

# Kaplan Financial Limited

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

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## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Kaplan Financial Limited was inspected in June 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.

Kaplan Financial Limited (Kaplan) provides a wide range of programmes in the financial services and accounting sectors. The apprenticeship provision operates across multiple sites nationally. Training is provided through a mixture of face-to-face, on demand and live online sessions. At the time of the visit, there were 11,043 apprentices enrolled on apprenticeship standards. Three quarters of all apprentices study the level 7 accountant and taxation professional apprenticeship. The remaining apprentices are enrolled on apprenticeships in the professional and business services sector or the financial services sector from levels 2 to 7.

### Themes

**How much progress have leaders made in establishing rigorous quality assurance procedures to support leaders to improve apprentices' learning experience? How effectively do governors scrutinise and challenge information provided by senior leaders to assure themselves that apprentices receive high-quality education and training?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have made reasonable progress in rectifying the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have implemented a range of new quality systems and processes which they use effectively to improve the quality of education that apprentices receive. Leaders have introduced a system of learning walks and developmental observations that identify themes for improvement. For example, leaders have introduced training for tutors to improve their teaching skills on topics, such as questioning techniques. Tutors have improved their questioning skills to identify gaps in apprentices' knowledge.

Leaders carry out 'deep dives' into apprenticeship provision to identify the strengths and areas of weakness. Courses that are underperforming are placed into special measures. In a few cases, leaders have ceased running or stopped enrolments on apprenticeships that are under special measures to rectify the weaknesses.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have restructured the leadership team. They have recruited staff with appropriate industry expertise and recruited additional board members with experience in the further education and skills sector. Board

members have the skills and expertise to support and challenge senior leaders regarding the quality of education that apprentices receive. The external advisory board receives useful reports that they use to provide scrutiny and challenge to senior leaders. Board members rightly identified that following the previous inspection, senior leaders did not act quickly enough to bring about the sustained improvements required. Senior leaders are now more focused on identifying the impact of their changes so they can make improvements swiftly.

**How much progress have leaders and managers made in providing effective careers education advice and guidance so that all apprentices benefit from advice on next steps and support to achieve their career aspirations? Reasonable progress**

Leaders have strengthened the careers advice and guidance that apprentices receive. They have created a careers microsite to ensure that apprentices have useful information on the range of careers and progression pathways available to them. Apprentices benefit from accessing information on future qualifications, job roles and careers talks from previous apprentices to identify their potential career pathways.

Leaders have put in place a range of activities for apprentices to attend such as careers week and talks by industry specialists. Apprentices can now access topics that help them to prepare for competency-based interviews and networking for future employment opportunities.

Talent coaches receive appropriate training on the various opportunities available to apprentices on completion of their apprenticeship. They use this information to inform discussions with apprentices. Apprentices set short-, medium- and long-term careers goals with talent coaches during their reviews. This supports apprentices to complete additional training courses, such as python and other professional qualifications, to prepare them for their future careers.

Apprentices have ongoing discussions with talent coaches about their career aspirations. For example, they discuss future careers in credit control and finance management. Most apprentices are aware of the wider opportunities available to them beyond the achievement of the next level qualification. However, a few apprentices are still not aware of what they can progress to outside of the next qualification.

**What progress have leaders made in ensuring that employers are involved in the planning and development of apprentices' on- and off-the-job learning? To what extent do tutors and talent coaches review the development of apprentices' knowledge, skill and behaviours so that apprentices make swift progress? Reasonable progress**

Leaders have introduced a range of changes to improve the engagement of employers in the reviews that take place. They have created a 'good employer' guide

that shares their expectations of line managers and has formed the basis of conversations and the development of line managers. Most employers attend progress reviews where they discuss apprentices' learning and progress.

Talent coaches effectively coordinate on- and off-the-job training. They work with line managers to support apprentices to apply their new learning in the workplace. Apprentices learn how to carry out double-entry bookkeeping. Following this training, apprentices complete double entry without support. Apprentices benefit from work shadowing in different departments to practise the skills they do not routinely carry out. Apprentices shadow colleagues completing reconciliations and preparing monthly sign-off figures for managers.

Leaders have made too slow progress in ensuring that talent coaches use apprentices' initial starting points to set challenging targets against their knowledge, skills and behaviours. Talent coaches do not routinely identify which aspects of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to work on to help them to make rapid progress.

**What progress have leaders made in ensuring that tutors and talent coaches use assessments at the start of the apprenticeship to ensure that apprentices develop the knowledge and skills they need to success? How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that talent coaches use assessments to rectify swiftly misconceptions and gaps in apprentices' knowledge? Insufficient progress**

Leaders have redesigned how tutors assess apprentices' starting points at the start of each new teaching module so that tutors adapt their teaching and give targeted guidance and support to individual apprentices.

Leaders have put in place support for apprentices who fail their examinations to work on the areas for improvement. For example, progression advisors provide support and guidance on aspects such as examination techniques and managing stress. Tutors provide technical support where gaps in apprentices' knowledge are identified. However, leaders have yet to introduce these interventions across all apprenticeships.

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