

Applied Business Academy Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2626849

Name of lead inspector: Gayle Saundry, 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

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.

Applied Business Academy Limited began training apprentices in April 2020. The Academy delivers two standards-based apprenticeships and at present trains 23 apprentices in the digital marketer standard at level 3 and 14 apprentices in the junior content producer standard at level 3. In March 2021 the Academy began training four learners on traineeships. At the time of monitoring visit, it was too soon to make judgements about the effectiveness of this provision.

At the time of the monitoring visit, the Academy was providing all training to apprentices online, including online lessons and coaching sessions, due to restrictions posed by COVID-19 (coronavirus). The impact of COVID-19 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?

Insufficient progress

Leaders have not accurately assessed the quality of their apprenticeship training and do not effectively monitor the quality of their staff's work. As a result, leaders are not aware of the weaknesses in their apprenticeship training and have not put in place plans to improve the experience of apprentices.

Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship provision. As such, governors are unable to support or challenge leaders to make the steps necessary to improve the quality of the Academy's training.

Leaders do not keep accurate records relating to their apprentices. In contrast to the records held, inspectors found cases of apprentices who did not have jobs, whose job roles were inappropriate for their course of study, and who did not work in England for the minimum time required under funding regulations.

Leaders have been very slow to put in place suitable arrangements for apprentices to develop their knowledge of English and mathematics, in order to achieve the qualifications they need to complete their standard. While they have recently put in place plans to remedy this, no apprentice has taken or achieved their English or mathematics examinations, including those who are nearing the end of their apprenticeship.

Leaders do not ensure that all apprentices are given the time they need at work to study towards their apprenticeship or to complete assignments.

Leaders have not provided teaching staff with appropriate training to support them to improve their craft of teaching. Leaders have not accurately evaluated the quality of their staff's teaching or given teachers useful feedback to help them to improve.

Leaders have put in place commitment statements that broadly meet the requirements of an apprenticeship. However, they have not personalised these statements to individual apprentices. Leaders do not provide all apprentices with the teaching they have committed to at the beginning of their course.

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

Leaders have not taken appropriate actions to ensure that the apprentices they recruit can gain substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours through their apprenticeship. Not all apprentices have jobs which allow them to apply their learning at work. For instance, a few apprentices working towards the digital marketer standard mainly take orders from customers or make deliveries while at work.

Staff do not assess apprentices' knowledge and experience sufficiently at the start of their apprenticeship. When planning their training, staff do not consider how apprentices' work links to their training or make plans to support apprentices to improve upon any specific areas of weakness.

In progress reviews, staff do not discuss with apprentices what they have learned through their training or how they have applied what they have learned at work. Employers do not routinely contribute to apprentices' reviews. As a result, staff do not have a complete understanding of the progress each apprentice has made.

Trainers do not explain new knowledge clearly. As a result, apprentices find it hard to follow what is being taught or to recall what they have learned in previous lessons. At times, apprentices do not understand the questions that teachers ask. As

such, teachers are not able to assess whether apprentices have learned new knowledge before moving on.

Leaders do not ensure that apprentices know how they will be assessed at the end of their programme. While a few apprentices know that they need to complete a business project, staff have not taken steps to prepare them to do so.

Staff do not provide apprentices with sufficiently detailed or helpful feedback on their assignments. Where assignments have been marked, staff have not made clear to apprentices how they have met or exceeded the standard. As a result, apprentices do not know what they are doing well or how to improve their work.

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

Leaders have only recently put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, which include information on who apprentices should contact should they have any concerns. Apprentices do report, however, that they would contact staff should they require any support.

Leaders do not keep accurate records of their apprentices and did not know that at least one of their apprentices is under the age of 18. As a result, leaders have not appropriately assessed the risks these apprentices may face or put in place measures to support them.

Leaders do not follow their own safer recruitment policy. Leaders are unable to provide evidence that they have undertaken suitable and timely reference and background checks for all of their staff who work with apprentices.

Leaders have a reasonable understanding of the threats of radicalisation and extremism. However, they are not able to identify any specific risks that their apprentices may face and, as such, they have not taken any steps to mitigate these risks.

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