

# DART Limited

Interim visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 51468

**Name of lead inspector:** Bob Hamp, Her Majesty's Inspector

**Visit date(s):** 24 to 25 November 2020

  

**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 in this period, including those with high needs and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the provider.

### Information about the provider

DART Limited (DART) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Reaseheath College. It offers training in land-based operations including agriculture, animal care, horticulture, trees and timber, sports turf, green keeping, veterinary nursing and environmental conservation. DART works with two subcontractors, Bottle Green Training and Abbeydale Vetlink, to deliver apprenticeship standards and frameworks. At the time of the visit, 390 apprentices study at level 2, 3 and 4. The majority study veterinary nursing. Eighteen learners are on study programmes at level 1, 2 or 3, mainly in agriculture and animal care.

### **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 report that the move to online learning in response to COVID-19 restrictions was challenging. For example, land-based assessor tutors had little contact with learning technology before the pandemic. As a result, all assessor tutors received support to deliver their courses online and create resources to develop knowledge and understanding. This allows apprentices and learners to make progress towards their qualification.

Assessor tutors report difficulties in gathering evidence of practical activities during the pandemic, particularly for those unable to access their workplace. This was compounded by delays to final assessments as awarding organisations adapted their assessment methods to meet safeguarding requirements. Dates are now set for apprentices to complete their final assessment.

Staff recognise the benefits of home working and have adapted to remote teaching. They describe how communication between apprentices, learners and staff has improved through the exploitation of new and existing technologies. They feel that the increased flexibility to review apprentices' progress at convenient times and the reduction in travel time are positive aspects of online learning and assessment.

Leaders and managers use a range of quality assurance activities to monitor the standard of teaching, learning and assessment, including the subcontracted provision. For example, they have access to the online learning platform to review apprentices' work and monitor the quality of training and feedback they receive from assessor tutors. Managers use this information to ensure that improvement actions are taken.

Managers report that initial assessment is thorough and is used as part of learners' and apprentices' individual learning plan that relates directly to their programme of study. Careers advice and guidance is available to apprentices and learners online and this provides them with useful progression routes and options.

Managers describe attendance at online sessions as high and feel that apprentices and learners participate well with online learning. However, they recognise that most apprentices and learners would welcome the return to classrooms and face-to-face interactions with assessor tutors.

### **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?**

All apprenticeships were affected during the COVID-19 restrictions. For example, golf clubs furloughed green keeping apprentices twice during the pandemic and they continue to study online. Environmental apprentices could not mix with people. This required a swift curriculum change to an animal plant unit that allowed them to continue their studies. Veterinary nurses continued their apprenticeships in COVID-19 safe environments or were furloughed and studied online. Study programme learners continued to study at home using paper-based assignments.

Assessor tutors received a number of workshops from the technical team at Reaseheath College in the use of online technology and the production of online courses. As a result, apprentices and learners benefit from nine life skills courses that include mental health awareness, county lines, online safety and 'Prevent' duty training. The content of these courses is built into reviews for apprentices.

An online platform is used by assessor tutors to upload teaching resources and provide feedback on marked work. Apprentices find the online journal useful to reflect on their learning. Information about apprentices' achievement is also shared with employers via this platform. Managers report that this is helpful in monitoring apprentices' progress. Monthly reviews with assessor tutors are used to provide extra support for those apprentices who are not on track. Study programme staff work as

a team to create workbooks for each unit and provide a paper-based journal for learner reflection. These are assessed by staff on a monthly basis.

Managers confirm their commitment to online learning and have redesigned all courses to include online delivery. Managers note that many apprentices prefer to study functional skills online and in small classes, so that they can get more support from assessor tutors.

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

Leaders and managers prioritised well-being support and online safety at the start of the pandemic. As a result, apprentices and learners complete e-safety courses. A COVID-19 steering group keeps staff up to date with all health and safety rules and restrictions. Staff, apprentices and learners have support for their mental health from the well-being team at Reaseheath College.

Policies and procedures have been updated following the pandemic and staff complete mandatory training in safeguarding. Managers ensure that safeguarding issues are routinely addressed at all team meetings and concerns are escalated to the designated safeguarding lead.

Apprentices and learners are aware of who to contact if they have concerns for themselves or their peers and have safeguarding contacts in their course handbook. They confirm that they receive online safety training, complete 'Prevent' duty training and that safeguarding is discussed at reviews.

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