

Intuitions Limited

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 52531

Name of lead inspector: Cath Jackson, HMI

Visit dates: 30 September to 1 October 2020

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 43–45 Tower Street
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Interim visit

Context and focus of visit

On 17 March 2020, all routine inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. As part of our phased return to routine inspections, we are carrying out 'interim visits' to further education and skills providers. Interim visits are to help learners, parents, employers and government understand how providers are meeting the needs of learners and apprentices in this period, including learners with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We intend to return to routine inspection in January 2021 but will keep the exact timing under review.

The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below and the findings are based on discussions with leaders, managers, staff and learners.

Information about the provider

Intuitions Limited is an independent training provider based in Harrogate. The company was established in 1993 and offers apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. It operates from centres in Harrogate, Middlesbrough and Wakefield and from the premises of a subcontractor in Leeds. Around 160 apprentices are currently in learning, with just over half of these aged between 16 and 18. The vast majority of apprentices are completing hairdressing apprenticeships, with a small minority enrolled on beauty therapy apprenticeships. There is a very small number of learners on adult learning programmes.

What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that responds to the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?

Leaders confirmed that all apprentices were put on furlough when their employers' salons closed in line with lockdown requirements. They adjusted the curriculum for apprentices and adult learners in response to COVID-19 restrictions. Staff adapted teaching resources to enable apprentices and learners to access them online. Leaders feel that, as a result, apprentices and learners have largely kept up with the theory element of their courses.

Leaders identified that apprentices and learners had very little opportunity to practise their hands-on skills during lockdown. They feel that many apprentices and learners lost confidence in their practical skills development over this period. Leaders prioritised these skills when salons and the training centre reopened. They also worked with employers to continue to provide apprentices with online learning in their salon workplaces, focusing on theory.

Leaders provided support for apprentices and learners with specific needs during lockdown. They conducted well-being meetings in between reviews to identify those

who were most vulnerable in terms of mental health, and they offered support by telephone.

Leaders consider that using online platforms for remote teaching has been particularly successful in developing apprentices' English and mathematics knowledge. Teaching staff feel that when they work individually with apprentices online, they can tailor learning to address specific gaps in knowledge. Apprentices value this approach as their individual knowledge gaps are not shared with a larger group of apprentices. Leaders intend to continue with online teaching approaches for English and mathematics.

Employers are positive about the way teaching staff support apprentices nearing the end of their training to prepare them for practical assessments. Staff provide additional classes in which apprentices can hone their hairdressing skills, using head blocks where clients cannot attend. Employers consider that online resources and support have helped to motivate their apprentices to re-engage and to catch up.

What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?

Managers have identified gaps in apprentices' knowledge and practical skills. Teaching staff found that they needed to provide extra sessions to revisit practical topics and techniques that apprentices learned prior to lockdown. They anticipate that apprentices who attend these sessions will catch up with practical tasks more quickly. However, not all salons are able to release apprentices to attend due to work commitments.

Staff said that, prior to lockdown, they made very limited use of online learning. Managers feel that their online learning platform meets apprentices' and learners' needs well, and they intend to develop their use of it. Apprentices find online resources helpful, such as demonstrations from prestigious hair salons. Teaching staff make use of online quizzes to check the knowledge and skills of apprentices who are learning remotely. They believe that this helped to prepare apprentices for assessments once they were able to attend the centre again. They realise that online learning presents some challenges. They have found that apprentices are more reluctant to ask questions, making it harder to identify those who have gaps in their knowledge or may be falling behind.

Managers have encouraged teaching staff to keep to a structured timetable when working remotely, to support apprentices to maintain a sense of routine. This is because maintaining a routine is often difficult for apprentices who are furloughed and do not have the normal structure to their working week. Managers feel that younger apprentices often prove harder to engage and keep on track. They told us that, along with employers, they addressed this through frequent contact and checks on the well-being of the apprentices.

Managers have concentrated careers advice on supporting those on furlough and facing redundancy during this period. They wait to see the effects that the changes to the furlough scheme will have.

How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

Staff described how they trained apprentices and learners to keep themselves and their clients safe in a salon environment. Apprentices value the training they received about COVID-19 and the support from staff. They told us that teaching staff paid close attention to their mental and physical well-being, both during and after lockdown. For example, managers changed start and end times at the training centre when it reopened so that apprentices could travel safely without anxiety.

Safeguarding staff explained how they address safeguarding concerns or disclosures. Staff support apprentices who had been identified as vulnerable or at risk before lockdown. Staff and apprentices know who to talk to if they have any concerns about safety. Staff said that they understood how to keep apprentices and learners safe online, but they recognise a need to update their awareness of current and recent online and local threats.

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