

Real Skills Training Limited

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

Unique reference number:	1270912
Name of lead inspector:	Suzanne Horner, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	215 Crosby Road South Liverpool L21 4LT

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Real Skills Training Limited was inspected in March 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.

Real Skills Training Limited is an independent learning provider. It provides training in the childcare and early years, business administration and management sectors. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 194 apprentices in learning. There were 95 apprentices on the level 3 early years practitioner, 46 on the level 4 children and young people's family practitioner, 30 on the level 2 early years practitioner, 17 on the level 5 early years lead practitioner, and less than five on each of the level 5 operations departmental manager and the level 3 business administration apprenticeship standards. There were a few adults studying the level 5 diploma in leadership for health, social care, children and young people's services and the level 3 diploma for the early years workforce.

To what extent have leaders strengthened their governance arrangements so that leaders receive enough support, challenge and scrutiny to improve the quality of education? Reasonable progress

Leaders now have effective governance arrangements in place. Since the previous inspection, leaders have recruited three external board members who have the appropriate skills and expertise to provide support and challenge to senior leaders on the quality of education that apprentices receive. There is a board member responsible for safeguarding.

Leaders have implemented monthly board meetings that review the quality of education that apprentices receive. Board members have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They have ensured that leaders have made improvements since the previous inspection. However, leaders rightly identify that they need to provide detailed, high-quality reports for board members so that board members have a clear oversight of all aspects of the apprenticeship provision.

Board members have ensured that leaders have implemented new quality processes to improve the quality of teaching that apprentices receive. For example, leaders have completed observations of all staff to review the quality of teaching that trainers provide and learning that apprentices receive. However, leaders are still to implement training for staff to support them to develop their teaching skills further.

To what extent have leaders and trainers improved the planning and coordination of on- and off-the-job training to ensure that apprentices are challenged to achieve their aspirational targets and reach their potential?

Insufficient progress

Leaders and trainers do not coordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively. They do not routinely plan apprentices' on- and off-the-job training from the beginning of the apprenticeship. A few apprentices are not sufficiently aware of what they will be taught each month until they attend their class. Most apprentices use their allocated off-the-job time to complete independent research to produce high-quality assignment work.

Trainers do not ensure that apprentices know more and can remember more over time. They do not use assessment consistently to check for gaps in learning. As a result, a few apprentices are unable to identify what they have learned beyond the completion of the qualification criteria.

Trainers do not set challenging targets for all apprentices. Too often, targets are focused on the completion of criteria and tasks of the qualification. This results in apprentices not developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to complete their apprenticeship and make an effective contribution at work.

Trainers do not provide sufficient advice and guidance to apprentices on how to achieve distinction grades in their final assessments. Apprentices do not know how to achieve a distinction grade, or the progress they are making towards attaining a distinction grade, in preparation for their final assessments.

Leaders have put in place a range of information to support employers to provide off-the-job training for apprentices. Apprentices gain knowledge mainly from their workplace mentors and swiftly apply their knowledge, skills and behaviours at work. For example, apprentices are able to use their knowledge of legislation to review and update company policies on safeguarding and health and safety.

Trainers provide a minimal proportion of the off-the-job training for apprentices, which is mostly focused on supporting apprentices to complete assignments. They do not ensure that all employers are aware of what, or how much, off-the-job training they are responsible for. This results in employers not always knowing what they need to do to ensure that apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.

To what extent do leaders and tutors ensure that trainers routinely plan for the development of all apprentices' English and mathematical skills?

Reasonable progress

Apprentices that require functional skills complete assessments at the start of their apprenticeship to identify gaps in their knowledge. Functional skills tutors use this information to plan the curriculum for apprentices. However, tutors do not sufficiently individualise the English and mathematics curriculum to meet the needs of a few apprentices. This results in these apprentices not making swift progress in their functional skills and, ultimately, do not pass their examinations.

Apprentices attend online sessions and complete online tasks for functional skills in English and mathematics. Most apprentices skilfully apply their new knowledge when carrying out tasks in the workplace. Level 3 early years educator apprentices use calculations to accurately work out staff and child ratios, and incorporate literacy into their activities through reading books when discussing emotions with children.

Apprentices continue to develop their English and mathematical skills as a direct result of their apprenticeship. Trainers embed English and mathematical skills within their sessions with apprentices. Apprentices on the level 4 children, young people and families practitioner and the level 5 early years lead practitioner apprenticeships develop their academic writing skills and incorporate Harvard referencing within their work. In mathematics, they complete costing proposals for managers to make justifications for new resources in their nurseries. Consequently, apprentices become more confident at work, write effective reports and provide precise information in their logbooks.

How well do tutors routinely provide useful feedback to help apprentices focus on developing their knowledge, skills and behaviours for the workplace?

Reasonable progress

Trainers have improved the quality of feedback that apprentices receive. They provide verbal and detailed written feedback on what apprentices have done well and what they need to do to improve. Apprentices on the level 4 children, young people and families practitioner apprenticeship use their feedback from their written assignments to extend their writing and improve their analytical skills.

Apprentices use the feedback on their written work to improve the quality of work that they produce. They include additional information, such as the application of policies and practices in their settings, to produce more detailed work. A few apprentices that need additional support from trainers progress from voice recording their work to writing high-quality reports for assignments and when completing documents at work.

Most apprentices develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their employment. Level 5 early years lead practitioner apprentices use their knowledge of holistic child development to re-evaluate communication methods with young children. Employers lead on the vast majority of the teaching of knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices need to learn. While trainers direct apprentices on what they need to do, the amount of teaching that apprentices receive from trainers is minimal.

How well do leaders ensure that tutors routinely provide apprentices and learners with independent and impartial careers advice about the full range of opportunities available to them?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have improved the quality of careers education information and guidance for apprentices and learners. Apprentices and learners have access to a wide range of online resources about different career options. Trainers discuss with apprentices and learners the opportunities that are available to them at work for promotion and opportunities to take on additional responsibilities.

Trainers support apprentices with their career aspirations and discuss higher level study and wider career options such as primary school teaching and social work. However, apprentices and learners do not receive information from external organisations to provide them with unbiased information about employment and higher education opportunities beyond their current employment.

Trainers discuss initial career plans with apprentices to identify their knowledge of the different pathways and routes available to them at the beginning of their apprenticeship. Trainers use their own sector experience to inform apprentices of the plethora of potential directions and prospects for their futures in the childcare and early years sector.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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