

The Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Sambit Sen, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Ashridge Berkhamsted HP4 1NS

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.

The Ashridge Trust is an independent learning provider offering standards-based business and management degree and higher apprenticeships across England. At the time of the monitoring visit, 810 apprentices were in learning. The Ashridge Trust provides a range of apprenticeships from level 4 to level 7. Apprenticeship qualifications offered include, level 4 associate project manager, level 5 operations or departmental manager, level 6 chartered manager, (degree) and level 7 senior leader.

During the national pandemic, leaders and managers changed the way they trained their apprentices from a blended model of face-to-face and distance learning, to fully online.

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 and managers do not have effective oversight of the skills that apprentices develop. Leaders and managers do not know if apprentices make good progress in their studies.

Managers do not liaise with employers to design apprentices' training programmes. Managers do not explore with employers how the training programme content planned reflects the requirements of apprentices' job roles. Managers do not work with employers to ensure that the training employers provide reflects the requirements of the apprenticeship standard.

Governance arrangements are weak. The board of directors do not receive feedback on the quality of training that apprentices receive. Directors do not have a good overview of the apprenticeship programme. They are unable to challenge senior leaders and managers to provide training that meets the requirements of successful apprenticeships.

Leaders do not know the strength and weaknesses of the quality of training to inform areas for improvement or development. They do not, for example, identify any potential training requirements of lecturers or have a subsequent training and development plan. Leaders respond positively to feedback from apprentices. Leaders have instigated more developmental feedback for apprentices in response to apprentices' comments.

Managers do not assess the starting points of apprentices accurately. They do not explore what apprentices can already do or have a good understanding of. This prevents lecturers from planning training to ensure that apprentices gain substantial new skills and knowledge as a result of completing their apprenticeship.

Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices who have additional study requirements are effectively supported. Apprentices with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, receive relevant help from their lecturers. As a result, these apprentices make good progress and achieve their qualification in the time planned.

Employers and apprentices have a clear understanding of the requirements of the end of apprentices' final assessments. Lecturers help apprentices appropriately to prepare for these. As a result, apprentices know how to secure merit and distinction grades.

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

Workplace mentors usually have an appropriate understanding of the topics that apprentices learn in their theory sessions. They often encourage apprentices to take on large and complex workplace projects, such as being the project lead for developing a companywide marketing strategy. Apprentices use innovation and creativity to bring about change and improvement in their places of work.

Apprentices receive good support from their workplace mentors. This enables apprentices to practice at work new theoretical concepts learned as part of their training programme.

Lecturers plan the order of the theory subjects in a logical manner. On the chartered manager (degree) apprenticeship, apprentices accurately identify their own leadership styles before moving on to topics about how to manage people.

effectively. Apprentices remember, apply, and build very effectively on their knowledge and skills over time.

Lecturers help apprentices to develop their academic skills effectively. This helps apprentices to undertake research, critically analyse and integrate complex information into their assignments. Apprentices develop effective English skills to enhance the report writing and presentation skills required of them as senior leaders.

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

Apprentices are, and feel, safe in the workplace. Workplace mentors and lecturers look after the welfare and well-being of apprentices appropriately. As a result, apprentices are comfortable and confident in reporting and discussing any concerns they may have with their line managers and lecturers.

The safeguarding team frequently check the welfare and well-being of apprentices. Where concerns are identified, the safeguarding team work collaboratively to provide appropriate help for apprentices. Strategies include giving extensions on assessment submissions, and reducing the workload allocated by line managers. As a result, apprentices feel appropriately supported at work and continue to progress through their apprenticeship.

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