

NPL Management Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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.

NPL Management Limited (NPL) is based at the National Physical Laboratory and provides apprenticeship training in level 3 metrology. The aim of the three-year programme is to train apprentices who can interpret and apply accurate measurements in a wide range of industries, for example healthcare and satellite navigation.

NPL has a contract to deliver levy-funded apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit, 12 apprentices are on the standards programme. Five apprentices started in October 2018 and a further seven joined in the autumn of 2019. Half of the apprentices work for NPL and the other half work in other sectors, such as the automotive and medical industries. A small minority of the apprentices are aged 16 to 18 when they join the programme. In addition to its main contract, NPL has four apprentices through a subcontract with CSR Scientific Training but this provision does not form part of this monitoring visit.

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

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have a clear rationale for the provision. The apprenticeship provision enables NPL to attract new staff and train them to the required technical specification. Apprentices have access to valuable jobs while training and good employment prospects once qualified. As a result, the programme has significant benefits for the apprentices, NPL itself and the other employers whose apprentices are on the training programme.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the provision meets the apprenticeship requirements. The programme meets the off-the-job training requirement fully. Leaders have planned a well-coordinated programme of learning through face-to-face training, online learning and highly effective support in the workplace.

Leaders and managers have good processes in place to monitor the provision. A thorough recruitment process results in apprentices having a good understanding of

the programme before they start. The retention of apprentices on programme is excellent.

The programme manager and trainers create effective links with NPL managers and external employers. Staff plan carefully how to introduce potential new employers to the metrology apprenticeship programme. Consequently, employers are well aware of the curriculum and the requirements of the programme.

Trainers and line managers have closely aligned the training content and work-based tasks. This results in great opportunities for apprentices to learn the theory of metrology and then apply it in practice. The curriculum is carefully planned and apprentices have good opportunities to learn, revise and expand their knowledge and skills. Senior staff have produced well-structured learning materials which clearly set out learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Staff have relevant industrial experience and use it skilfully to contextualise metrology in practical activities.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Significant progress

Apprentices acquire significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They are new to the field of metrology and most apprentices make rapid progress. Even those who have joined the programme only recently explain their learning very clearly. Apprentices enjoy the challenge of learning content and applying their new skills, knowledge and behaviours in their place of work. They find the work fulfilling and interesting and relish working on, for example, research projects with universities. Employers value highly the opportunities that NPL opens up to their apprentices.

Trainers have an appropriate focus on the development of general skills in metrology, as well as work-specific aspects. They also develop the wider skills that apprentices need in order to thrive in their place of work. Trainers use effective questioning techniques in training sessions to check that apprentices understand and recall the content of the learning material accurately.

Apprentices and employers find the coherent training plans useful when planning the development of skills and reviewing progress. The course, training blocks and employer visits are clear to all. The sequencing of on- and off-the-job training works particularly well. For example, apprentices have good opportunities to shadow staff before or after they start new modules.

Trainers provide in-depth feedback on the quality of learning and give clear advice on the actions that apprentices need to take to improve their work. Detailed observation records on workplace performance set out clearly how well apprentices carry out tasks. Trainers and apprentices use self-reflection to good effect. For

example, apprentices learn to conduct mismatch measurements. They describe their tasks clearly and some provide good photographic evidence. They reflect in detail on the outcomes of the test and how well they performed the task. In-depth analysis and feedback during block learning and end-of-year reviews set out clearly what apprentices have achieved and what action they should take to improve their work further.

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

Leaders and managers have put in place appropriate processes to ensure that apprentices are safe. The safeguarding lead and trainers have a good understanding of the safeguarding requirements for the apprentices, most of whom are young people in their first job. All staff have had relevant training and the safeguarding policy is clear on principles and expectations. Staff know their apprentices well and give them good personal support.

Apprentices feel safe and know whom to talk to if they have problems. They have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding and of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Staff embed British values in the curriculum. They acknowledge that it can be hard to create meaningful opportunities in a technical curriculum and have good plans to develop this aspect further.

Staff check that employers have appropriate health and safety procedures which enable apprentices to work safely in the laboratories. Apprentices have the appropriate personal protective equipment and have access to relevant training, such as laser training, before they work with specialist equipment.

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