

Davidson Training UK Ltd

Interim visit report

Unique reference number:	51492
Name of lead inspector:	Penny Fawcus, HMI
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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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

Davidson Training UK Ltd (DTUK) is an independent learning provider, established in 1997 and based in Grays, Essex. At the time of the visit there were 120 apprentices, located in London, Essex and Kent.

DTUK offers standard-based apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5 in a wide range of subjects. These include business administration, retail, customer service, recruitment, team leader, supervisor and management studies. Most apprentices are on the level 3 business administrator programme.

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 are proud of how they have responded to the national lockdown. They believe they were quick to move apprentices to work remotely online. They recognise that the standards-based curriculum enabled them to be flexible and adapt the learning to meet individual apprentices' circumstances.

Leaders told us how they anticipated the national lockdown. They created time to come together as a team and develop a plan of action that they then communicated to employers and apprentices. Leaders increased the frequency of communication with employers and apprentices. This has strengthened working relationships.

Trainers shared their own experiences of remote working to support apprentices, for example by providing suggested coping strategies, such as the importance of creating a routine and taking exercise breaks. This has helped apprentices cope better and remain in learning.

Leaders describe the support they have given their staff. They have been more accessible to them through using social media platforms. Staff value the feedback from leaders. They feel confident to use technology to provide remote learning to apprentices.

Moving forward, leaders are continuing with a combination of remote and face-to-face learning. With less travel time between employers, trainers have more time to help apprentices and deal with any potential issues more promptly.

Leaders have supported employers to take on new apprentices during lockdown. They have provided up-to-date Covid-19 information to employers, such as safety checklists and training materials.

Leaders and employers are concerned about the longer-term limitations of remote learning for apprentices. For example, apprentices not being able to work in a busy office environment and learn from experienced work colleagues.

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?

Leaders have invested in a new online tracking system. They reviewed how staff use assessment plans to monitor apprentices' skills development and their general well-being. Leaders have done this with an increased focus on keeping apprentices and staff healthy and safe. In weekly meetings, leaders and trainers review apprentices' progress and risk ratings. They are confident that most apprentices are on target to achieve.

Trainers report that since the start of lockdown, they have increased their visits to apprentices. These are now fortnightly. Trainers use visits to motivate and help apprentices, for example by resolving any issues that apprentices may be having in the workplace. Leaders say that they have prioritised support for apprentices approaching their final assessment. They recognise it is important for apprentices' job security to complete and achieve their apprenticeship qualification.

Trainers report that apprentices have had more time to spend on learning the theoretical elements of their course independently of their trainers. Leaders say that apprentices now happily complete online learning, rather than relying on visits from their trainers to develop their knowledge.

Trainers continue to give careers advice and guidance throughout the programme. Apprentices complete an assessment of their training needs and career aspirations at the start of their course. They update both during reviews of learning to ensure that they fulfil their career goals.

Leaders and trainers have a heightened awareness of the differences between apprentices' individual circumstances. For example, they are more aware of

apprentices' personal situations and different approaches to learning. Leaders and trainers have enabled those apprentices without access to computers to access learning by providing laptops.

Leaders say that apprentices have looked to their trainers for work-related help during the national lockdown. For example, a few apprentices have raised concerns about their job security. Leaders describe how trainers have worked with employers to provide reassurance to apprentices.

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

Leaders are conscious that all apprentices are vulnerable because of the pandemic. They say many are anxious and feel isolated. They told us that trainers complete a safeguarding assessment of the apprentices' health and well-being as part of every visit.

Trainers use topical issues such as the Black Lives Matter campaign and conspiracy issues about the origins of Covid-19 to develop apprentices' understanding of wider safeguarding concerns. Leaders are confident that trainers also reinforce with apprentices how to stay safe online, and the potential risks associated with extremism.

Apprentices feel confident that they have been given the information and training to keep them safe at work and online. They value the regular two weekly reviews with their trainers. Apprentices describe the support they receive from their tutors as going beyond the curriculum.

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