

Best Practice Network

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2654136
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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 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.

Best Practice Network (BPN) provides training to people employed in early years settings and schools. It was established in 2002 and has provided apprenticeships since July 2020. At the time of the monitoring visit, 925 apprentices from across England were enrolled on an apprenticeship. Most were over 18 years old. Nearly half the apprentices are managers and leaders in schools and nurseries. Nearly all of these are on a level 5 management apprenticeship, with a small number following a management apprenticeship at level 7. Around a third of apprentices are on a level 2, 3 or 5 apprenticeship in early years. A small but growing number of apprentices are on a level 3 apprenticeship for teaching assistants.

Themes

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

Significant progress

The fact that leaders focus solely on a sector in which they have provided training for many years is a significant strength. The apprenticeship programme builds on this experience by using BPN's existing relationships, resources and expertise to construct highly effective curriculums and a high-quality service to employers. Senior leaders have managed the rapid growth in apprenticeships well. When introducing new apprenticeships, they ensure that well-qualified and experienced staff are in place and learn from their experience of running other apprenticeships. For example, when introducing apprenticeships for teaching assistants this year, they included training and information about the final assessments early in the apprenticeship. This was because tutors and apprentices recognised how this could help apprentices prepare for their final assessment.

Leaders have well-established and highly effective relationships with employers. Employers are highly committed to the apprenticeships and give their apprentices opportunities to apply their new knowledge in the workplace. They provide apprentices with the time they need to study and complete assignments. Employers gave inspectors many examples of how apprenticeships have increased their staff's

confidence to take on a wider range of responsibilities. These include management apprentices taking on the role of mentor to other staff in their school.

Senior leaders are highly evaluative and self-critical. They identify accurately areas for improvement and take effective actions to make these improvements. For example, senior leaders recognised the need to increase the rigour with which they monitor the quality of apprenticeships. As a result, they have strengthened the team responsible for this and encouraged the advisory board on challenging leaders more strongly.

Leaders support apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. They have a highly qualified and experienced member of staff overseeing this aspect of their work. They plan the support for these apprentices thoroughly and monitor the effectiveness of this support very well.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Significant progress

Tutors work closely with apprentices and employers to identify what apprentices already know when they start their apprenticeship. They also find out the specific demands and responsibilities of the apprentices' job. They use this information well to set targets that help apprentices develop extensive new knowledge, skills and understanding, and to monitor apprentices' progress. Tutors also take account of employers' and apprentices' priorities when developing the curriculum. This can lead to additional training in the workplace or adaptations to the curriculum. For example, tutors of early years apprentices developed extra resources for apprentices to understand how children use possessions, such as cuddly toys, to help them through difficult times.

Apprentices are well-prepared for the next steps in their careers. Tutors provide them with useful information about the options they have to develop their career once they finish the apprenticeship. Apprentices and employers told inspectors about how the apprenticeship had raised their aspirations for the career they might pursue in the future.

The high-quality curriculum in each apprenticeship is taught well by tutors using a very good range of very useful resources. Webinars contain carefully chosen information that apprentices need to meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. Tutors provide valuable feedback to apprentices on their work, which helps them improve their work further. However, a small number of apprentices are not sufficiently aware of how to achieve the highest grades in their final assessments.

In a small number of cases, apprentices do not have the opportunity to practise applying some of the concepts to which they are introduced in webinars. This

restricts their chances to experiment and feel confident with new practices before applying them in their school or nursery.

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

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding. They understand the importance of preparing apprentices to work with young children and build a curriculum that contains the knowledge apprentices need to keep the children in their care safe.

Leaders take the necessary steps to check tutors' suitability for working with young learners. They train staff annually on their responsibilities for safeguarding. Tutors monitor apprentices' safety and welfare through monthly reviews, including evaluating their workload. They provide valuable support by, for example, liaising with social workers, regular telephone support for apprentices and financial support.

Senior leaders have identified some of the risks learners face from radicalisation and extremism. However, they have not taken into account the specific risks that come with the many different jobs and locations in which apprentices work.

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