

ARC Academy UK Limited

Progress monitoring report

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

ARC Academy UK Limited (ARC) received a new provider monitoring visit in April 2018. At that time, inspectors made progress judgements under three themes.

This monitoring visit focused on the extent to which leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education and training 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?

Reasonable progress

Leaders continue to offer apprenticeships in the construction and rail sectors at levels 2 and 3. The large majority of apprentices study construction at level 2. Since the previous visit, leaders have introduced standards-based apprenticeships, where they are available.

Leaders have made advances in most of the areas identified at the previous visit. They have reviewed the curriculum, staffing and information-sharing processes to better meet the needs of apprentices and their employers. As a result, leaders now have a clearer view of their organisation's strengths and weaknesses.

Teaching staff have benefited from gaining teaching and assessing qualifications and from sharing effective practice with their peers. As a result, they have increased their knowledge of pedagogy. Trainers teach apprentices new concepts, recap learning regularly to check their understanding and discuss how they can apply this new knowledge effectively at work.

Trainers have significant industry expertise, which they share with apprentices to help them understand what it is like to work in their sector. This includes information on working antisocial hours and travel requirements. Trainers also provide guidance on future progression opportunities, which helps motivate apprentices to continue learning.

Trainers link on- and off-the-job training effectively. For example, trainers work closely with employers to enable groundworker apprentices to apply their new knowledge of concrete mix ratios while at work.

Rail and construction trainers routinely teach English and mathematics and develop apprentices' skills. For example, rail apprentices are taught to calculate the correct amount of ballast for specific jobs. As a result, apprentices continue to develop further these skills, regardless of whether they are undertaking a functional skills qualification as part of their apprenticeship.

Trainers rearrange their work so that apprentices who work antisocial hours are not disadvantaged. Trainers teach online sessions in the evening and at weekends and schedule work visits at times which meet the needs of the apprentice and employer, including night visits to apprentices repairing roads.

Leaders decided to teach all apprenticeships remotely at the start of the current lockdown. Rail and construction apprentices now benefit from one-to-one online teaching sessions, which help them to develop new knowledge that they can apply at work. For example, a better understanding of health and safety regulations meant that apprentices understood they needed a prop chain to complete a job safely.

Apprentices rightly value the support they receive from their trainers. Trainers provide additional support to help learners stay on track, such as extra teaching sessions or breaking learning down into smaller concepts. Trainers check that apprentices with additional learning needs understand questions and have time to review their answers.

Apprentices spoken to by inspectors understood how to stay safe online. At the start of lockdown, leaders developed a presentation for apprentices which included topical issues, such as fake news and online fraud. This led to apprentices having further discussions with trainers in their review meetings about their individual risks and how best to mitigate them, for example reducing the amount of information shared online. However, apprentices have a limited understanding of the risks of extremism and radicalisation in their home areas. Leaders have worked with a local college to identify risks and produce learning resources for a group of apprentices who live in

the same area. They plan to extend these targeted local resources to all of their apprentices.

Although senior leaders now meet regularly with ARC's leadership team, they do not hold leaders to account well enough for meeting agreed improvement actions or targets. As a result, the pace of change is not in line with leaders' expectations.

Leaders and trainers hold regular meetings with apprentices, which capture the progress that they make towards achieving their qualifications, and any well-being issues. However, they do not always record the substantial skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices are gaining over time, or routinely check that apprentices receive enough time in working hours for their off-the-job learning.

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

- hold leaders and managers to account for meeting agreed objectives, so that they make rapid improvements to the quality of the provision
- routinely record the skills, knowledge and behaviours that apprentices are gaining over time, and regularly check the amount of off-the-job training they receive to ensure that apprentices have sufficient time to undertake their learning.

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