

Aspirations Academies Trust

Monitoring visit report

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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.

Aspirations Academies Trust is a multi-academy trust of primary, secondary, and all-through schools. The trust became an employer-provider for apprenticeships in 2021, with the first apprentices, studying the senior leader standard, starting their training in November 2022. Within the trust, apprenticeships are managed through the Aspirations Learning Institute department. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 27 apprentices studying standards-based apprenticeships. Of these, seven were studying level 3 teaching assistant, nine studying level 7 senior leader and 11 studying the level 5 coaching professional apprenticeships.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Leaders and managers have carefully chosen apprenticeship standards to build the expertise of existing staff in their current and future roles. The training fits well within their broader strategy: to develop staff so that they help children and young people in schools within the trust achieve positive outcomes. There are early indicators that this strategy is highly successful.

Leaders and managers make sure that the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship are met. For example, coaches, line managers and tutors frequently review the progress that apprentices make. School principals understand the need for apprentices to study while they are at work. They make sure that apprentices receive this time despite working in busy schools.

Senior leaders and managers understand very well the strengths and weaknesses of the provision because they closely monitor each programme. They have learned lessons from the early stages of delivering the training and have rapidly adapted the provision. For example, they recognised that early start apprentices and employers did not always understand the demands and requirements of an apprenticeship

programme. Following this, leaders and managers successfully strengthened the onboarding arrangements of future cohorts of apprentices.

Leaders and managers make sure they have the necessary expertise to manage and develop the curriculum effectively. Leaders have very productive relationships with sector bodies. They take advantage of external training opportunities on, for example, the curriculum for personal development. They welcome external scrutiny of the provision. For example, they commissioned a health check of the first cohort of apprentices in the early stages of their training. Managers used the findings very effectively to make improvements to the training.

Leaders and managers have effective governance arrangements in place. For example, senior managers and trustees scrutinise the quality of the training through the Learning Institute committee. Managers provide the group with a good range of information on the quality of the provision. This ensures that senior leaders have a very good understanding of the quality of education that apprentices receive.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?	Significant progress
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Leaders and managers make sure that training programmes are well designed and taught so that apprentices quickly develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result of the new knowledge they learn, apprentices make a significant impact at work. For this reason, school principals highly value the training their apprentices receive. For example, senior leader apprentices complete projects that lead to staff training, improve communication with parents and increase the engagement of disadvantaged pupils in learning.

Apprentices produce work of a high standard. Tutors provide apprentices with prompt and highly useful feedback that helps apprentices improve their work. This shows apprentices what they need to do to achieve a high grade and helps them understand the requirements of their final assessments. Apprentices take pride in the work they produce.

Leaders, managers and coaches in schools monitor closely the progress that apprentices make. Together, they assess what apprentices know and can do at the start of their training. They revisit these assessments systematically throughout the training. This helps apprentices to stay on track with their studies and for school leaders to tailor activities at work so that apprentices can consolidate their knowledge and practise their skills.

Tutors are highly qualified, with extensive experience as teachers. They teach sessions that help apprentices to reflect critically on their own practice in the classroom and as middle and aspiring leaders. As a result of the training, apprentices

become highly motivated to learn, achieve at work, and progress in their careers. They told inspectors they would highly recommend the training to their peers.

Tutors support apprentices very well, so they make good progress in their studies. For example, they help senior leaders returning to study to understand the academic requirements of the training, such as use of referencing in written work. Apprentices with additional learning needs, such as dyslexia, receive additional training hours to complete tasks. This support helps apprentices with additional needs overcome their disadvantage.

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

Leaders, managers and school leaders create a positive safeguarding culture. This includes fulfilling their obligations in relation to 'Prevent' duty. They have put in place a safeguarding governance group to provide effective oversight and scrutiny of safeguarding practice. The group includes a trustee with responsibility for safeguarding across the trust and the designated safeguarding lead.

Apprentices are safe and know who to turn to if they have a concern. They have an excellent understanding of safeguarding because this has a high profile in the curriculum. For example, apprentices develop a detailed understanding of how to assess and mitigate risks to pupils on a school trip. They understand well their responsibilities to safeguard pupils and staff in their schools.

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