

Gordon Franks Training Limited

Progress monitoring report

Unique reference number:	59227
Name of lead inspector:	Bev Ramsell, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	St James Place Birmingham West Midlands B7 4JE

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Gordon Franks Training Limited was last inspected in February 2020. 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?

Reasonable progress

Since the last inspection, leaders have adjusted the organisation and scope of the governing body. Newly appointed governors have the skills and experience needed to support the provider to make the necessary changes to their provision. For example, one governor is a specialist in careers advice and guidance and has worked with the curriculum management team to install recognised benchmarks into their careers strategy. All governors use their expertise and experience to lead on themes, such as safeguarding.

Following the last inspection, leaders have changed the way careers advice and guidance are taught. Learners receive advice and guidance around career aspirations at the start of and throughout their course. They attend virtual employer visits. Apprentices now discuss their careers opportunities within review visits, every 12 weeks. As a result, most learners and apprentices are able to identify clearly their career goals. They understand how the course or apprenticeship is helping them to achieve their ambitions. However, a small minority of learners have not yet received support to help them with their next steps.

The previous inspection identified recommendations around the planning, structure and order of the curriculum. Leaders and managers acknowledge that rapid improvements are still required in these areas. Managers have developed a curriculum plan that logically orders modules of learning. However, the curriculum plan does not always identify teaching and assessment methods, nor does it take into account the knowledge, skills and behaviours which apprentices learn and practise at work. As a result, apprentices cannot always apply the knowledge they have learned to their workplace activities to support them to embed the learning in their long-term memory. Apprentices can, nevertheless, recall the most recent learning and understand how the knowledge is relevant to their overall job roles. Learners on study programmes can see a link between each of their units of study and identify how this develops areas such as confidence to help them complete mock interviews and presentations. Apprentices also receive time to study while at work.

Teachers and tutors have responded well to moving teaching to online classes. Learners can recall well the learning they have undertaken during the session. Tutors provide positive encouragement and support with verbal feedback. However, teachers do not always use more formal assessment methods throughout the session to identify clearly the learning that has taken place. Teachers' written feedback is not always used well enough to support learners to make the changes needed to help them improve. They often rely too much on verbal discussions which are easily forgotten.

Tutors do not use the starting points of learners or apprentices well enough to develop individual learning goals for personal development or additional learning. Leaders have developed and put in place a new, more robust process to record apprentices' starting points and monitor the progress apprentices make, but it is too early to see the impact of this.

Leaders recognise the value of work experience for learners on study programmes; however, they also understand the current constraints for employers to offer work placements. As a result, leaders are piloting a new virtual work experience programme for learners studying business administration.

Learners report being well supported and encouraged by teachers. Where apprentices are behind, development tutors provide extra support with additional visits – remotely and, where needed, on-site – to help apprentices to catch up.

Employers and apprentices feel that apprentices are progressing well with their learning and value the support from development coaches.

Leaders have ensured that learners or apprentices with safeguarding concerns have been well supported while working remotely. Teachers and tutors use established online programmes to report concerns. Teachers and tutors use a range of activities to support learners and apprentices to stay safe online. Learners and apprentices complete online courses, and teachers hold discussions in sessions to develop further learners' understanding of how to stay safe. Apprentices discuss regularly topics related to safety. They say they feel safe at work and know how to keep themselves safe online.

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

- improve rapidly curriculum planning for apprenticeships, to make sure apprentices build the knowledge, skills and behaviours over time that link to work activities to secure long-term memory of what they have learned
- make sure teachers and tutors use the starting points of learners and apprentices to develop individual learning goals and to plan the curriculum to make sure there are no gaps in learning
- put in place swiftly written feedback so that learners can be reminded what they need to do to improve, and then make sure the improvements are being made, to enable learners to make rapid progress and reach their potential.

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