

Skern Lodge Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2654142

Name of lead inspector: Tracey Zimmerman, Her Majesty's Inspector

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 April 2022

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Watertown
Appledore
Bideford
EX39 1NG

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.

Skern Training and Skills (STS) is an independent training provider based in Bideford. It is the training subsidiary of Skern Lodge Limited which is an outdoor activity and development training centre. STS started to provide directly funded apprenticeships in the outdoor activity sector in April 2021. At the time of the inspection, 119 learners were following standards-based apprenticeship programmes. Of these, 107 were following the level 3 outdoor activity instructor apprenticeship, one was following hospitality at level 2 and one at level 3, three were following level 3 team leader/supervisor and seven were following operations/departmental manager at level 5.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

STS leaders have a good understanding of the requirements of the outdoor activity sector. They have devised a post-COVID-19 curriculum that meets employers' needs and which quickly enables apprentices to become invaluable members of staff.

Leaders have developed productive links with national and local organisations. They use these links to ensure they maintain a good understanding of how best to support the sector's training requirements. They understand the sector's need to regain employees after the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders understand what makes a successful apprenticeship and consequently ensure that the curriculum at least meets the standards required.

Trainers conduct comprehensive assessments with new apprentices at the beginning of their programmes to identify their existing knowledge and skills. They use these assessments well to plan a curriculum that meets each apprentice's and employer's needs. Leaders have structured the curriculum well so that apprentices gain essential skills and knowledge over time. This means that apprentices develop their

understanding and skills progressively in how to manage increasingly complex topics. For example, they learn to apply current health and safety practices when planning a training session while meeting an employer's specifications. Apprentices become valued employees that meet an employer's expectations and who need minimal supervision, for example during busy periods at work.

Leaders have ensured that employers have been involved in shaping curriculum planning and implementation so that they fit around their business cycles. For example, the quiet winter season is being used to provide apprentices with extensive off-the-job training and work shadowing. Apprentices then apply their new skills and behaviours during the busy summer period.

Leaders have implemented effective performance monitoring systems and procedures so they can assure the quality and consistency of training for apprentices across the country. As a result, all apprentices benefit from similar experiences and high-quality teaching sessions. All trainers attend week-long, block-release training sessions for apprentices, during which trainers teach as a team, learn from each other and further develop their teaching skills.

Leaders have recently established governance arrangements by appointing a board with appropriate expertise. Board members have a good understanding of their responsibilities and already recognise the strengths of the provision and actions for improvement. For example, they recognise the need to appoint another governor with further education experience. However, as the board has only been established recently its impact is yet to be seen.

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

Trainers provide apprentices with thorough advice and guidance at the start of their programme. This ensures apprentices understand fully the scope and requirements of the apprenticeship and the sector. As a result, apprentices understand their career paths and how they can make progress. The vast majority of apprentices are clear about the role of an outdoor activity instructor and know how to move on to centre manager roles. Where relevant, trainers will suggest prospective apprentices look at alternative options if an apprenticeship is not the right match for their career aspirations.

Trainers integrate learning about wider topics thoughtfully to enrich apprentices' personal development. For example, during a kayaking training session apprentices also learned about the sustainability of kayak construction and how best to manage a group of kayakers safely.

Trainers provide apprentices with effective help to gain additional, essential qualifications that they need to obtain employment in the outdoor sector. These include qualifications in paddle boarding, hill walking and power boating. All apprentices learn basic first aid and become confident in dealing with health and safety issues.

Trainers provide apprentices with prompt and constructive feedback during practical activities and on their written course work. Trainers explain clearly what the apprentice has done well, and what they need to do to further improve their work and gain higher grades or better fulfil the apprenticeship criteria.

Trainers and employers attend apprentices' progress reviews every 12 weeks. This means that apprentices and employers are clear on what needs to happen in order for apprentices to make good progress in completing their learning.

Trainers provide useful support to apprentices who are undertaking English and mathematics qualifications. This helps apprentices understand key concepts. As a result, they understand the benefits of gaining English and mathematics skills and use them confidently in the workplace. For example, apprentices use mathematics to create groups, calculate activity times and ensure angles for ropes are correct. However, apprentices who have already achieved the required levels of English and mathematics qualifications do not benefit from activities that extend their knowledge further.

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

STS's designated safeguarding leads have appropriate knowledge and training to deal with any safeguarding issues that might arise. Leads maintain their knowledge and awareness through regular communication with employer counsellors, local authorities and adult social care teams. All STS trainers have level 3 safeguarding qualifications. They are aware of how to report a concern and what happens once it is reported.

Leaders have designed the curriculum carefully so that apprentices develop their understanding of health and safety, first aid and safeguarding matters. For example, apprentices know how to keep their social media accounts safe and how their posts can have a detrimental impact on others. However, trainers and apprentices have not had sufficient training about recognising sexual harassment or peer-on-peer abuse.

STS apprentices' understanding of safeguarding is enhanced by completing a basic safeguarding qualification with their employer. During apprentices' reviews, trainers revisit safeguarding themes. This includes extending apprentices' knowledge through discussion about relevant local, regional and national events.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022