

Education and Training Skills Ltd

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Education and Training Skills Ltd (ETS) was inspected in March 2019. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in addressing the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from well-planned and taught apprenticeship programmes that enable apprentices to develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours and quickly complete their apprenticeships?

Reasonable progress

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours during their apprenticeships that enable them to become more effective in their job roles. For example, apprentices in customer service learn about the usefulness of different ways of communicating with customers. Team leading and supervisor apprentices learn how to deal successfully with conflict and how to resolve disagreements quickly.

Apprentices studying emergency services contact handling apprenticeships with Devon and Cornwall Police become more responsive and confident when handling emergency calls. They learn about the difference between complaints that police deal with and concerns which are not criminal matters. They study topics, such as honour-based violence, to prepare them effectively for their future work.

Apprentices benefit from a carefully planned curriculum to help them develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need for their workplaces. For example, apprentices working for Devon and Cornwall Police start by learning in detail about key concepts such as vulnerability, national standards of incident recording, the code of ethics and how to assess risks. They then learn how to operate call handling technology effectively and subsequently spend time developing their skills in a safe, practical environment. This enables them to quickly develop the confidence and skills they need to work in emergency call centres.

Teaching staff provide useful feedback that helps apprentices improve their practical and written work. Staff acknowledge what apprentices have done well and indicate clearly how they can enhance their work. Over time, apprentices produce work that is more detailed, better structured and more carefully researched.

A few apprentices do not receive their full entitlement to off-the-job training or benefit from employers joining their review of progress meetings. These apprentices have to complete their work in their own time and are not able to swiftly put into practice at work what they learn in their training.

What progress have leaders made in monitoring and improving the quality of their directly delivered and subcontracted apprenticeship programmes and ensuring that these programme meet the requirements of an apprenticeship? Significant progress

Leaders have improved substantially many of the weaknesses in the quality of their apprenticeship programmes identified at the previous inspection. Leaders understand in detail the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. They plan sensibly and successfully to improve weaknesses. Leaders have developed new and effective systems to track apprentices' progress and the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they gain. These systems help teaching staff intervene quickly if apprentices fall behind and support them successfully to improve.

Leaders have successfully refined and enhanced the ways they identify apprentices' prior experience when they start their apprenticeships. When apprentices start their programmes, teaching staff work closely with them and their employers to gather accurate information about apprentices' prior skills. Leaders use these findings to plan individualised learning programmes to develop apprentices' skills and knowledge effectively.

Leaders and staff at Devon and Cornwall Police speak very positively about their strong relationship with leaders at ETS. They rightly appreciate the willingness of ETS staff to adapt resources to meet their requirements. They value the expertise in apprenticeships that staff from ETS bring.

Leaders now oversee more closely the quality and the amount of off-the-job training that apprentices receive. They identify quickly apprentices falling behind with their off-the-job learning. They plan effectively to help these apprentices catch up. Staff and employers review apprentices' records frequently to ensure that off-the-job learning is relevant to apprentices' training and improves their performance in their job roles. Leaders collect useful feedback frequently from apprentices about the quality of their courses which they use to improve their apprenticeships. For example, they now provide handouts to apprentices before sessions to help them understand better the content they will learn. Leaders now spend more time with prospective employers before apprentices start to ensure that employers understand the requirements of an apprenticeship.

What progress have leaders made in improving the effectiveness of governance arrangements?

Significant progress

Well-qualified and highly experienced trustees hold leaders and managers to account very effectively. Trustees meet with leaders frequently and use their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of both ETS and their subcontractor to question leaders carefully. Trustees discuss in detail the quality of teaching and learning in each of their meetings and challenge senior leaders successfully to improve the quality of their provision. Trustees worked closely and successfully with senior leaders after the previous inspection to redesign the apprenticeships and the curriculum that ETS offer.

Trustees rightly recognise that the quality and clarity of the reports they receive from leaders have improved since the previous inspection. Leaders now provide trustees with clear and sufficient documentation so that they can understand the strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeships that ETS and their subcontractor provide. Trustees receive reports in good time and analyse data carefully so they can hold leaders to account successfully. Trustees feel confident to challenge leaders to improve the quality of their provision.

Trustees use their skills well to make sure that staff at ETS continue to develop their professional expertise. For example, trustees quickly identified the need to make sure that staff understood the impact of recent changes to key government safeguarding requirements. They took prompt and successful action to help staff understand how these changes affect their safeguarding responsibilities.

Trustees receive frequent and informative safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. They understand their safeguarding responsibilities very well. They receive useful safeguarding reports from ETS staff in board meetings and examine safeguarding concerns in detail during quarterly safeguarding meetings. New trustees undergo a beneficial probation process, shadowing current trustees for 12 months and having a trustee mentor to help them. This enables them to understand and develop the skills they will need for their work in governance.

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