

APA Procurement Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Steven Tucker, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection date(s): 21–22 October 2020

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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 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.

APA Procurement Training Limited (APA) is based in Swindon, Wiltshire. It was established to teach the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) qualifications. It started offering a level 4 standards-based apprenticeship programme in commercial procurement and supply in 2017. APA currently has eight apprentices. In the first monitoring visit in October 2019, inspectors judged that the provider had made insufficient progress in all three themes.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Since the previous monitoring visit, leaders have evaluated the quality of their apprenticeships and accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses. They have taken well-considered, and mostly successful, steps to make the necessary improvements. For example, they considered carefully how governance could make the greatest contribution to improving the quality of apprenticeships. As a result, they have recently appointed a non-executive director who is tasked with supporting and challenging them as they continue to make improvements.

Leaders have set clear standards and expectations for the working relationships they have with employers. They communicate these through a commendable employer engagement strategy. They have started to implement this strategy with the

employers of their current apprentices. While tutors work closely with some employers, they have a small number with whom collaboration and oversight of workplace activities is too limited. Leaders are acutely aware of the need to implement their employer engagement strategy consistently with all employers when they start to recruit new apprentices.

Leaders have developed a curriculum which links the content of the level 4 CIPS diploma with other elements of the apprenticeships well. This ensures that apprentices gain a broad understanding of a range of procurement practices. For example, apprentices working for a charity also learn about the work of procurement professionals in the public and private sectors. A few apprentices also study elements of the level 5 CIPS diploma, where relevant to their work. Most apprentices who need to complete an English or mathematics qualification have achieved or are making progress towards achieving one. For a very small number, this progress has been too slow.

The apprenticeships meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. All employers complete the required commitment statement. However, a small number of these statements do not record enough details about plans for off-the-job training or the support and on-the-job training that employers will provide.

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

Tutors ensure that apprentices have the chance to apply their new knowledge and skills in the workplace. Apprentices complete projects that link closely to their work place. Employers appreciate the value these projects add to their business.

Tutors take account of feedback from apprentices and the outcomes of assessments when planning the training. This includes using a range of teaching methods to ensure that each apprentice has understood a topic before moving on to the next. For example, tutors identified why a small number of learners struggled with multiple-choice tests and then gave them specific training on how to understand the questions.

Apprentices know how to make informed choices about their next steps because tutors include useful careers advice and guidance in the curriculum. This, along with the effective training, leads to learners moving onto higher levels of study or promoted posts. Some apprentices have been supported well by their tutors to secure new jobs or take on additional responsibilities while on their apprenticeship.

Tutors have improved their reviews of apprentices' progress since the previous monitoring visit. They now discuss and record apprentices' progress more effectively

and agree apprentices' next steps. This is seen particularly clearly in reviews of apprentices' final projects.

Leaders' efforts to get employers involved in progress reviews have had some success. However, employers are still not involved enough in planning how best to link apprentices' off-the-job training to their job or to the support and guidance they receive from workplace mentors and managers.

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

Leaders have taken the necessary steps to deal with the weaknesses in safeguarding identified during the previous monitoring visit. They have produced a safeguarding policy and risk assessments which underpin the actions they are taking to keep apprentices safe.

All staff, including the senior leader for safeguarding, have attended appropriate training and apprentices are now given information during their induction about how to stay safe. This information is reinforced by activities and training throughout their apprenticeship and updated when necessary.

Since leaders moved all teaching online, apprentices have been given guidance on how to stay safe online. Tutors discuss and reinforce this guidance during meetings with their apprentices.

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