

ECM Southwest Ltd

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 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

ECM Training Ltd (trading as Construction Assessments) is an independent learning provider based in Taunton, Somerset. It started to deliver framework apprenticeships to levy-paying employers in August 2018. At the time of the visit, eight apprentices were enrolled on level 3 construction programmes, based with employers in London and Cornwall.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders do not have sufficient understanding of apprenticeships to ensure that all apprentices meet the requirements of the programme. They have not implemented effective processes to track apprentices' off-the-job training and cannot confirm that all apprentices receive their full entitlement. Leaders have not made any provision to develop intermediate apprentices' mathematics and English skills beyond the levels expected for the apprenticeship.

Leaders have not developed an effective curriculum strategy. They do not plan or sequence the curriculum to meet apprentices' individual needs. The curriculum is too narrow and focuses on achieving the main qualification; it is not ambitious and does not develop apprentices' broader knowledge and behaviours. Staff do not engage with employers enough. They do not plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job training, assessments and review points.

Leaders do not have effective systems to monitor apprentices' progress. As a result, they are unable to provide accurate information on when apprentices are due to complete their programmes, or if they have undertaken functional skills examinations.

Leaders have not developed adequate quality assurance or quality improvement processes. Managers do not undertake observations of assessors' practice to confirm the quality of training and assessment. The self-assessment report does not reflect

accurately the provider's strengths and weaknesses, and there is no plan in place to ensure continued improvement.

The governance arrangements are ineffective. Leaders recognise that, as a very small team, they rely too heavily on verbal agreements. Leaders do not record decisions or hold anybody to account for their actions. There is no external oversight of leaders' actions.

Employers are committed to apprenticeships and they value the new skills and knowledge that apprentices develop during their programme. All the apprentices are newly recruited to their current roles within the construction industry and they develop some good skills and knowledge.

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

Managers have been slow to adapt from their previous delivery of construction qualifications to meet the broader requirements of apprenticeships. They have focused their activities on redesigning paperwork for the portfolios, rather than developing an ambitious curriculum that meets apprentices' individual needs. For example, the initial assessment paperwork is comprehensive and detailed, but the results are not used to plan the apprentice's learning programme.

The standard of apprentices' work is below that which is expected of level 3 learners. Apprentices are not encouraged to take enough responsibility for their own research and evidence. In too many cases, where the apprentices' work is of a poor standard, the assessor does not provide appropriate feedback.

Assessment practice is weak; it does not measure how apprentices develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours in a logical and systematic way. Assessors provide useful verbal feedback to apprentices; however, this does not allow assessors to accurately check the progress that apprentices make.

Too many apprentices are uncertain about the progress they are making. They do not know when they are due to complete their apprenticeship or whether they still need to take their functional skills examinations.

Apprentices benefit from good personal support from their assessor who is knowledgeable and well qualified. This motivates apprentices to work hard to complete their qualifications, and they gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. Most apprentices are given additional responsibilities or gain promotion at work as a result of their training.

Apprentices have good opportunities to gain additional qualifications that will enhance their career prospects within the construction industry, for example in

harness training, site traffic management and first-aid training. Some apprentices attend outward bound courses to develop core skills in teamwork and self-confidence.

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

Leaders do not promote safeguarding arrangements effectively. The designated safeguarding lead has not received appropriate training to carry out her duties and responsibilities for the role. Not all staff have undergone a disclosure and barring check. Leaders have not established any links with external specialist agencies for referral, advice or guidance.

Leaders do not understand the requirement for apprentices and staff to receive training on the 'Prevent' duty and fundamental British values. They have not developed a 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan or any resources to support training. As a result, apprentices do not understand the dangers of radicalisation or extremism, or how these relate to working in the construction sector.

Apprentices feel safe, and they know to whom they should report concerns. They are respectful of colleagues and they do not tolerate discriminatory behaviours in the workplace. Employers promote mental health and well-being, and apprentices show a good awareness of these issues. However, in some construction sites the health and safety culture is poor.

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