

Maximus Training

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 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 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Maximus Training (Maximus) is a national training provider based in Leicester. It forms part of Maximus People Services Limited, a division of Maximus UK, which is an American-owned welfare-to-work company. Maximus has delivered adult learning programmes since December 2017 and standards-based apprenticeships since April 2018. Currently, 30 apprentices are working towards a level 2 customer service practitioner apprenticeship and 80 are working towards level 3 team leader, business administrator or customer service specialist apprenticeships. Twenty-three apprentices are on operational manager, quality improvement or employability practitioner programmes at level 4 or 5. All apprentices are aged 19 or over. The 12 adult learners are all on a level 1 programme in either employability or well-being.

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 ensure that apprenticeships are planned effectively and meet the requirements and principles of an apprenticeship. They ensure that employers understand and comply fully with the on- and off-the-job training requirements of an apprenticeship.

Leaders develop productive relationships with employers. Managers check that employers can provide high-quality on-the-job training and experience to enable apprentices to develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours. They are diligent in securing employers' commitment to providing enough time away from the job for off-the-job training. They take swift action to rectify any shortfall.

Skills coaches provide high-quality training through classroom sessions, online learning, webinars and podcasts. The company's curriculum specialists work well with employers to develop a comprehensive and detailed curriculum plan. They ensure that training meets employers' needs and matches apprentices' job roles. As a result, apprenticeship training supports the development of new skills, knowledge and behaviour in a logically structured and sequenced way.

Managers ensure that skills coaches have the specialisms that they require to support apprentices to make good progress. Skills coaches are particularly well qualified and experienced. They use their experience and expertise effectively to help apprentices progress and achieve.

Managers' processes for recruiting apprentices are thorough. Maximus's staff provide detailed information to employers and prospective apprentices about the apprenticeship during open days. They provide clear guidance about the commitment required to complete an apprenticeship, including what apprentices will learn and arrangements for end-point assessment. Consequently, employers and apprentices have a good understanding of what is expected of them during the programme.

Managers use quality-assurance processes effectively to improve skills coaches' performance and to monitor apprentices' progress. Delivery managers meet regularly and frequently with coaches and with apprentices' supervisors to check apprentices' progress. Any apprentices falling behind receive effective tailored support to help them catch up with their peers.

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 and apply substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours that help them to become valued employees. Their self-confidence improves and, as a result, they deal more effectively with peers, managers and senior staff in their organisation. They contribute well in meetings and offer suggestions, manage personal workloads effectively and organise their time efficiently.

Apprentices undergo a comprehensive initial assessment and selection process to ensure that the apprenticeship they are applying for is suitable for their job role and at an appropriate level. Apprentices who need to gain qualifications in English and mathematics are provided with useful online learning resources and past examination papers to help them prepare for the final tests.

Skills coaches are highly qualified and experts in their field. Learning resources and materials are of a high standard and available online. Delivery managers have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of training sessions gained through observations of skills coaches. They encourage skills coaches to improve their practice continually. As result, apprentices receive high-quality off-the-job training.

Skills coaches work well with apprentices' supervisors to monitor and review apprentices' progress. Apprentices' supervisors participate well in progress reviews and provide support to any apprentice at risk of falling behind.

Apprentices receive useful and constructive feedback on assignment work. Skills coaches prepare apprentices for end-point assessment well. They help them to practise mock assessments, which improves their confidence. As a result, most apprentices know how they will be assessed, including the opportunities for attaining merit and distinction grades.

Maximus's managers provide each employer with detailed curriculum plans that map the apprenticeship standards with the off-the-job training programme. Skills coaches and apprentices' supervisors often work together to ensure that topics covered during off-the-job sessions are coordinated with the apprentices' work commitments. However, they do not always exploit fully opportunities to coordinate on- and off-the-job training more effectively.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? Reasonable progress

The company offers adult learning programmes in London, Newcastle and in the West Midlands. Almost all learners are unemployed and have significant mental or physical health difficulties which limit their opportunities of securing employment. The curriculum is largely focused on supporting learners to secure full-time work or vocational training.

Leaders have established a very clear rationale for the company's adult learning programmes. This centres largely on their commitment to improving learners' employment prospects and improving their health and well-being.

Almost all learners exhibit anxiety and low self-esteem when they begin their studies. Most report difficulties in engaging and interacting socially with others. This is often the result of chronic ill health and long-term unemployment. Learners' participation in learning has a significant positive impact on their confidence and readiness to overcome their barriers to employment.

Leaders work with carefully chosen partners who understand the challenges that these learners face. Together, they ensure that training is tailored to the needs of adults with multiple disadvantages. For example, learners who do not own a computer are provided with an email address and access to a laptop computer to help develop their word processing skills. This enables them to write CVs and to apply for jobs online.

Pre-course information, advice and guidance is thorough. It ensures that learners enrol on courses that develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to improve their employment prospects. Trainers continue to provide good careers advice and guidance even after learners have completed their studies.

Feedback on written work is constructive and sensitive, and helps learners to make improvements.

The process for tracking learners' destinations is in its infancy. As a result, managers are unable to assess fully the impact of the training they provide in helping learners to progress into employment or vocational training.

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

The company's designated safeguarding leads have received suitable training to help them discharge their responsibilities to ensure that apprentices and learners are kept safe. They implement the company's comprehensive range of safeguarding policies and procedures effectively and update them when necessary.

Managers ensure that new staff are safe to work with learners. All staff are subject to pre-employment checks before starting work. Managers provide mandatory safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. As a result, staff know how to make a referral to the designated safeguarding leads if they have any concerns about apprentices or learners.

Apprentices and learners know how and to whom they should report any safeguarding concerns. They receive comprehensive information and advice about safeguarding during induction. Skills coaches develop apprentices' awareness of British values and of the risks posed to these values by extremist ideologies. As a result, most apprentices understand and can speak confidently about these topics.

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