

Dick White Academy

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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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.

Dick White Academy (DWA) was set up by Dick White Referrals Limited (DWR) in 2016 to remedy the shortage of registered veterinary nurses. DWA has held a direct funding contract to provide levy-funded apprenticeships since 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, 38 directly-funded apprentices were on standards programmes. Five were on the level 2 animal care and welfare assistant standard and the rest were on the level 3 veterinary nursing standard. DWA holds a subcontract with the College of West Anglia. These learners were out of scope for this visit.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Directors aspire to provide high-quality veterinary nursing apprenticeships to remedy national and local shortages. They have a well-qualified and very experienced team of staff. Leaders have ensured that apprenticeship training is well resourced. Apprentices have access to the staff and facilities at DWR, one of the largest private specialist veterinary referral centres in Europe.

Apprentices attend high-quality off-the-job training at DWA. They can carry out a much wider range of duties as a result of their studies and can carry out tasks more effectively and independently in the workplace. Leaders ensure that apprentices are appropriately supported in their workplace. Apprentices remain on the programme and achieve.

Employers value the flexibility of leaders at DWA. Leaders found an apprenticeship route for part-time employees, whereas other providers declined to do so. Employers value the swift and constructive responses of leaders to their queries. For example, DWA was the only provider to respond to employers' queries about coronavirus. Leaders have a clear plan to move to remote delivery.

Leaders are inclusive in their recruitment. For example, they introduced the level 2 programme to provide access to veterinary nursing for those without the qualifications to enrol at level 3. However, only a few current apprentices are male and there are no apprentices from a minority ethnic background.

Leaders have not yet ensured good alignment between on- and off-the-job training. This slows apprentices' learning and progress. The development of apprentices' practical competencies in the workplace sometimes takes place too long after the relevant theory is covered.

Directors oversee the quality of provision. They ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are implemented. However, directors have yet to improve the current skills and experience gaps of managers.

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 clearly understand the requirements of their apprenticeship before they start. Leaders assess their starting points and use this information effectively to plan the development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills. However, they do not use this information to tailor the rest of the programme or to inform progress reviews.

Leaders and tutors carefully plan learning. They take account of how frequently apprentices use particular knowledge in the workplace. They use this to decide what to teach and when. They make sure that they fully prepare apprentices for external assessments. Apprentices complete surveys on the teaching of each unit. Leaders proactively use this feedback to adjust future delivery.

Apprentices benefit from their courses. Tutors support them effectively and encourage them to achieve high standards. Tutors use a range of questioning techniques appropriately to reinforce apprentices' knowledge development. They carefully check apprentices' understanding. They set weekly tests to consolidate apprentices' knowledge. These are valuable in helping apprentices to retain what they have learned.

Apprentices make a greater contribution in their workplaces as a result of the knowledge gained on their course, for example in applying improved and documented sterilisation procedures.

Leaders and tutors recognise when apprentices fall behind or require extra help. They act quickly to ensure that apprentices catch up. Tutors' feedback on assignments helps most apprentices to understand how to improve further.

Apprentices' progress reviews do not capture all aspects of apprentices' development. Clinical coaches do not review apprentices' progress with tutors. Too often tutors agree targets with apprentices that are too vague to meaningfully guide the apprentice. Review records do not capture what apprentices know and understand about areas such as British Values.

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

Apprentices feel safe. They learn about health and safety early in their training. They work safely by applying their knowledge in the workplace. Apprentices know their individual responsibilities for safeguarding. They know how to report any concerns they have. They are able to discuss some issues around radicalisation and extremist behaviour. However, they lack a detailed awareness of the potential dangers of such behaviour in their working context, for example the potential impact of actions taken by animal rights activists.

Leaders recognise mental health as a specific safeguarding issue in the sector. They have proactively responded by training all academy staff as mental health first-aiders. They integrate training on dealing with and avoiding mental health issues into courses. Apprentices develop resilience to cope with work and life pressures as a result.

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