

# B-Skill Limited

Progress monitoring report

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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent Learning Provider
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# Monitoring visit: main findings

## Context and focus of visit

B-Skill 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 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 have taken appropriate actions to rectify the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. They have ceased most subcontracting arrangements for apprenticeships and have reduced the range of apprenticeships that they offer. They now focus on apprenticeships that they are able to provide effectively. As a result, in recent months fewer apprentices have left their programme early and a higher proportion have completed their apprenticeship successfully. Leaders recognise, however, that these improvements need to be sustained.

Since the start of the pandemic, leaders have set up effective arrangements for online and blended learning for apprentices and adult learners. They have provided guidance and support to help staff to teach online. Tutors and coaches have adapted

well to the revised approach and now teach confidently online. Adult learning tutors use effective teaching strategies to ensure that learners retain information. On a level 3 beauty course, tutors ask learners to recall previous learning through answering relevant questions and identifying important procedures, such as the health and safety requirements of a full consultation prior to giving treatment to a customer.

Leaders and managers have reviewed and revised the curriculum for apprenticeships and adult learning programmes to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of learners, apprentices and employers during the pandemic. For example, adult learners on level 2 beauty programmes have had their programmes extended so that once national COVID-19 restrictions allow, they can continue learning the practical elements of their course.

Leaders and managers have recently introduced a rigorous recruitment and selection process that enables them to recruit applicants who are suitable for an apprenticeship. They carry out an analysis that accurately identifies apprentices' existing skills and knowledge, and they use the results of the analysis to determine eligibility and to plan individual programmes for apprentices.

Apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours and build on their past experience. Apprentices on level 3 and level 5 management programmes described how they have developed knowledge and skills relating to aspects of their work, such as sending formal emails, proactive management, transformational leadership, and using emotional intelligence when managing people. However, a small minority of coaches set activities for apprentices that concentrate solely on the assessment criteria of the qualification and not specifically on the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Leaders have invested in tracking systems which allow managers and coaches to monitor apprentices' progress well. Managers meet with coaches monthly and identify any apprentices who are making slow progress or who are at risk of leaving their apprenticeship early. Managers take actions to support apprentices to catch up, including increasing the frequency of visits and liaising directly with the apprentice's employer. As a result, most apprentices who had fallen behind are now making better progress.

Apprentices benefit from helpful support in improving their English and mathematics skills. Most coaches provide helpful feedback that helps apprentices to improve their written work. For example, apprentices on a level 5 operations departmental manager programme make improvements when coaches identify inaccuracies in sentence structure and the use of punctuation. Managers have recently put in place appropriate arrangements to enable apprentices to gain the English and mathematics qualifications that they need. Coaches plan individual learning activities for apprentices at the beginning of their programmes and aim for them to pass their examinations by the seventh month of their apprenticeship. However, as yet no

apprentices have taken their examinations, which means that it is too early to evaluate the impact of the new arrangements.

Coaches provide helpful support that prepares apprentices well for their final assessment. Apprentices have a good understanding of end-point assessment requirements and what they need to do to achieve high grades. The proportion of apprentices achieving a high grade at end-point assessment has increased in recent months.

In a few instances, coaches do not ensure that employers participate fully in reviews of apprentices' work and progress. As a result, these employers do not have a good enough understanding of how the programme supports apprentices in their job roles. Coaches have to make additional contact with employers to explain and clarify the relevance of planned on- and off-the-job training.

During the pandemic, staff have continued to safeguard learners and apprentices effectively. Staff recognise that the biggest impact during the pandemic has been on learners' and apprentices' mental health and well-being. They have increased the contact that they have with learners and apprentices and have provided them with additional resources and information on, for example, staying safe online and identifying scams related to the pandemic.

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

- sustain the recent improvements made to apprenticeships to ensure that fewer apprentices leave their programmes early and a higher proportion complete their apprenticeship successfully
- ensure that coaches involve all employers in apprentices' progress reviews to clarify the relevance of on-and off-the-job training
- ensure that all coaches set activities for apprentices that concentrate on the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

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