

First Intuition Maidstone Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 89 King Street
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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.

First Intuition Maidstone Limited is a small independent learning provider that is part of the wider First Intuition Group. The Maidstone centre started providing private training courses to the finance and accounting sector in 2011. It gained approval to provide publicly funded apprenticeships in January 2019. At the time of the monitoring visit, 31 apprentices are studying standards-based apprenticeships in accountancy and finance, 20 at level 4 and the rest at level 3. First Intuition also offers apprenticeships at level 7, which are not in scope for this monitoring visit. Almost all apprentices are over the age of 19.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders are ambitious for their apprentices and make well-considered decisions about the apprenticeship programmes they offer. They expect all apprentices to work hard, complete their professional qualifications and make a successful career in the finance sector.

Leaders have a clear strategic intention to work with local accountancy practices. They aim to recruit apprentices who are often from the most deprived areas of the county. They use their good reputation to work with highly regarded employers. They communicate their expectations well so that employers know what their commitment needs to be. As a result, they recruit apprentices with integrity. Consequently, almost all of them complete their apprenticeship.

Leaders and employers have a good understanding of the requirements of an apprenticeship programme and plan programmes effectively to include all the components. They work well together to arrange meaningful on- and off-the-job training activities. These help apprentices to practise their skills and use the new knowledge they have gained to undertake accountancy tasks in the workplace.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their organisation well. They use their quality assurance processes to analyse their provision. They then put in place quality improvement actions to address the weaknesses identified. However, they do not involve employers and apprentices sufficiently. They do not consider the positive impact on apprentices that these actions will bring about.

Leaders have ensured that apprentices have access to high-quality learning resources, such as online resources. They use these independently for research, examination practice and the consolidation of knowledge gained in the classroom.

Tutors have expert finance and accounting technical knowledge, although as correctly identified by leaders, their teaching skills require development. All tutors are undertaking a teacher training course.

Leaders do not benefit from a system of governance or external scrutiny. They are in the process of appointing a non-executive director.

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 are proud of the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they gain and the increasing contribution they make to their work roles. Employers rightly value these contributions.

Staff and employers work effectively to plan on- and off-the-job training for apprentices. Skills coaches and employers arrange workplace activities so that apprentices can use new knowledge and practise their accounting skills.

Staff use initial assessment well to identify apprentices' starting points. They then plan tasks to address skills that apprentices need to develop, such as communicating with clients. However, this is not always accurate and too often staff have to repeat the assessment.

Staff use assessment well to check understanding and inform changes to the order of the curriculum. For example, in classes staff use an interactive quiz to help apprentices recall their learning. Tutors use this information to identify gaps in the group's learning. They then return to topics previously completed, such as costings, to do more work. This would be more useful if tutors could identify individual responses.

Apprentices who work for large employers benefit from moving between departments and disciplines, such as from the healthcare to the audit team. Consequently, apprentices gain additional opportunities to practise their skills across

a range of disciplines. Apprentices are also able to make more informed choices about where they may want to specialise.

Tutors give a high priority to apprentices continuing to develop their writing and communication skills. For example, apprentices benefit from support in improving their writing techniques for examination answers.

Apprentices and employers have a good understanding of the end-point assessment process. However, they have an insufficient understanding of the grades they can achieve.

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

Leaders prioritise the safety of their apprentices. Leaders have an appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty policy in place, which they review frequently. A well-considered 'Prevent' duty risk assessment includes local threats, such as right-wing extremism and animal rights.

The designated and deputy safeguarding officers are appropriately qualified. They use the knowledge they gain from community partners and additional training, such as mental health first aid, to support apprentices well.

Leaders have established effective recruitment processes and carry out appropriate pre-employment checks. All staff benefit from an effective training programme which includes monthly working lunches to discuss and receive local safeguarding updates.

Apprentices feel safe and know to whom they should report concerns. Staff frequently discuss safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty with apprentices. As a result, apprentices have a good understanding and continued awareness of the potential issues they may face. This is particularly so in relation to the risks related to the finance industry, such as money laundering.

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