

Skills Consultants Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2554086

Name of lead inspector: Jacquie Brown, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 29–30 March 2021

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Ignite Gas Training Unit 5
Larch Court
West Chirton North Industrial Estate
North Shields
NE29 8SG

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Skills Consultants Limited is an independent learning provider based in North Shields. It provides training to apprentices across the north east. The provider first received funding to deliver apprenticeships in March 2019, and it currently has 37 apprentices enrolled on programmes. There are 29 apprentices on the level 3 gas engineering standard and eight apprentices on the level 3 team leader standard. Most apprentices are over 19 years of age.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Significant progress

Leaders work closely with employers to implement a curriculum that meets business needs and contributes to improving skills in the region. They use labour market intelligence to plan programmes in response to the national shortage of gas engineers. Through the team leader apprenticeship, leaders contribute to the Local Enterprise Partnership's priority for increasing the number of women working in technology and management.

Leaders have implemented an ambitious curriculum. Apprentices on the team leader programme develop to a high level their skills in coaching, supervising and mentoring staff. Apprentices in gas engineering learn about the future of the industry by exploring topics such as alternative heat sources.

Leaders ensure that their programmes fully meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. They successfully construct and implement training programmes that meet apprentices' individual needs. This helps apprentices to make rapid progress in developing substantial new knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

Leaders have rigorous arrangements in place to monitor and improve the quality of the provision. They complete observations of training and audits to identify areas for improvement, and take appropriate action to make improvements where needed. Leaders carefully and accurately track the progress of apprentices, and ensure that tutors intervene quickly to provide additional support to apprentices who fall behind.

Leaders have an effective process in place to manage the performance of staff. They provide feedback to coaches following observations of training and hold reviews to discuss coaches' overall performance and to identify support and training where appropriate. Tutors who do not improve their performance quickly enough leave the organisation.

External consultants provide effective oversight and scrutiny of the apprenticeship programmes. This provides additional assurance to leaders about the quality of the provision. For example, following feedback from consultants, leaders have become aware that they need to improve employer engagement by including line managers in progress reviews.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? **Significant progress**

Coaches have implemented a comprehensive curriculum that enables apprentices to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can operate effectively in the workplace. Apprentices on the team leader programme benefit from studying useful topics, in addition to those covered in their main qualification, such as mental health, well-being, and how to manage teams remotely. Apprentices use the knowledge that they gain to improve their management of the staff for whom they are responsible.

Coaches accurately identify the starting points of apprentices and use this information to plan programmes that meet apprentices' individual needs. For example, apprentices on the gas engineering programme who have a background in plumbing spend more time focusing on other topics.

Leaders ensure that apprentices have access to high-quality training resources. Apprentices on the gas engineering programme benefit from industry-standard training facilities with access to domestic and commercial equipment. They use this equipment to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, they use design boards to learn how to isolate electrical wires safely and practise with gas cookers to 'fault find' using the action of the flame.

Coaches have significant industrial experience which they use to provide high-quality training to apprentices. Coaches on the gas engineering programme use external speakers from industry to motivate and engage apprentices and to improve their

skills. As part of their off-the-job training, coaches encourage apprentices to broaden their knowledge of the industry by watching videos, completing research, and sharing what they have learned with other apprentices.

Coaches use assessment well to check that apprentices understand the topics covered in workshops and how they relate to the workplace. They ask challenging questions to check apprentices' understanding, and they ensure that apprentices complete practice tests in preparation for their end-point assessment.

Coaches skilfully support apprentices to improve their English and mathematic skills. Apprentices on the gas engineering programme learn to calculate ventilation requirements, and apprentices on the team leader programme learn to write business reports. Apprentices become more confident in applying these skills at work.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

The designated safeguarding lead has appropriate qualifications to be effective in her role. Leaders have a suitable safe recruitment policy in place which ensures that they appoint staff who are appropriate to work with apprentices.

Leaders implement appropriate safeguarding policies and guidance, which they share with staff and apprentices. Apprentices feel safe and know to whom they should report concerns.

Coaches deliver useful training to apprentices on safeguarding topics, such as online safety, mental health, well-being and recognising the signs of abuse in children and vulnerable adults. Apprentices on the gas engineering programme know how to recognise safeguarding concerns when they work in customers' homes and are aware of the procedure for reporting these concerns.

Apprentices learn about the 'Prevent' duty during induction and in progress reviews. They have a basic knowledge of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. However, most apprentices are not aware of how this might impact on their everyday lives in the areas in which they live.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021