

Cambridge Professional Academy Limited

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

Unique reference number:	2539225
Name of lead inspector:	Georgina Ager, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Cherry Orchard Dysons Drove Burwell Cambridge CB25 0BL

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Cambridge Professional Academy Limited was inspected in July 2022. 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.

Cambridge Professional Academy Limited is a national independent learning provider. They specialise in providing standards-based marketing and management apprenticeships. Apprenticeship standards offered include level 3 marketing assistant, level 3 digital marketer, level 4 marketing executive, level 6 marketing manager, level 4 sales executive, level 3 team leader/supervisor and level 5 operations manager.

There are approximately 170 apprentices in training, and most are over 19 years of age. Most apprentices are training on the level 4 marketing executive standard and the level 6 marketing manager standard. There were approximately 40 apprentices on a break in learning. The provider has no subcontractors and no apprentices in receipt of high-needs funding.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that staff work effectively with apprentices' workplace managers in the planning, tailoring and reviewing of the apprentice's curriculum? **Reasonable progress**

Employers are now fully involved in the planning and review of their apprentices' training plans. Leaders and managers have introduced a rigorous process to assess apprentices' starting points. Mentors now have appropriate discussions with line managers and apprentices. They identify apprentices' existing knowledge, skills and behaviours, their strengths and weaknesses. Employers provide apprentices with interesting and helpful shadowing opportunities. This ensures that the apprentice's workplace training supports their learning. Marketing apprentices shadow members of their wider marketing teams and shadow colleagues in finance departments. As a result, apprentices gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For example, level 3 marketing apprentices visit their companies' head office to shadow national marketing teams. Consequently, apprentices learn about company branding and key relevant legislation.

Tutors and mentors adapt their teaching and mentoring sessions effectively to take account of apprentices' job roles. Where apprentices work for a charity, tutors explain the relevance of different marketing concepts to this sector. Apprentices learn how product analysis may differ for those working in a market research organisation. As a result, apprentices gain a deeper understanding of how to apply marketing concepts in their own organisations. However, mentors do not routinely change the sequencing of the apprenticeship to meet the requirements of the apprentice and their employer.

Employers now have a good oversight of the progress their apprentices are making. For example, most line managers now receive helpful monthly updates on their apprentice's progress. Managers have useful frequent meetings with apprentices' mentors. As a result, line managers know how they can appropriately support their apprentices. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these improvements on whether apprentices achieve their apprenticeships in a timely manner.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices know what they need to do to improve, and to enable them to make swift progress? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have significantly improved the information that apprentices receive on their progress. Apprentices have frequent helpful meetings with their mentor to discuss their progress. Most apprentices receive useful monthly emails which provide information on their progress. As a result, apprentices know what they still need to do to achieve their apprenticeship.

Targets set by mentors during progress reviews do not have clear timescales. Consequently, too many apprentices do not finish their apprenticeship by their planned end date. Leaders and managers have implemented a new automated system to ensure that prompt actions are set for apprentices who fall behind. It is too early yet to see the impact of these changes on apprentices' progress.

Most apprentices receive helpful verbal and written feedback. As a result, apprentices know what they need to do to improve their work. For example, following presentations apprentices receive helpful feedback on topics such as reducing the pace of their presentation and managing their time more effectively. As a result, apprentices are aware of what they need to do to improve for future presentations. Apprentices receive helpful feedback on how to improve the style, tone and structure of the assignments.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that staff use the findings of initial assessment effectively to plan for the English and mathematics training needs of individual apprentices? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and managers have effectively amended their English and mathematics strategy. Apprentices now study English and mathematics before fully starting the vocational content of their apprenticeship programme. As a result, apprentices can commit their study time to English and mathematics to make swift progress.

Tutors of English and mathematics adapt their sessions to meet apprentices' needs. Tutors use apprentices' diagnostic assessments effectively to plan their sessions and to improve apprentices' understanding in their weaker areas. Tutors respond to apprentices' requests for further training. Tutors work on areas which apprentices want to work on or they lack confidence in, or areas in which they need to improve.

Mentors are not provided with detailed information on the progress that apprentices are making in their English and mathematics sessions. Mentors do not set apprentices English and mathematics targets within progress reviews. Consequently, apprentices are not actively supported by their mentors to achieve these qualifications.

Apprentices continue to improve their English and mathematics skills while on their apprenticeships. Marketing apprentices learn how to use data analytics and calculate break even points. In written work, apprentices receive feedback on the style, tone and structure of their work. Level 4 marketing apprentices learn about copywriting techniques.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring they have a clear oversight of the progress apprentices are making? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have improved their oversight of the progress that apprentices are making significantly. For example, leaders have introduced a thorough new management information system to monitor progress. This new system monitors effectively a range of factors such as apprentices being past their planned end dates, apprentices missing mentor meetings and attendance. As a result of this, leaders are now aware of which apprentices are at risk of falling behind or not achieving their apprenticeships. Consequently, leaders can plan appropriate interventions to support apprentices who have fallen behind. However, it is too early to see the full impact of these changes on apprentices' progress.

Leaders and managers do not yet have clear enough oversight of the impact of any actions in place to support apprentices at risk of not achieving. For example, actions are not always recorded correctly on the new system. Where actions are in place, they do not have clear deadlines. Plans are in place to improve how leaders monitor these actions, but they are not yet fully implemented.

Governors provide appropriate challenge to leaders. Governors have been actively involved in ensuring that leaders have put in place appropriate actions to ensure that they have the information needed to monitor apprentices' progress. As a result, leaders now have an oversight of the progress of apprentices. For example, governors have challenged leaders to ensure that training continues to improve apprentices' mathematical and English skills.

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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