

First Intuition Leeds Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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.

First Intuition Leeds Limited is a member of the First Intuition network of companies, all of which specialise in providing training in accountancy. In 2018, First Intuition Leeds Limited began to offer apprenticeships. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 27 apprentices on the level 3 assistant accountant standard, 29 on the level 4 professional accounting/tax technician standard, and 124 on the level 7 professional accountant standard.

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 plan a curriculum from level 3 to 7 in accountancy that allows apprentices in the Yorkshire and the Humber region to progress and develop their careers in finance. They work with a range of leading national and regional employers as well as smaller accountancy practices to provide a curriculum that meets employers' needs for training accountancy professionals. Staff work very closely with employers to support apprentices to make progress on their apprenticeship and in their job roles. Employers rightly value their working relationships with staff at all levels of the organisation.

Trainers are well qualified in accountancy and all are members of one of the professional institutes. They use their knowledge and experience well to ensure that apprentices develop the technical accounting knowledge and skills that they need for their current job role and future accountancy careers. Leaders and managers have plans in place to recruit more staff to support the planning and implementation of the professional skills curriculum. At present, skills coaches have a high workload, which means that the quality of the feedback that they provide to apprentices on the

development of their skills is not consistently high. As a result, a few apprentices do not make all the progress of which they are capable.

Those in a governance role are extremely well qualified and experienced. They hold senior positions across the wider First Intuition network, and they share good practice and ideas across this group to the benefit of the apprentices in Leeds.

Managers and coaches ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training and a significant number of apprentices exceed the minimum expectation. The progress that apprentices make towards completing their apprenticeships has slowed during the pandemic, particularly because of delays to examinations. However, staff are providing effective support to help apprentices to catch up. They provide useful revision classes and small group coaching for apprentices who need extra help on particular topics.

Leaders have established an effective subcontracting arrangement that allows apprentices who want to specialise in taxation to receive expert tuition. The subcontractor's staff monitor the progress of apprentices carefully and take effective action if apprentices fall behind.

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

Leaders and managers plan most aspects of the curriculum effectively, to help apprentices develop expertise over time. They ensure that the off- and on-the-job training aligns well and that apprentices have multiple opportunities to embed key knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, at level 7, apprentices learn about leadership in skills sessions; this supports them in new projects at work and helps them to do well in their examinations.

Leaders and managers plan the curriculum in a logical order so that simpler knowledge and skills that apprentices might need early in their careers come first. Apprentices learn about communication skills and teamwork before using these later in the course when studying conflict management and change management.

Trainers use a range of effective methods and resources to support apprentices to pass their accountancy examinations. They break down complex composite tasks, such as double-entry bookkeeping, into individual components, including identifying accounting periods and different ledgers. They also pace sessions well so that learners are engaged, motivated and responsive in online learning. Apprentices are provided with high-quality booklets containing explanatory passages and exercises, that they find very useful. Trainers check apprentices' knowledge and understanding in class well. They immediately recap relevant material and direct apprentices to textual sources if apprentices need more help. They also use mock examinations at

the end of units to help identify any remaining misconceptions and to help apprentices embed key knowledge.

The training that staff provide enables apprentices to develop their technical knowledge so that they are able to complete tasks at work with more proficiency over time. This includes training in digital financial skills. For example, apprentices learn to use up-to-date accounting software that enables them to function well in digital workplaces.

Staff ensure that apprentices develop useful skills. For example, at level 7, apprentices develop their professional scepticism, leadership, and ability to delegate. However, aspects of the professional skills curriculum at level 7 are insufficiently ambitious and rigorous for apprentices working at this level. The resources for parts of the skills curriculum are of a lower quality than the study resources produced for the technical accounting units. Consequently, too many apprentices working at this level produce lower standards of work for the skills component of the apprenticeship.

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

Leaders and managers have implemented suitable policies and procedures to keep apprentices safe. The 'Prevent' duty risk assessment that they have produced is informed by up-to-date information about the local risks in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, where the apprentices live and work.

Apprentices know what to do if they feel unsafe. Staff record any incidents appropriately and take effective action to support apprentices.

Staff provide apprentices with a basic knowledge of how to stay safe from key safeguarding issues in wider society, including in relation to the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Apprentices can explain key risks relating to their own profession. For example, they are aware of the need for vigilance and robust audit to reduce the risks of corruption, insider trading and manipulation of share prices. This is because they learn valuable information about the ethics of accountancy on their apprenticeships.

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