

Riverside Training (Spalding) Ltd

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

Unique reference number:	2495148
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Riverside Training (Spalding) Ltd was inspected in December 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 resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Riverside Training (Spalding) Ltd (Riverside) provides training in the early years, care, and business sectors. They train apprentices across the East Midlands and east of England regions, with most provision being in south Lincolnshire. At the time of the visit, there were 172 apprentices, most of whom study the level 3 early years educator. Forty-three apprentices were aged 18 and under.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from enough well-coordinated and logically sequenced training? **Insufficient progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have focused more on the training apprentices receive. However, their actions have been slow to lead to improvements.

Apprentices join the course at different points throughout the year. They start their studies with whatever topic their group is doing at that time. Therefore, apprentices' learning is not always in a logical order. They do not consistently develop the core understanding they need so they can access the curriculum successfully. For example, apprentices fail assessments about the stages of child development because they do not yet possess a thorough understanding of these stages.

Training takes place at the main centre, remote satellite centres, or online. Most apprentices undertake bi-weekly workshops. Tutors send employers copies of training dates, and employers release apprentices to attend. Most apprentices now attend their training workshops well.

Leaders plan a sensible and relevant induction. This covers key content such as safeguarding, health and safety and basic child development. However, beyond this, leaders have not made enough progress to improve curriculum sequencing.

Tutors work hard to provide individual support to apprentices. They create detailed work plans for each apprentice to target gaps in their knowledge. However, despite these efforts, apprentices do not gain the full underpinning knowledge they need.

Recently, leaders met with employers to brief them about off-the-job requirements. Leaders set out a clear plan of expectations around apprentices' scheduled workshops. However, this activity has been slow to take place. Consequently, the impact on apprentices is not yet evident.

Most apprentices do receive additional off-the-job training time to undertake online training or to complete assignments. However, apprentices do not consistently get the additional time to complete the valuable activities leaders and tutors plan for them.

What progress have leaders and managers made in improving apprentices' recall of their learning, as well as preparation for their final tests so that a higher proportion of apprentices achieve high grades? **Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection, leaders have placed more focus on apprentices' preparation for their final tests.

Leaders ensure apprentices complete mock final assessment preparation at an early point in their studies. Apprentices complete tests at home or in workshops to start with, then practise them in exam conditions. Apprentices find the tests useful, as they help them to become familiar with the style of questions that they will face. Apprentices know well what to expect from their final assessments.

Leaders and tutors use the results of these mock tests to make sound adjustments to the curriculum that benefit apprentices. Tutors identify topics that apprentices find difficult to recall and change teaching approaches appropriately. For example, apprentices struggle to recall the range of theorists they need to know about. Tutors now revisit this topic throughout the course. As a result, apprentices have a better recall and grasp of this learning at the end of their studies.

However, curriculum organisation means apprentices often answer questions on aspects of the curriculum that they are yet to learn. This does not give leaders or tutors a precise enough picture of what apprentices do or do not know.

Tutors now use a wider range of activities in workshops to check apprentices understanding of what they learn. Most tests and activities are well designed. Tutors use the outcomes of these to inform further individual support for apprentices where they need it.

Most apprentices pass their apprenticeship, with the large majority achieving distinction grades.

What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the arrangements for quality assurance/improvement (QA/QI), and for external scrutiny, to impact positively on standards of training? Insufficient progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed arrangements for QA/QI; however, their actions have been slow to lead to improvements.

Leaders have made changes to observations of training to focus more on assessment. However, leaders do not consider whether training helps apprentices' understanding become more fluent. Observation records are overly positive, often identifying very basic practice as 'best practice' and give insufficient focus to the impact of training.

Leaders recognise there is still work to do to sequence the curriculum logically. They have ideas from team meetings and from the governance board. However, leaders have yet to decide upon and design a curriculum that builds apprentices' learning progressively. Their current quality improvement plan contains no details of their intended approach.

Leaders more frequently check off-the-job training records and speak with employers about apprentices' training entitlement. However, apprentices do not always receive enough training outside of workshops. Leaders acknowledge a more robust approach is required.

Leaders ensure that tutors receive suitable development to help apprentices be successful in their final tests. New tutors receive mentoring and undertake shadowing. They undertake professional updating, such as webinars about assessment methods. Leaders carry out effective standardisation activity and hold team meeting discussions to improve assessment feedback. As a result, final test results have improved.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced helpful arrangements for external scrutiny.

The governance board has suitable membership and presents challenge and support through critical peer review. Members understand well the curriculum provision and the associated sector challenges. The board meets termly and considers key areas of work, including safeguarding and performance.

The board has been effective in addressing improvements in end-of-course grades and within the pastoral curriculum.

Recently, the board has looked at ways to better sequence the curriculum, but these discussions are yet to have an impact.

What progress have leaders and managers made in improving the pastoral curriculum so that apprentices develop their understanding of life in modern Britain, as well as their future career opportunities? Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders have developed a more comprehensive pastoral curriculum.

Apprentices learn about relevant topics throughout their course. Tutors set suitable work plans for apprentices, which include completion of online courses or materials within the learning platform's personal development 'library'.

Apprentices readily access these materials, which include material relating to 'Prevent' duty, fundamental British values, mental health awareness, and social media safety. However, their recall of this learning is quite limited.

Tutors also discuss topics directly with apprentices, such as personal safety at work. They help apprentices make links to their work environment. For example, when apprentices learn about bullying and harassment, they research how grievances are dealt with in the workplace. Most apprentices find this learning helpful. However, tutors' checks of apprentices' understanding are often superficial.

Tutors promote well a wider curriculum that extends to apprentices' everyday lives. For example, they advise them about how to budget, eat healthily, and keep safe when out at night.

Apprentices benefit from career conversations with their tutors. Tutors find out about apprentices' long-term goals and career aspirations. They use this information during reviews to guide apprentices. Tutors provide CV writing support and direct apprentices to relevant resources within the learning platform's 'library'. Apprentices receive next-steps support at the end of their course, and tutors advise about their progression options. Tutors provide suitable guidance to any apprentices who aspire to pursue training not offered by Riverside, or to change their career plan. For example, tutors help apprentices apply to an alternative provider to study a teaching assistant course. Apprentices know they can ask for support about their next steps if they require it.

At the time of the visit, there was no formal careers curriculum. However, leaders plan for this to commence next year through an external partnership.

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