

Bishop Fleming LLP

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector:	Steve Battersby, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Employer provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Ofsted undertakes to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision funded 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.

Bishop Fleming provides accountancy, audit and tax services and became an employer provider in 2020.

Bishop Fleming currently has 162 apprentices, all of whom study the accountancy or taxation professional level 7 standard. Bishop Fleming provides most of the training. First Intuition Bristol provides the knowledge element of the standards. Apprentices are based in seven offices: Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Torquay, Truro and Worcester.

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 manager ensure that an appropriate apprenticeship training programme is completed, including their entitlement to appropriate on- and off-the-job training. Leaders and managers use initial assessment well to judge apprentices' starting points, adjusting the length of the programme to match individual needs. For example, if they have a suitable degree, the apprentices complete a three-year programme and are exempt from certain elements of the training. As a result of the assessment, most apprentices are given suitable time to complete the programme.

Leaders and managers discuss with apprentices the additional training they will complete at the start of the programme. For example, apprentices complete extra knowledge learning over and above that required for the standard. This helps with completion of the apprenticeship and for professional accreditation. As a result, when the apprentice passes their apprenticeship, they have the knowledge and skills needed to apply to become a chartered accountant.

Leaders and managers have established effective processes to monitor the progress apprentices are making. Apprentices meet with their people managers (line

manager) at least once a month. They also meet more formally every twelve weeks to discuss what the apprentice has learned and how this will improve their practice. As a result, both the line manager and the apprentice are fully aware of what learning they have completed and what they still need to do.

Bishop Fleming makes use of people managers to act as apprentices' mentors. They have high levels of up-to-date subject knowledge. For example, taxation staff are constantly updating their knowledge due to an ever-changing landscape. As a result, staff quickly keep apprentices up to date with the current developments in the sectors they work in.

Leaders and managers do not always ensure that all apprentices get timely feedback on their performance when working for other departments. As a result, further development areas for apprentices are not always identified quickly enough.

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

Leaders and managers have selected a robust curriculum that gives apprentices the skills and knowledge they need. For example, following the training they receive, apprentices who started with no industry experience quickly gained a portfolio of clients. Other apprentices who are six months into the programme have good enough knowledge of taxation principles to have direct contact with clients and can advise them on tax returns. As a result, apprentices can take on additional responsibilities swiftly and progress well in their chosen professional pathways.

Leaders and managers provide a variety of opportunities for apprentices to develop their skills within and beyond their apprenticeship. For example, a few apprentices near completion have had discussions with their line manager about internal progression opportunities and are now preparing for internal promotion. Apprentices gain support from a range of sources, including job rotations, industry networking and careers advice, to plan their careers, both internally and beyond the organisation.

Leaders and managers have created a positive and inclusive culture for their apprentices. For example, apprentices are invited to take part in industry networking events and social gatherings. As a result, apprentices get opportunities to network, discuss their learning with their peers and build professional relationships across the organisation and beyond. Consequently, apprentices become valued members of the organisation.

Leaders and managers do not always ensure that the curriculum is sequenced effectively. Apprentices do not always have the opportunity to practise the new skills and knowledge they develop in the classroom. As a result, a small minority of

apprentices struggle to deepen their new knowledge quickly enough on returning to the workplace.

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

Leaders and managers have in place effective, age-appropriate safeguarding processes. They have policies such as safeguarding and whistle-blowing in place. The importance of safeguarding is reinforced well during apprentices' personal development weeks and through newsletters and regular emails. As a result, staff and apprentices understand the responsibilities they have regarding keeping themselves and others safe.

Leaders and managers have named designated safeguarding leads (DSL) in place, and the apprentices know who they are. Leaders and managers have put appropriate controls and resources in place to make sure apprentices feel safe. For example, health and safety guidance on lone working and training given on client confidentiality are in place. As a result, apprentices know how to conduct their jobs safely and securely.

Leaders and managers recognise that there is more work to do on ensuring that all apprentices have a working knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremist views. Leaders recognise the need to further highlight local safeguarding concerns in the geographical areas where the apprentices work.

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