requirements of apprenticeships.

Trainers are appropriately qualified and experienced in their occupational areas. They have extensive experience as trainers and are qualified assessors. They make effective use of workbooks and online resources to supplement classroom-based learning activities.

Managers recruit apprentices carefully. They work with line managers at the council to identify individuals who are most likely to benefit substantially from training. This has helped to ensure that apprentices in the second cohort remain motivated and develop a good range of new knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, managers did not choose recruits to the first cohort as carefully and too many have dropped out.

Managers review the quality of programmes and produce an accurate self-assessment report. They identified several weaknesses during the training of the first group of apprentices, and they have made changes for the second cohort. For example, they selected a different diploma qualification for team leader apprentices that is a better match for their work roles.

Trainers do not do enough to ensure that activities in the workplace support and reinforce apprentices' off-the-job training. Training staff do not participate in quarterly reviews with apprentices and their line managers, and line managers do not always know what apprentices need to practise in the workplace.

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 benefit from well-planned and well-structured off-the-job training. Trainers have identified the key skills and knowledge that apprentices should gain. They have planned programmes so that they present topics in a sensible order, enabling apprentices to develop their understanding progressively. As a result, apprentices produce written and practical work that meets the expected standards.

Apprentices develop a good range of knowledge, skills and behaviours. Trainers know their subjects well and help apprentices to understand how their training relates to their job roles. For example, they enabled one apprentice to use her increasing skills in planning and forecasting to complete a successful project related to fly-tipping in the local community.

Managers have made arrangements to support apprentices as they prepare for end-point assessments (EPAs). They have appointed a specialist trainer to help apprentices present their portfolios clearly and prepare them for professional discussions about their work. However, although apprentices know what to do for their EPAs, they are less clear about how to gain higher grades.

Staff have not included English and mathematics training early enough in the programmes for the very small number of apprentices who lack qualifications in these subjects. Because of this, these apprentices are unable to produce their best work until later in their programmes.

Apprentices meet regularly with their line managers to discuss and agree targets for completion of assessments. Although training staff monitor the progress apprentices make, they often do not attend review meetings. As a result, they do not always deal effectively with apprentices who make slow progress.

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

The council has a comprehensive safeguarding policy. This includes guidance on how staff should deal with and report concerns and disclosures. It gives explicit guidance on how staff should behave towards children and young people, including through electronic means. Council staff follow appropriate safer recruitment practices, by checking the backgrounds of staff who work with apprentices.

The designated lead officer is well trained and has a clear understanding of his role. He has extensive knowledge of local safeguarding problems, such as domestic violence and modern slavery. He has contact with a range of other local agencies, whose roles he understands well.

Apprentices feel safe. They receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role at the council and further training as part of their apprenticeship programme. As a result, they have a good understanding of safeguarding, including the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

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