

Goddard Veterinary Group Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider:	Employer
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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.

The Goddard Veterinary Group Limited is a family owned company that was established in 1952. It has 44 branches and three hospitals in London. Branches provide routine healthcare and hospitals offer specialist referral services and 24-hour emergency care for animals.

The group began teaching apprenticeships in January 2020. There are currently two apprentices on the level 2 veterinary nursing assistant framework apprenticeship, 11 studying level 2 animal care and welfare assistant and 19 on the level 3 veterinary nurse standards-based apprenticeship.

Since March 2020, around half of all apprentices were furloughed and experienced a break in learning. Teaching moved online during the early stages of the pandemic and it remains so. Leaders intend to return to face-to-face teaching later this year. 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?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have selected appropriate apprenticeships to meet the needs of their business. The training ensures that staff develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to be effective in their jobs.

Leaders and managers ensure that the apprenticeship programme is well structured. Apprentices' managers schedule work rotas effectively around the training. This ensures that apprentices attend classes, learn and can apply what they have learned when they return to work.

Managers make good use of the group's resources to support the training. For example, apprentices are placed in different hospitals within the group to develop and broaden their skills and knowledge. As a result, they learn about, and complete, tasks that are not available in their host branch, such as ongoing care and treatment after orthopaedic surgery.

Leaders ensure that the training programme prepares apprentices effectively for their next steps in learning. For example, level 2 apprentices complete a skills log to help them understand the level of commitment they need to show when they progress onto level 3 apprenticeships to become veterinary nurses.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They take action to make improvements, for example in the quality of teaching. However, they do not systematically monitor all the areas for improvement in the training that they have identified.

Leaders and managers are developing the governance arrangements. The new board is intended to provide more effective challenge on the quality of education that apprentices receive. However, the effectiveness of these new arrangements is untested.

In a few cases, leaders and managers do not communicate all the requirements of the apprenticeship to all managers or apprentices. For example, apprentices are not well informed about the requirements of their final assessments. At times, regional managers and clinical coaches across the group are not consistently involved in reviews of apprentices' progress.

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

Reasonable progress

Tutors teach a curriculum that builds logically on what apprentices know and can do. At the start of their training, apprentices learn about the five basic principles of animal welfare. They revisit these themes when learning about suitable accommodation for animals who are recovering from surgery or are boarding at the premises.

Highly qualified tutors and clinical coaches teach apprentices complex concepts and support them to make good progress. Tutors check effectively that apprentices remember what they have learned. Tutors use quizzes and mock tests to identify any gaps in apprentices' learning. They correct misconceptions where apprentices are not clear about what they have learned. Tutors provide useful feedback on apprentices' written work. This helps apprentices to improve and produce high-quality work.

Apprentices learn new skills, knowledge and behaviours which help them care for animal patients. For example, veterinary nursing assistants learn the procedures they need to follow leading to a routine neutering of a dog: how to admit the animal, gain consent from the owner and check the dog's medical background. Veterinary nursing apprentices apply what they learn about anatomy and physiology at work to good effect. For example, they know how to administer intramuscular injections correctly to different animals because they understand the differences in dogs' and rabbits' anatomy and skin thickness.

Managers and tutors thoroughly review the progress that apprentices make. Where apprentices fall behind in their studies, staff work well with apprentices' managers to put action plans in place to help them catch up. However, in a minority of cases, apprentices struggle to balance their studies with the unpredictable demands of the workplace. This leads to a few apprentices feeling overwhelmed by the pressure of work and study. Where this is the case, apprentices can struggle to manage their workload and fall behind in their studies.

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

Apprentices feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns about their own or others' welfare. When needed, leaders, managers and staff act effectively to safeguard apprentices and help them get any additional support that they need. Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices have access to free counselling and to a specialist helpline should they need support for their mental health.

Leaders and managers have put in place suitable policies to safeguard apprentices. However, they recognise the need to make these more relevant to apprentices' lives and the risks they may face.

Apprentices do not always remember what they are taught about the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Managers recognise this and are considering ways in which they can better teach apprentices about the risks to them where they live and work.

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