

Paragon Training Academy Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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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.

Paragon Training Academy Limited is a small independent provider. It began delivery of directly funded apprenticeships in March 2019. It provides standards-based apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit it had 36 apprentices, 25 of whom were following the L2 rail engineering, track maintenance standards and 11 apprentices were following L3 community sports and health worker standards. Most apprentices are employed in and around the London area.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of employers' needs and take action to improve the quality of training for apprentices. Apprentices make valuable contributions in the workplace when they join rail maintenance teams or when working in a community setting.

Leaders ensure that the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship are met. Apprentices and employers are aware of end-point assessments and what they need to do to pass.

The rail engineering, track maintenance curriculum aligns effectively to the training requirements and expectations of the rail industry. Rail engineering apprentices receive health and safety training in a high-quality simulated rail track environment by very experienced tutors. As a result, they have a good understanding of the practical application of their technical knowledge. They practise their skills in realistic scenarios before being employed to work on live tracks.

The community sports and health worker programme prepares apprentices for working with communities and in local sports centres. Apprentices learn from the beginning of their programme how to work successfully with different community groups to encourage more active lifestyles.

Leaders undertake observations of training sessions and provide tutors with improvement actions. However, these do not focus sufficiently on improving the craft of teaching.

A board of governors, with relevant knowledge and experience, has recently been appointed. It is too soon to judge their impact.

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

Most apprentices gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, rail engineering apprentices learn how to safely remove a rail sleeper or replace worn or broken rails, adhering to strict health and safety procedures. Community sports and health worker apprentices liaise with national sporting organisations and support community groups to become involved in sporting and well-being activities in their local area.

Tutors ensure that apprentices' English and mathematical skills are developed throughout their programme. For example, rail engineering apprentices develop their use of technical language and how to adhere to rail specification requirements. Community sports apprentices learn to communicate effectively with a wide range of clients and develop financial management skills as they plan budgets for community projects.

Apprenticeships are well planned and sequenced to meet both the employer and apprentices' needs, for example developing digital skills early in the community sports and health worker apprenticeship to support apprentices' research projects and the completion of funding bids. Rail engineering apprentices learn how to make visual safety checks before they undertake any rail track activities.

Tutors have good specialist knowledge and experience that they use well to provide off-the-job training of a high standard. As a result, rail engineer apprentices develop the confidence to work in rail track maintenance teams. They reinforce their skills, knowledge and behaviours through regular health and safety discussions with their tutor.

Apprentices' progress is monitored closely. As a result, apprentices make at least the progress expected of them.

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

Leaders and managers follow safe recruitment practices and keep a record of appropriate checks made on staff. The suitably trained designated safeguarding lead

is knowledgeable about the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.

Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They receive comprehensive safeguarding training which includes staying safe online. Staff prioritise apprentices' understanding of health and safety in the workplace and how to keep themselves and others safe at all times.

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