

City Skills Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Steve Lambert, 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 the Education and Skills Funding Agency 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.

City Skills Ltd offers apprenticeships predominantly in the areas of coaching, learning and development, and human resources to individuals working primarily in schools. At the time of the visit, there were 257 apprentices. Almost all were on level 3 to 5 standards. Six apprentices were on a level 6 standard. City Skills Ltd started to receive funding for apprentices in 2019. The first apprentices started in September 2019. All off-the-job teaching is currently done remotely. At the time of the monitoring visit, the provider had just started adult traineeships. They had fewer than five learners on traineeship programmes.

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 set up a programme for employers to give existing members of staff, mostly in schools, useful new knowledge, skills and behaviours. They understand the need for organisations to develop their staff in order to improve organisational performance. This has led to leaders and managers having the vision to provide apprenticeships to the education and health sectors.

At the time of the monitoring visit, the provider had just started adult traineeships. They had fewer than five learners on traineeship programmes. They plan to grow this provision and offer progression for learners into apprenticeships within the education and health sectors.

Leaders work closely with employers to understand what they want apprentices to be able to do by the end of their apprenticeship. They use this information to recruit apprentices who will benefit from the programme. Staff use their knowledge of

employers' needs to plan the apprenticeship as recorded appropriately in the commitment statement. Leaders and managers use the information from employers to link effectively the activities that apprentices do at work with appropriate off-the-job training.

Employers value the training that apprentices receive. Apprentices' line managers have seen apprentices become more confident in communicating with staff at different levels of the business. Line managers talk about the positive impact that apprentices' new knowledge, skills and behaviours have had on their organisation. For example, operations manager apprentices have improved staff retention by implementing techniques they have learned in the apprenticeship training. Learning and development apprentices have developed a system to improve the monitoring of training offered within their own organisation.

Leaders and managers have an appropriate understanding of the quality of the provision. However, their evaluation is too descriptive and lacks clearly defined areas for improvement. This has resulted in their quality improvement plan not aligning well enough to areas for improvement identified in their self-assessment.

Staff benefit from twice-yearly observations of their teaching sessions. However, leaders and managers do not give precise enough information to tutors on how they can improve further their teaching skills.

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 value the highly knowledgeable tutors at City Skills. Apprentices speak positively about their learning experiences. Prior to lessons, tutors provide apprentices with a range of resources. They use these resources effectively in lessons to help apprentices learn new concepts. Tutors on coaching programmes provide multiple opportunities for apprentices to practise coaching sessions based on different scenarios.

As a result of the new knowledge they gain, apprentices make a positive contribution to their place of work. For example, apprentices working in hospitals have led a project to reduce the number of pathology tests completed by junior doctors. This has saved time and resources and improved patient care. Apprentices on assessor programmes are now able to use specific learning techniques to work more effectively with mentees.

During lessons, tutors ensure that apprentices understand topics before moving on to the next topic. In mathematics, tutors run revision sessions on adding fractions with irregular denominators, and if apprentices struggle to understand after the

additional sessions, tutors arrange individual sessions for apprentices. As a result, apprentices learn the key concepts they need for their exams.

Apprentices understand the requirements of the end-point assessment and how to achieve high grades. For level 6 apprentices, managers arrange for one of the end-point assessment organisations to deliver a training session, which the apprentices found useful in understanding the requirements.

Apprentices' line managers are not directly involved in progress reviews. Their views are gathered separately and are later added to the progress review report. This limits the chance for managers and apprentices to identify additional work opportunities to help further develop the apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviour.

Leaders and managers do not relate the teaching of English and mathematics adequately to the apprenticeship standard. As a result, apprentices do not always see the relevance in completing functional skills training and qualifications.

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

Leaders and managers have suitable policies and processes in place that keep apprentices safe. Apprentices are aware of whom to contact and how to contact them if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe and can recall the training they received on the risks posed by extremism and radicalisation. Apprentices are also aware of the potential negative impacts of working in isolation, particularly during the pandemic. They are aware of safeguarding as it relates to their places of work, for example in schools.

Apprentices benefit from a comprehensive health and well-being service. They can access support for a range of confidential medical, mental health, well-being and lifestyle support.

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