

Dutton Fisher Associates Limited

Progress monitoring report

Unique reference number:	1276426
Name of lead inspector:	Sarah Lonsdale, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Dutton Fisher Associates Limited received a new provider monitoring visit in October 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 apprentices 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 apprentices 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

Leaders and managers have not made sufficient progress in addressing the weakness identified at the previous monitoring visit in relation to apprentices' progress. They have developed their approach to monitoring the development of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. However, too often staff do not use monitoring information well enough to intervene when apprentices fall behind. In too many instances, tutors do not support apprentices quickly enough to address gaps in their knowledge and skills to enable them to catch up. As a result, too many apprentices make slow progress from their starting points.

Leaders and managers have recently improved their approach to recruiting apprentices. They work with employers of potential apprentices to ensure that

employers understand the commitment needed on an apprenticeship and to assure themselves that employers will provide an appropriate level of support. Managers provide employers with useful guidance on ways in which apprentices can develop new knowledge and skills during their off-the-job training. However, tutors do not support apprentices consistently well to identify the knowledge and skills that they develop as a result of their off-the-job training and what they need to do next.

On property management apprenticeships, which make up the largest proportion of the provision, tutors do not provide good enough support for apprentices who fall behind to enable them to catch up with their learning. They do not ensure that interventions are effective to enable apprentices to improve their understanding or application of their skills. As a result, too many apprentices on these programmes make slow progress in the development of substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Leaders recognise the slow progress that a large proportion of apprentices make and have recently changed the way that apprentices are assessed. They have set challenging expectations of what they want mentors to do with apprentices. Mentors meet these expectations well with apprentices new to their programmes but have been less successful intervening with apprentices who have been in learning for a considerable period of time.

On leadership and management programmes, which make up around a third of the provision, tutors assess apprentices' prior knowledge and skills well. They use information about what apprentices can and cannot do to plan learning activities and identify additional qualifications that will help broaden apprentices' vocational skills. Consequently, apprentices on these programmes improve their knowledge and skills and can articulate what they have learned and what they can do. For example, apprentices apply the 'fishbone technique' to resolve issues with bulk-buying processes and go on to implement procedures to prevent similar problems arising in future.

Since the last monitoring visit, leaders have recruited new English and mathematics staff to improve how the curriculum is taught. Tutors plan effective activities to enable apprentices to recap on important mathematical concepts and to test apprentices' understanding through problem-solving. For example, tutors revisit topics such as mean, mode and median, and apprentices use their knowledge to work out average football scores and the consistency of players by determining which average gives them more reliable results.

Tutors on the leadership and management apprenticeships have developed a helpful academic skills module to support apprentices to improve their analytical thinking and critical writing skills. Apprentices learn how to write in the first, second and third person. They use their report writing and analysis skills to convey complex information to senior leaders in their organisations.

Leaders and managers work closely with employers to identify career and progression pathways for apprentices. Apprentices are provided with helpful guides to develop their understanding of the range of career opportunities in the sectors in which they work. A number of apprentices gain promotion as a result of their apprenticeship. For example, level 5 leadership and management apprentices take on out-of-hours manager roles in which they work unsupervised, in recognition of the leadership skills they have gained during their training.

Learning support staff provide effective support to apprentices with additional learning needs. They identify tools and resources that help apprentices and ensure that tutors use these in their lessons. Staff make appropriate adaptations to online learning to increase accessibility for apprentices. For example, apprentices can use screen readers and magnification functions to help with visual impairments.

Tutors and mentors regularly check on apprentices' well-being and their understanding of safeguarding. Apprentices feel safe and value the support that they receive. They can describe how they have demonstrated their understanding of safeguarding, British values, and radicalisation and extremism in the workplace.

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

- identify promptly apprentices who are at risk of falling behind and plan effective actions quickly to ensure that these apprentices make good progress by demonstrating that they know more and can do more
- ensure that all staff plan and deliver effective interventions to address gaps in apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable them to make more rapid progress
- ensure that staff work with apprentices to reflect on what they learn during off-the-job training and identify what they can and cannot do as a result of this training.

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