

Swift ACI Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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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.

Swift ACI Limited is an independent learning provider based in Birmingham. The provider delivers apprenticeships in the West Midlands and London. At the time of the visit, there were around 406 apprentices studying directly funded apprenticeship standards. Of these, 129 were on the level 2 early years practitioner, 134 were on the level 3 early years educator, 42 were on the level 3 digital marketer, 52 were on the level 3 improvement technician, 38 were on the level 2 lean manufacturing operatives and nine were on the level 2 supply chain warehousing operatives standards.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders have a clear rationale for the apprenticeships that they offer. They work closely with employers to meet regional and national skills needs. For example, senior leaders have nurtured effective working relationships with key partners in the early years sector. They ensure that the early years apprenticeship is wholly focused on meeting skills shortages in the sector.

Managers support employers effectively to recruit apprentices and upskill their staff. They design a curriculum that reflects the company values of the employers with which they work, and recruit to these values. For example, they prioritise keeping children safe and maintaining a healthy environment in early years settings.

Senior leaders design and teach the curriculum in a way that best meets apprentices' and their employers' business needs. They prioritise specialist training that benefits the employers' business. For example, all level 2 early years practitioner apprentices achieve a first-aid certificate early in their programme, which employers value highly. As a result, apprentices can safely and independently administer first aid to children in their care.

Trainers and assessors have the appropriate experience and qualifications to teach apprentices. Leaders and managers observe trainers' and assessors' teaching and assessment practice frequently. They provide them with training to improve their teaching and assessment skills, and support that enables them to improve and maintain their occupational skills. For example, leaders ensure that trainers and assessors maintain their specialist knowledge and skills through an annual 'return to the workplace' day.

Senior leaders are acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. They challenge and support managers to improve the quality of education that apprentices receive. They have recently implemented improvements such as a more focused assessment of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours at the start of their programme to better inform apprentices' learning plans. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of these actions on the quality of apprentices' education.

Those responsible for governance are suitably experienced to carry out their role. They carefully monitor the progress that leaders make in improving the quality of education for apprentices. For example, they provide challenge and scrutiny where apprentices fall behind with their studies and ensure that they are supported swiftly to catch up.

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 plan the curriculum in a logical way to develop apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. They teach apprentices new knowledge in meaningful steps over time. Apprentices on the level 3 digital marketer programmes first learn about the principles of email marketing. They then move on to more complex topics, such as the analysis of website analytics. As a result, apprentices know more and remember more as they progress through the apprenticeship.

Apprentices develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their apprenticeship. They quickly apply their new learning to practice at work. Apprentices on level 2 early years practitioner programmes learn about how young children respond to different types of play, such as child-led play and adult-led play. They quickly gain the confidence to plan and deliver play activities. As a result, apprentices make a valuable contribution in their childcare settings.

Trainers and assessors ensure that the majority of apprentices are prepared well for their end-point assessments. They provide them with helpful practice assessments, so that apprentices know what they need to do when they complete their final assessments. A significant proportion of apprentices achieve distinction grades.

Trainers and assessors set precise targets with most apprentices to keep them on track with their studies. However, in a few cases, trainers and assessors set targets

that focus too much on the completion of assessment tasks and not enough on the development of new knowledge, skills and behaviours. Consequently, these apprentices do not progress as rapidly as they could.

Most assessors review apprentices' progress frequently with their workplace supervisor. They link well the on- and off-the-job learning. They plan this coherently so that apprentices can apply their new knowledge quickly to practice. However, in a few cases, where workplace supervisors are not routinely involved in progress reviews, this is less effective. As a result, this slows the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for these apprentices.

Trainers and assessors do not routinely support all apprentices to develop their English and mathematical skills from their respective starting points. They do not provide training that is sufficiently targeted. As a result, not all apprentices fill the gaps identified in these skills.

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

Senior leaders prioritise apprentices' mental health and well-being and provide apprentices with highly effective pastoral support.

Senior leaders ensure that all members of the safeguarding team are suitably qualified. The deputy safeguarding lead keeps accurate records of safeguarding concerns and follows up swiftly with apprentices and external agencies. Senior leaders follow suitable recruitment practices to check that staff are safe to work with their apprentices.

Senior leaders and managers have put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, including their response to the 'Prevent' duty. All staff undertake regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. However, leaders do not measure precisely enough the impact of the actions they have set in their 'Prevent' action plan.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report any concerns they may have. They have a broad awareness of extremist behaviour and radicalisation. However, they are less well informed about the potential risks posed to them in the areas in which they live and work, such as county lines or terrorism in central London.

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