

BC Arch Limited

Interim visit report

Unique reference number: 1184091

Name of lead inspector: Mike Finn, Her Majesty's Inspector

Visit date(s): 28 to 29 October 2020

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 58 Wood Lane
White City
London
W127RZ

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

BC Arch Limited (BC Arch) is part of the Avado Group. It is a specialist independent learning provider delivering data and digital, learning and development, and human resources apprenticeships to large corporate employers, local authorities, and small and medium-sized enterprises. BC Arch works with employers to recruit and select apprentices for a variety of workplaces and job roles. BC Arch delivers training online to apprentices across the UK. At the time of the visit, there were 2989 apprentices taking standards apprenticeships at levels 3 to 5.

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?

BC Arch has been delivering the majority of its apprenticeships online for some time. As a result, leaders informed inspectors that they have been able to continue without COVID-19 restrictions causing significant disruption to the training that apprentices receive.

As national restrictions started, leaders took the decision to pause the teaching of the knowledge component on two apprenticeship programmes that were not yet running online. Leaders used this time to plan sessions with interactive elements, to replicate the classroom. For example, they use specialist software to allow for group work. This allows business analyst apprentices to network with one another. Leaders informed inspectors that apprentices enjoy this approach. These sessions now have higher attendance than before the move online.

Leaders and staff work with employers to reduce the number of apprentices who take breaks in learning. For example, where civil service apprentices are redeployed to similar roles in different departments, coaches and employers adjust the tasks that

apprentices need to complete to fit the new role. Due to this flexibility, leaders and employers say that they have helped many apprentices to remain on their apprenticeship.

Staff and employers feel that communication between them has improved during the pandemic. They more readily share concerns about apprentices who are falling behind and coordinate the support that apprentices need to catch up.

Leaders recognise that one of their greatest challenges is supporting apprentices to complete their apprenticeship on time. This is particularly the case for those who have taken a break in learning. Some apprentices experience delays while they wait for English and mathematics examinations to take place.

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 developed an online learning platform for their teaching. Apprentices are able to reinforce their own learning by using resources posted to this platform. Most apprentices enjoy learning online, although some miss the social elements of the classroom.

Leaders have adapted the order of the curriculum for some apprentices. For those who are unable to work due to furlough arrangements, leaders bring forward the theoretical component of the apprenticeship. Leaders work with employers to plan an individualised curriculum for apprentices returning to work. This covers gaps in skills and work competencies that apprentices have missed while away from the workplace.

Leaders monitor apprentices' progress and engagement in all areas of the apprenticeship. They continue to use a variety of methods to monitor the quality of teaching, including evaluating online lessons. Apprentices complete regular surveys and leaders act on the results of these. For example, in response to recent feedback, leaders have reduced the length of teaching sessions.

Apprentices who need extra help receive support from staff so that they can make progress and achieve. Coaches identify any additional support needs of apprentices through online one-to-one meetings at the start of the programme. This enables coaches to produce specific action plans for apprentices. For example, those who need it are allowed more time to complete larger synoptic projects. Staff record online lessons so that apprentices are able to revisit the content in their own time.

Leaders have developed a buddy system so that staff with more online teaching experience can support those who are less confident. Staff also attend weekly training sessions covering topics such as how to embed the teaching of mathematics and English within virtual lessons.

Coaches provide careers advice and guidance to apprentices. They support apprentices who have been made redundant by, for example, helping them to update their curriculum vitae.

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

Staff receive training about safeguarding when teaching online lessons. They provide information to apprentices about online risks, such as phishing. Leaders recognise that they need to more regularly reinforce apprentices' understanding of online safety issues.

Coaches check on apprentices' well-being in frequent discussions. They cover topics such as how to cope with isolation and managing workload when working from home.

Coaches informed inspectors that they are aware of the vulnerabilities of their apprentices. They use a tracking system to highlight if apprentices are a cause for concern or do not attend sessions. Where concerns exist, leaders refer these to the designated safeguarding lead.

Coaches have worked with employers to ensure that apprentices are safe when attending the workplace. This includes reviewing safety measures, such as social distancing arrangements.

Apprentices say they feel supported by their coaches and line managers, and they know who to contact if they have any worries or concerns.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020