

Gloucestershire Enterprise Limited

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Gloucestershire Enterprise Limited (GEL) was inspected in August 2021. 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.

At the time of this monitoring visit GEL had 56 adult apprentices with 4 apprentices on breaks in learning. Around 20 of these are on associate project manager or improvement manager standards at level 4. The remaining apprentices follow either the team leader/supervisor standard at level 3, or the operations/department manager standard at level 5.

Themes

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that the advisory board is effective in helping to improve the quality of apprentices' training?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have clarified the role and responsibilities of the advisory board. This has helped to empower board members, who now chair and set the agendas of the six-weekly meetings. Board members challenge leaders well on their knowledge of the business and the actions that they take to improve the quality of the provision. They hold leaders accountable for the quality of apprentices' training, identifying positive changes to support further learning. For example, board members identified a need to increase the amount of contact time between assessors and apprentices. As a result, assessors now meet apprentices more frequently, offering timely training and feedback.

Leaders have effectively directed the advisory board to focus their attention on six key themes, drawn from the recommendations identified in the previous Ofsted inspection report. Leaders have adopted a scoring system, which they use well to measure the progress made against each theme, and these form the basis of discussions at board meetings. Advisory board members also conduct informal interviews with staff to inform their formal discussions with leaders. As a result, board members are now challenging leaders to make improvements based on information that links well to relevant themes. However, leaders have not yet established effective ways of gathering apprentices' feedback on their training experiences. As a result, governors miss opportunities to hear directly from apprentices.

Leaders recognise that governance is still an area for development, and they have plans in place to broaden board members' focus beyond the current priority areas.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that all apprentices receive planned, impartial and high-quality careers guidance?

Reasonable progress

Leaders now ensure that meetings between reviewers and apprentices regularly include appropriate careers guidance. Reviewers use review meetings to lead discussions around the opportunities that apprentices will have when they finish training and achieve their apprenticeship. Reviewers make effective links between apprentices' career ambitions and the new skills and knowledge that they are developing. As a result, the vast majority of learners are aware of natural progression opportunities on completion of their training. However, leaders have not ensured that the content of review conversations are linked to key milestones within the apprenticeship. As a result, detailed careers advice is not always timely, and not all apprentices have the opportunity to reflect on their skills development in line with their ambitions until nearing the end of the apprenticeship.

Leaders have developed a valuable new online resource which collates a range of tools used by staff to help provide apprentices with support and careers advice and guidance. Resources include bespoke materials, such as a workbook which helps apprentices to link the elements of their training that they enjoy most to possible future roles. Leaders have also included national careers service tools, and information provided by professional bodies such as the Institute for Leadership and Management. However, leaders do not yet promote the use of these resources by staff and apprentices well enough. They rely on apprentices choosing to explore the new resources, with the information they gain not routinely being fully discussed or built on by reviewers. As a result, most learners are aware of the resources, but many are not maximising their use with reviewers to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that apprentices, employers, and trainers, review the impact of on- and off-the-job training on what apprentices know and can do?

Significant progress

Leaders have worked effectively to help employers develop a deeper understanding of the apprenticeship programme as a whole. They have developed new sign-up processes for the start of apprenticeships, which identify how reviewers and the employer will work together to provide an effective training package for all apprentices. Employers value the clarity of the new processes and are now active partners in reviews, contributing to effective discussions on the impact and quality of the training apprentices receive.

Leaders have also developed useful employer reports which summarise the progress apprentices are making in learning new knowledge and skills. These valuable reports help to identify key improvement themes and training opportunities relating to apprentices and their employers. Leaders and employers use these reports well to

identify the changes required to support apprentices to make the expected progress in their learning.

Employers also identify timely opportunities in the workplace for apprentices to apply the new skills and knowledge that they have developed. As a result, the vast majority of apprentices take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities in the workplace to apply their learning and become more valuable employees. For example, trainers teach apprentices how to produce formal costed project plans. Apprentices have applied this knowledge successfully to the handling of raw materials and, as a result, reduced employers' waste cost.

What progress have leaders made in using the information they gather about apprentices' prior skills and knowledge, to plan the curriculum and learning that builds on previous experience and is relevant to their roles? Reasonable progress

Leaders have developed new effective ways of capturing and using apprentices' knowledge and experience, prior to the start of their training, to plan the curriculum. Trainers, assessors, and reviewers now use the comprehensive diagnostic tool that apprentices complete at the start of the course, to inform their interaction with learners and support the tailoring of projects, assessment and feedback to ensure that they better meet apprentices' needs. Assessors link their feedback to the apprentices' self-assessed scores for skills and knowledge, effectively supporting the development of apprentices' confidence and resilience.

Leaders ensure that reviewers help apprentices and their employer-mentors to understand how their apprenticeship will impact positively on the business. However, leaders do not yet work well enough with employers to plan from the outset opportunities that would link important learning and training milestones with workplace activity. As a result, although the vast majority of employers are highly responsive to apprentices' development, a minority of apprentices miss opportunities to deepen their knowledge in their workplace and put their theory into practice.

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