

Institution of Railway Operators Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Bev Ramsell, Her Majesty's Inspector

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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.

The Institution of Railway Operators (IRO) is a professional institution whose focus and specialism are railway operations. In September 2018, IRO started to deliver levy-funded apprenticeships. At the time of the inspection, IRO had 110 apprentices enrolled across three standards. The majority of apprentices are studying the standards for level 4 passenger transport operations manager, and level 3 team leader/ supervisor, with the remaining apprentices on the level 5 operations/ departmental manager standards.

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 good relations with employers and apprentices to make sure all parties are clear on their responsibilities for meeting the apprenticeship criteria. These include the requirements for time away from work to study and for the preparation of assessments. Apprentices and employers are clear on the demands of the programme before they start the apprenticeship. Consequently, very few apprentices have left early.

Managers have made sure they have the appropriate human resources needed to deliver the apprenticeship well. Experienced trainers and coaches hold the relevant qualifications and undertake regular professional development. Where required, managers work with rail experts to teach essential parts of the curriculum, to make sure apprentices receive the information that can support them to develop. As a result of this, apprentices get a rounded view of the rail industry and a greater understanding of the operational activities involved with rail.

Managers have a reasonably accurate oversight of the progress apprentices are making during their training, through the evaluation of regular reviews that monitor developments, and meetings with trainers and coaches. Apprentices who are behind due to workload receive extra time to study, to support them to catch up. This has

resulted in most apprentices making appropriate progress. However, the main tool that apprentices, employers and coaches use to store work and measure improvement does not link with other procedures. It does not give an accurate overview of the distance travelled by most learners and can give a misleading picture of either overachievement or poor progress, resulting in confusion for those using the tool.

Most apprentices and employers are clear on the requirements of the end-point assessment. Coaches use competency-based interviews effectively to prepare apprentices well to meet this challenge. However, in a few instances, apprentices are unaware of what they need to do to prepare for this final assessment.

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

Trainers and coaches deliver a well-ordered curriculum that provides an effective overview of the rail industry. As a result, apprentices develop a strong understanding of their industry and acquire substantial new knowledge and skills, which they impart to good effect in the workplace. Apprentices develop transferable managerial skills that support them to make good progress. For example, a driver team leader used their newly acquired managerial, training and communication skills to develop other drivers within their network.

Trainers and coaches use the information on apprentices' existing skills and knowledge to plan their programmes effectively in alignment with the standard they are studying. A thorough recruitment and induction process identifies apprentices' skills gaps and learning needs. Apprentices receive support where it is appropriate to help them develop or catch up. As a result, apprentices build on their current experience and develop new knowledge and skills that advance their effective working practices and future career opportunities.

Trainers and coaches make sure apprentices' work is at the correct level for them to make good progress. Work is usually of a high standard, mapped well to the learning criteria. It clearly shows the building up of the apprentices' knowledge and long-term understanding through reflective practice.

Most apprentices receive feedback and guidance that enable them to identify what they need to do to improve and set targets for future development. However, in a few instances, assessment feedback is insufficiently detailed, and targets lack sufficiently clear skills/ knowledge-based focus, to support apprentices in making improvements to their work. For example, spelling and grammar are not always corrected to help the apprentice improve. Targets on reviews are, at times, perfunctory and focused only on qualification units, rather than the further development of knowledge and skills.

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

Leaders have developed an effective safeguarding culture that supports the needs of apprentices and staff. Leaders have made sure to develop apprentices' and staff's general understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding concepts. As a result, staff are confident in their understanding, and apprentices are clear on the key principles of safeguarding and 'Prevent'. However, managers need to make sure that apprentices and staff receive regular, current and contextualised updates to make sure apprentices are aware of emerging threats they may face in their daily lives.

Safeguarding leads work well with employers to make sure they are aware of the support available for apprentices. Processes used to track and monitor apprentices who have been involved in safeguarding incidents are effective and support individuals past the point of resolutions.

Leaders have not made sure the safeguarding policy is sufficiently current. The policy relates to out-of-date legislation and does not detail local authority information to be used, if a situation were to arise.

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