

Thames Marine Academy Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Montserrat Pérez-Parent, Her Majesty's Inspector
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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.

Thames Marine Academy Limited (TMA) is a marine training company based on the banks of the River Medway in Kent. TMA became an approved apprenticeship provider in October 2019 and started training apprentices in January 2020. TMA subcontracts some courses to North Kent College.

TMA offers standards-based apprenticeships in boatmaster and workboat crewmember, both at level 3. Currently, there are 14 apprentices on the boatmaster apprenticeship and five apprentices are studying the workboat crewmember apprenticeship. The majority of apprentices are aged 19 to 34. However, two apprentices are aged 16 to 18 and two are over 35. Apprentices work for three different employers.

At the time of the visit, training is a blend of group lessons and one-to-one tutorials through live video conferencing software, independent remote study, and face-to-face group lessons. 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 have a well-considered rationale for their apprenticeships. They have used their specialist knowledge and understanding of the maritime industry post-Brexit to develop much needed training to professionalise the workboat industry. Apprentices develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to become competent and qualified to work on vessels in Britain and abroad.

Leaders carefully assess the prior experience of each candidate to ensure an apprenticeship is right for them. Leaders work closely with employers to plan apprentices' training so that it is relevant to their business. For example, boatmaster apprentices study different modules depending on whether they work on towing or

passenger vessels. Leaders are ambitious for their apprentices. They have added a diploma in maritime studies to the workboat crewmember apprenticeship. This enables apprentices to gain an international certificate of competence which allows them to progress in the industry and work abroad.

Employers speak passionately about how the training raises the aspirations of apprentices and enthuses other crew members to become qualified too. Employers schedule work shifts so that they can release apprentices for their training. They mentor apprentices and ensure that they have opportunities at work to put into practice what they are learning on their training. For example, an employer who currently has no boats working on the River Thames has arranged for one of their apprentices to work for a passenger boat company on the Thames while he is studying the Thames local knowledge module.

Leaders acknowledge that the quality assurance systems they have in place are not suitable to effectively manage the quality of their training or that of their subcontractor. As a result, leaders have not identified some of the areas that need improvement. Leaders do not benefit from external scrutiny which they recognise would help them identify and tackle some of these areas sooner.

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

Apprentices develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours that enable them to progress in their roles and professionalise their careers. Trainers are highly experienced and use their expertise effectively to assess apprentices' starting points. They use this knowledge well to plan and teach lessons that challenge all apprentices. Apprentices who are new to the sector become competent in splicing, knots and boat handling. Those who have some existing experience gain an understanding of the legislative requirements for the documentation they complete onboard their vessels and the potential consequences of non-compliance. Apprentices also develop personal skills such as cooking and general maintenance.

Trainers support apprentices to develop the English, mathematics and information technology skills they need for their training. For example, apprentices learn how to interpret nautical charts and how to set up their laptops to access their online lessons. Apprentices who need to take functional qualifications in English and mathematics access additional online learning. Trainers do not plan tasks for these apprentices linked to the content taught in lessons nor do they review the progress that apprentices make on this self-directed learning. As a result, apprentices study for these subjects independently and make slow progress.

Leaders and trainers do not monitor and review the progress that apprentices are making on their studies so they can take prompt remedial action where progress is

too slow. Records of apprentices' progress are limited to copies of their assessments or certificates achieved. For example, trainers have no plans in place showing how they are going to support apprentices who have failed assessments to successfully retake them.

Apprentices and their employers understand they will need to take a final assessment to achieve their apprenticeship and most have detailed knowledge of its components. However, many are more focused on the achievement of their licence to practice.

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

Leaders and trainers do not ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is not suitably trained or experienced. The main trainer has not received appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks to ensure they are safe to work with the apprentices.

Apprentices know to report any safeguarding concerns at work to the captain of their vessel but are not aware of who the DSL is at TMA. Trainers do not develop apprentices' understanding of how to keep themselves safe beyond sharing their safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty policies with them and discussing these topics at the start of their apprenticeships. As a result, apprentices do not have sufficient awareness of the risks of their industry or those local to their place of work.

Apprentices understand how to work safely. They wear the correct personal protection equipment and complete useful drills, such as 'man overboard'.

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