

Hertfordshire Catering Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2510886
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Type of provider:	Employer
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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 provider received a monitoring visit under these arrangements and was found to be making insufficient progress against one or more themes.

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 additional monitoring visits to new providers that were judged to be making insufficient progress against one or more themes at their previous monitoring visit and would have been due their full inspection up to or during the interim phase but have not received it because of the suspension of routine inspections. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements as outlined in the [interim phase operational note for further education and skills](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook and is focused on the themes set out below.

Hertfordshire Catering Limited (HCL) began trading in 2013 and is owned by Hertfordshire County Council. The company has had a direct contract to fund apprenticeship training since April 2017. At the time of the monitoring visit, nine apprentices were working towards the standards-based hospitality team member apprenticeship at level 2 and less than five were studying towards the level 2 production chef standard. The functional skills training for apprentices is subcontracted.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Leaders have a clear strategic aim for offering apprenticeships: to help catering staff develop their careers at HCL and gain industry recognised qualifications. However, most apprentices do not become assistant cooks on completion of their qualification. This is because managers and trainers do not actively plan individual development pathways into current and future job opportunities at HCL and beyond. The careers advice provided to apprentices remains insufficient.

Trainers' records of apprentices' off-the-job activities are too vague. They do not provide a clear perspective of the new knowledge and skills that apprentices are developing. Records merely list what activities apprentices have undertaken; for

example, portioning and following a recipe. Trainers do not comment on the quality of apprentices' work or what apprentices need to do next. Apprentices cannot describe in enough detail how they link the knowledge they gain as a part of their qualification to their work settings.

Leaders and managers are not ambitious enough for apprentices. They do not ensure that trainers set challenging targets to help apprentices achieve quickly. Consequently, apprentices take too long to complete their qualification. Apprentices often do not know when they will complete their studies.

Managers' quality monitoring systems are ineffective. Managers do not use clear management information to track apprentices' development towards completing their qualification. They cannot evidence that apprentices develop substantial new skills and knowledge as a result of their apprenticeship.

Governance arrangements are insufficient. Directors do not have the correct information to challenge managers effectively. The most recent quarterly management report to directors was inaccurate.

The members of the apprenticeship team have recently improved their understanding of the requirements of an apprenticeship programme. Leaders have employed an experienced assessor. All staff have undertaken a teaching and learning qualification. However, this has yet to have a positive impact on the management of the apprenticeship provision.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?

Insufficient progress

Apprentices do not benefit from a broad range of learning experiences. This does not help them acquire new workplace skills quickly. Apprentices are not able to develop a better understanding of how to be an assistant cook. Most have little opportunity to work across the different school meals provision, for example small and larger primary schools and complex secondary schools.

Trainers do not establish apprentices' starting points. They often do not recognise what apprentices can already do. They do not create a plan to prioritise the skills apprentices still need to learn to become an assistant cook. Apprentices have too little time at work to learn new skills. They spend too little time away from their kitchens learning the theory needed to run a kitchen.

Trainers, apprentices and contract managers do not periodically review learning together. Trainers still do not identify what an apprentice needs to learn and practise next.

Too many apprentices have yet to sit their final assessment. Apprentices are not always clear about the arrangements or date of their assessment. Apprentices are preparing now for their professional discussions. They complete practice assessments and are finalising their business plans.

Most apprentices complete their English functional skills qualification. Many find it hard to reach an acceptable standard of mathematics. Apprentices are often unable to relate mathematics to their everyday job role, for example converting a recipe for many portions into a smaller number of servings.

Apprentices provide a good standard of customer care to children and teachers. They listen carefully to and respond appropriately to their comments and suggestions; for example, headteachers wanting a broader range of fruit and vegetables on menus and children enjoying theme days such as 'Fun Friday' and 'Roast Dinner Wednesday'.

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

Leaders have appropriate processes to keep staff and apprentices safe. They recruit safely and use the Disclosure and Barring Service.

A well-trained, designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff complete mandatory training at the start of their employment. Trainers frequently review apprentices' understanding of safeguarding to ensure that they remain up to date.

All apprentices work in primary and secondary schools. They undertake further training specific to the individual settings in which they work. As a result, they have a good level of understanding of how to keep children safe. They know who to report concerns to within the schools where they work. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders promote staff well-being effectively. Staff access a range of learning modules online to help them understand how to keep themselves healthy, for example how to remain positive during the COVID-19 national lockdown.

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