

United Church Schools Trust

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2691322
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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.

United Church Schools Trust (UCST) is a charity providing apprenticeship training on behalf of United Learning. United Learning is a large trust with over 90 schools across all phases in the state and independent sector. It employs over 7,300 staff. UCST began training teaching assistants and human resource support apprentices in March 2021. Subsequently, early years apprentices began their training in March 2022. The latest cohort of 15 teaching assistant apprentices began their training in October 2022.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 39 apprentices studying level 3 standards-based apprenticeships. Twenty-three apprentices were studying as teaching assistants, nine as early years educators and seven as human resources support staff. Nearly all apprentices are employed by schools within the trust. There are 155 apprentices studying teaching apprenticeships at level 6. These are outside the scope of this visit.

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 have a clear rationale for offering apprenticeship training that is aimed at meeting the trust's need for a skilled and expert workforce. More latterly, they have extended apprenticeships to other schools to help meet skills needs in the sector.

Leaders and managers ensure that the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship programme are met. The curriculum is well conceived and well organised. As a result, apprentices benefit from effective online webinars, self-guided learning, individual tutorials and reviews with their assessors and line managers.

Leaders and managers have devised a curriculum which links on- and off-the-job training well. They sequence aspects of the taught curriculum to reflect activities that

occur in the workplace. For example, human resource apprentices are taught the supporting performance and reward management unit in parallel at the time when they do end-of-year performance development reviews. As a result, apprentices are able to apply what they have learned in their work in school.

Senior leaders have effective oversight of the provision. They use external support to help give them an objective view of the performance of the apprenticeship programme. Leaders give governors thorough information about the apprenticeship programme. Through the board, they consider a range of performance information. As a result, governors have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Leaders and managers analyse and reflect well on what works well and areas that require improvement. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement. Leaders and managers take effective action to improve the provision. For example, they have re-enforced the expectations on employers to ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to off-the-job training. However, too many apprentices in the first cohort did not complete their training or are behind in their studies. This is because employers did not allow apprentices sufficient time at work to complete their studies.

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

Managers ensure that the curriculum is taught in a logical sequence so that apprentices build their knowledge and skills over time. For example, human resource apprentices first learn what human resource management is and its importance within organisations. They then learn about more complex topics, such as analysing and using data to manage staff performance. In their jobs, teaching assistant apprentices quickly apply the knowledge they gain about how children learn.

Apprentices benefit from frequent reviews of their progress. Tutors support apprentices well to reflect thoughtfully on their progress and identify areas for improvement. For example, tutors support apprentices to structure their assignments and complex written tasks better. As a result, most apprentices grow in confidence and produce coherent, analytical and evaluative written work.

Employers contribute well to reviews of apprentices' progress. Employers identify opportunities for apprentices to apply their learning at work. For example, apprentices use their understanding of child development to devise work-based activities to improve children's reading and writing. They produce materials for parents so that they can support their child's learning at home. As a result, apprentices deepen their knowledge and develop their skills well.

Tutors are appropriately trained and highly experienced in their vocational areas. They use their knowledge to teach apprentices up-to-date content. For example, tutors show teaching assistant apprentices how to use models and visual aids to help

children understand the tasks they are asked to complete. As a result, employers value the contribution that apprentices make at work.

Tutors ensure that apprentices understand the expectations and requirements of their final assessments. For example, in preparation for the professional discussion, tutors use scenarios to test apprentices' knowledge and provide feedback to them. As a result, apprentices grow in confidence in their ability to succeed.

Apprentices make suitable progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. They benefit from weekly support from a specialist tutor and online study. Most achieve their English and mathematics qualifications at the first attempt. However, apprentices in the first cohort made slow progress in these areas because the support they received from a subcontracted provider was not effective. Leaders and managers have now brought the teaching of English and mathematics in-house.

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

Leaders and managers ensure that there is a positive safeguarding culture throughout the organisation. They have begun to use social media and a newsletter to promote awareness of relevant issues, such as mental health, financial abuse and modern slavery.

Apprentices develop their knowledge of safeguarding very well. Tutors build well on what apprentices already know through working in schools. For example, they discuss the implications for children and families of making a child protection referral. As a result, apprentices grow in confidence in their ability to identify and take action to safeguard pupils at their school. They have a sound understanding of their roles in safeguarding pupils from radicalisation.

Apprentices identify a range of individuals within the trust with whom they would raise any concerns about their own or others' welfare or well-being. They feel that their concerns would be treated seriously.

Leaders, managers and staff are suitably experienced and knowledgeable about safeguarding. They have in place a range of policies and procedures that underpin safeguarding practice. They check effectively that staff are suitable for their roles.

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