

Plums Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2701040
Name of lead inspector:	Richard Kirkham, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning 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.

Plums limited is an independent learning provider, formerly working as a subcontractor for another apprenticeship provider. Plums limited successfully registered to provide apprenticeships in early 2022, specialising in hairdressing. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 23 apprentices. Of these, 15 apprentices studied level 2 hair professional standard. 8 apprentices studied level 3 advanced and creative hair standard. Plums Limited does not subcontract any of its provision.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear rationale to offer apprenticeships in hairdressing regionally. Leaders support salons to future proof their workforce by training new entrants into the sector.

Managers and trainers communicate effectively with employers. Managers meet with employers before the start of the programme in order to explain the apprenticeship requirements, including the end-point assessment. Trainers arrange regular review meetings to discuss apprentices' progress. Employers have a detailed understanding of the apprenticeship requirements and are well informed about the skills their apprentices are developing.

Leaders and managers adapt programmes to take account of apprentices' prior learning. For example, apprentices who have previously worked as Saturday assistants and already gained skills, such as shampooing, then have these skills removed from their learning programme. Apprentices benefit from suitably tailored programmes that enable them to make quick progress.

Trainers are suitably experienced and qualified in hairdressing. Leaders arrange occupational updating sessions for trainers and the vast majority are still working as hairdressers in salons. Apprentices benefit from being taught up-to-date practices and modern styles, such as using a razor blade to carry out wolf and shag cuts.

Leaders provide apprentices with a professional learning environment. Training consultants teach and support apprentices in a well-resourced, industry-standard training facility. Apprentices evidence their abilities in the training session, completing various cuts and colouring procedures on paying clients.

Leaders do not benefit from formal impartial support and advice. Leaders have not yet established independent governance and oversight of the apprenticeship provision.

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 very high expectations of apprentices. Training consultants teach apprentices early about positive values and how to act professionally when working with clients. Apprentices attend well, communicate positively with clients and demonstrate professional and respectful behaviours when working in the training salon.

Training consultants plan and teach the curriculum logically and effectively. Apprentices practise hairdressing techniques on training heads before completing these techniques on clients. Trainers continually support and provide constructive feedback to apprentices and perform helpful demonstrations as required. As a result, apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours swiftly.

Apprentices manage their own learning well. Apprentices' progress is monitored and tracked via an online portfolio, which apprentices regularly update and record reflections on what they have done well and how they can improve. Apprentices are aware of the progress they are making and what else is required to achieve their apprenticeship.

Employers appreciate the speed at which apprentices apply the skills they are developing in the workplace. Apprentices communicate confidently with clients, colour, cut and blow dry hair, and have started to take on their own bookings. Advanced apprentices have developed more complex colouring skills such as applying highlights, freehand. Employers value the positive impact the apprentices are having on their organisations.

Apprentices are prepared well for end-point assessment. Apprentices demonstrate their skills at career fairs and produce creative hairstyles that they present at a hair show. As a result, apprentices are ambitious and complete hairdressing techniques to a high standard.

Leaders do not track and monitor apprentices' English and mathematics progress as effectively as other elements of the apprenticeship. Leaders assess apprentices'

English and mathematics ability at the start of the programme. Trainers use this information to support apprentices to achieve the English and mathematics requirements of the apprenticeship. Leaders do not, however, use this information to continuously monitor and develop all apprentices' English and mathematics proficiency.

Leaders do not monitor the quality of provision effectively. Leaders and managers have not yet established quality assurance processes to fully recognise teaching and learning strengths and areas of improvement.

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

Leaders have not yet fully established safeguarding arrangements. Leaders have introduced a safeguarding policy and procedure, but do not fully meet their policies' expectations. Staff follow a referral system for safeguarding concerns, but leaders do not adequately monitor or record detailed information from the follow-up interactions with apprentices or fully appreciate why and when a case should be referred or closed. Leaders have not developed relationships with agencies to fully understand local risks and to whom they may refer if a learner raised a concern.

Leaders do not have appropriate safer recruitment processes in place. Leaders do not adequately check all staff are safe to work with apprentices. Leaders have not ensured all staff receive appropriate safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. The safeguarding lead is not trained to carry out the role effectively.

Training consultants cover a range of topics in reviews that develop apprentices' awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Apprentices are aware of who to report to if they have any concerns. Apprentices learn about how to cut hair safely and the safe use of chemicals and sterilisation.

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