

Veolia Environmental Development Centre (Veolia)

Progress monitoring report

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Type of provider:	Employer
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Veolia was last inspected in December 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was undertaken as outlined in the [operational note on visits carried out from January 2021](#) and with reference to the further education and skills handbook.

These 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.

Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, inspectors carried out this monitoring activity remotely. As a result, the range of evidence available to inspectors was narrower than would be the case during an on-site inspection. Therefore, this report provides a more limited level of assurance.

The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgement below. Inspectors did not evaluate leaders' response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer of 2020, when the provider was not open to all learners and there were no national expectations regarding remote education.

Theme

What progress are leaders and those responsible for governance making to ensure that staff teach a curriculum and provide support to meet learners' needs, including the provision of remote/online learning?

Insufficient progress

Since the previous inspection senior leaders and those responsible for governance have not taken the steps needed to improve the quality of apprenticeships. They have insufficient focus on the need for apprentices to improve their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices do not get the opportunity to develop the full range of English and mathematics skills that they need. Where an apprentice already has the required level of functional skills to achieve their apprenticeship standard, they are not supported to continue to develop these skills in order to support their long-term aspirations and career progression.

Apprenticeship specialists do not accurately identify what apprentices already know. Of the apprentices that we spoke to, many had been with Veolia for several years. Their line managers are not suitably involved in verifying the starting points of apprentices. Apprenticeship specialists do not use the information on what apprentices already know to set precise curricular goals for apprentices to work towards. All apprentices follow the same programme of learning and cover the same content.

Those responsible for governance have insufficient oversight of the quality of provision. Governance focuses too much on the financial elements and final outcomes of apprentices. There is little focus on the full apprenticeship journey and the quality of education which apprentices receive.

Senior leaders have improved the quality of careers advice and guidance that apprentices receive. For example, apprentices now receive specific sessions focusing on career progression and the options available to them. There are clear progression routes to higher-level apprenticeships, including with Veolia's preferred delivery partners, which they fund through their apprenticeship levy.

Apprentices enjoy remote learning. Many shared how they have enjoyed the move to learning online. It has reduced travel and is more flexible for apprentices to fit around their job roles. Veolia provides apprentices with tablet devices so that they can access their learning remotely.

Senior leaders and specialists have not planned the curriculum so that apprentices develop their knowledge in a logical way. For example, on the level 5 operational departmental manager standard, the unit on essential management skills comes too late in the programme. As a result, apprentices do not know some of the key management skills that they need to start developing from the beginning of their apprenticeship. There are too few opportunities for apprentices to revisit and recall their learning. In many cases, apprentices struggle to recall some of the key knowledge they covered at the beginning of their programme. It is not clear how on- and off-the-job training link together. For example, apprentices' line managers are not always clear on which parts of their learning apprentices are currently focusing. As a result, apprentices do not routinely have the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice within the workplace.

Senior leaders have invested in a new electronic portfolio system. They have revisited a number of processes including initial skills scan, assessment plans and the 12-week review process. However, when completing these processes, specialists do not precisely identify what apprentices now know and can do, and what they need to learn. For example, in many cases, apprentices do not know what they need to do to achieve a distinction within their work. Curricular goals that are set focus on the achievement of assessment criteria, rather than on the underpinning knowledge, skills and behaviours which apprentices need to develop.

Senior leaders and specialists ensure that apprentices receive regular information about site safety. Apprentices rightly comment on how Veolia have put a range of measures in place to keep them safe. For example, each site has clear protocols in place to make sure staff are safe in response to the pandemic. Apprentices now receive a regular newsletter which updates them on 'hot topics' such as how to stay safe when working online.

Leaders and managers have a clear focus on ensuring the well-being of apprentices. For example, they have set up a virtual apprenticeship community. This has supported apprentices, including some who have had to isolate away from their families as key workers, to be able to talk to colleagues and avoid the negative impact of loneliness on their well-being.

Leaders and those responsible for governance should take further action to:

- revisit urgently the content and the order in which it is taught on the apprenticeship standards that they offer. They must ensure apprentices learn the key knowledge that they need from the beginning of their programme, and that there are regular opportunities for apprentices to revisit and recall their learning
- place greater emphasis on the development of apprentices' English and mathematics knowledge and skills. These must be clearly planned into the apprentices' programme
- revisit their arrangements for governance, so that those in the governance role have sufficient oversight of the provision and have the relevant skills and expertise to hold senior leaders to account on the quality of education apprentices receive.

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