

MRG Services UK Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Ruth Stammers, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: 23 Houghton Street
Southport
Merseyside
PR9 0NS

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.

MRG Services UK Limited (MRG) is an independent learning provider based in Southport, Merseyside. It provides apprenticeship training mainly in management and fenestration, which is the installation of window frames and glass systems. At the time of the visit, there were 76 apprentices in learning. Almost all apprentices were studying the level 5 standard in operations/departmental manager and two apprentices were studying the level 2 standard in fenestration. There were a few apprentices studying other level 3 and 4 business and teaching apprenticeship standards.

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?

Insufficient progress

Leaders' initial focus when they began to provide apprenticeship training was to specialise in fenestration. This was due to leaders' expertise in the window and glass installation industry. They made the decision to provide apprenticeship training in management, following requests from levy-paying employers who needed this training. The proportion of management apprenticeships is currently significantly larger than fenestration apprenticeships.

Leaders do not ensure that they meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship for level 5 operations/departmental manager apprentices. Apprentices do not develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their apprenticeship programme. In too many cases, apprentices simply deepen their understanding of topics and consolidate existing skills such as communication and negotiation. For the few apprentices who study fenestration, leaders develop the curriculum to meet the needs of employers. They include training on the bespoke

product which the employer installs. Fenestration apprentices develop the skills to install window frames and glass competently.

Leaders do not have an accurate oversight of apprentices' progress. They do not monitor apprentices' progress towards the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours. Leaders do not provide adequate support for apprentices to catch up when they fall behind. Too many apprentices make slow progress.

Leaders and those responsible for governance do not accurately understand the quality of training that apprentices receive. They do not know which aspects of the apprentices' training programmes need to be improved. The governing board does not challenge leaders on the quality of apprenticeship provision. This leads to apprentices receiving a poor standard of apprenticeship training.

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 do not identify what apprentices already know and can do at the start of the level 5 operations/departmental manager apprenticeship. They do not plan an individualised curriculum for apprentices. For example, apprentices with existing knowledge of finance complete finance-related topics first and do not learn anything new.

Tutors do not teach the curriculum for the level 5 operations/departmental manager apprentices in a logical order. Monthly management workshops take place on set dates throughout the year. Apprentices choose online topics in any order between these workshops. Online topics do not align with the content of the monthly workshop or what the apprentice is doing at work. This restricts apprentices from building their knowledge, skills and behaviours incrementally throughout the programme. This prevents apprentices from practising and mastering these skills in the workplace.

Apprentices who are close to the end of their programmes understand the requirements of their final assessments. They practise mock professional discussions and presentations in advance of the final assessment. However, the large majority of apprentices do not know the grades they could attain or how they will achieve them.

Employers value the contribution that their apprentices make to their business. Apprentices apply leadership and management skills at work effectively, such as understanding different personalities within a team. Apprentices become more assertive and reflective managers.

Level 5 operations/departmental manager apprentices strive to improve their skills as competent workplace leaders and managers. However, tutors do not routinely

provide careers advice and guidance to help them to progress in their career. Apprentices are unaware of the opportunities available to them upon completion of the programme.

Leaders provide appropriate subject-specific training for staff. For example, tutors attend leadership development webinars on agile leadership. Tutors develop occupational knowledge and provide up-to-date training to apprentices.

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

Leaders and those responsible for governance do not have effective safeguarding arrangements in place. They do not carry out appropriate checks when recruiting staff. They do not ensure that there are clear and relevant policies and procedures in place and do not make safeguarding referrals in a timely manner.

Leaders do not meet the statutory 'Prevent' duty requirements. They do not identify any potential risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices are unaware of any specific threats, either where they work or the area in which they live. Leaders have not established any links with external specialist agencies for referral, advice or guidance.

Apprentices do not know who they should report safeguarding concerns to at MRG. They do not receive ongoing safeguarding training beyond the basic information they receive in induction. Apprentices are aware of how to keep themselves safe in the workplace due to the training they receive from their employers.

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Piccadilly Gate
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