

# Pathway First Limited

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

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<b>Name of lead inspector:</b>	Helen Morgan, His Majesty's Inspector
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<b>Type of provider:</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Address:</b>	Amington House, 95 Amington Road Birmingham B25 8EP

## Monitoring visit: main findings

### Context and focus of visit

Pathway First Limited was inspected in February 2023. 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.

Pathway First Limited is an independent learning provider based in Birmingham. At the time of the visit, there were 38 apprentices in learning. Most apprentices study the level 3 early years educator, level 2 early years practitioner, level 3 business administrator, or level 3 digital marketer apprenticeships. A small number of apprentices study the level 2 adult care worker, level 2 customer service practitioner, level 5 early years practitioner, level 3 lead adult care worker, level 3 team leader or supervisor, or level 7 senior leader apprenticeships. Eight apprentices were under the age of 18.

At the time of the visit, there were 783 adult enrolments, of whom 278 were on advanced learner loan courses. Adult learners study a wide range of accredited courses. These include functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics and level 2 and 3 courses in beauty therapy, health and social care, warehousing, construction, business, management, and customer service.

### Themes

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that the starting points of all learners and apprentices are used to plan learning and to provide clear targets and feedback to help them meet their potential?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have designed a new process for tutors to create personalised learning plans for learners and apprentices with prior knowledge, skills and behaviours. Tutors use comprehensive curriculum plans and tailor activities to learners' and apprentices' previous experiences. Tutors use regular discussion with learners and apprentices to set personalised tasks.

Leaders have recently refined the skills scans that apprentices undertake during enrolment to better identify prior knowledge, skills and behaviours. Tutors discuss apprentices' self-assessment of their skills to ensure they are accurate. However, in too many cases, tutors do not record this clearly. Tutors do not review skills scans to show the progress apprentices make over time.

Tutors give adult learners positive and supportive feedback to help them develop their ideas and skills. In English and mathematics functional skills classes, tutors use the assessment of learners' starting points to understand their strengths. Tutors direct questions and support to ensure learners develop their confidence and their English and mathematics skills.

Tutors provide clear feedback to apprentices on the completion of tasks. In a few cases, tutors use complex scenario-based tasks to stretch and challenge the most able apprentices. However, too few tutors set targets for apprentices based on their starting points. In a small number of cases, apprentices with prior experience do not make the progress of which they are capable.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in providing and using data to evaluate both the curriculums and the progress of learners and apprentices?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have invested in new systems and staff to better evaluate the quality of the curriculums and the progress of learners and apprentices. Senior leaders use data to understand achievement rates and identify areas of risk. A new quality team is working to identify risks to learners and apprentices, such as poor attendance or delayed submissions of work. Leaders provide training on the use of data systems to staff.

Quality managers use data extensively in individual meetings with teaching staff to identify patterns in learners' and apprentices' behaviour. Quality managers identify opportunities for interventions to ensure apprentices make progress in line with their learning plans. They share the trends in interventions and emerging issues with their line manager. However, the information that supports their findings is not reported clearly enough through leadership boards for decision-making to be highlighted to senior leaders.

Leaders have not yet established processes to ensure that information used to make key decisions is reported to governors. Leaders do not provide governors with enough data to understand all areas of the curriculums. They give governors too little information to be able to challenge senior leaders and support rapid improvement.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that all learners and apprentices receive support to develop their English and mathematics skills throughout their studies, including those who already have the required qualifications?**

**Reasonable progress**

Specialist tutors provide learners and apprentices with group and individual English and mathematics teaching sessions. Tutors help apprentices to identify gaps in their

skills and to prepare for functional skills examinations. As a result, apprentices understand what they must do to successfully pass their English and mathematics exams.

Leaders have implemented a diagnostic assessment for apprentices to identify gaps in their English and mathematics skills. Apprentices access individualised online programmes that target gaps in their skills. Too few apprentices, who have already achieved their qualifications, are yet to use this to develop their English and mathematics from the start of their apprenticeship.

Leaders have identified opportunities in schemes of work and curriculum plans to develop learners' and apprentices' English and mathematics fluency alongside their work-based skills. The majority of tutors teach English and mathematics through the vocational curriculum effectively. For example, level 3 digital marketing apprentices use statistics to analyse the percentage of products, such as paint and tools, that customers purchase. In level 3 combined beauty therapy skills, adult learners practise communication skills in order to discuss needs, risks and requirements with customers clearly during consultations. However, tutors do not use the gaps identified in apprentices' English and mathematics skills ahead of this learning to ensure that apprentices are able to progress rapidly.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that all learners and apprentices benefit from high-quality impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance?**

**Reasonable progress**

Leaders have developed a strategic approach to careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG). They have strengthened the initial advice and guidance that learners and apprentices receive at the start of their course to ensure that they are on the right programme. Leaders link curriculums more closely to the skills gaps in the local region to ensure learners and apprentices recognise key employment opportunities.

Leaders provide apprentices with structured CEIAG. A careers advisor provides apprentices with individual sessions at the start, mid-point and end of their apprenticeship to discuss career options and job vacancies in their chosen sector. Leaders ensure that tutors use new teaching and learning assessment plans to drive regular discussion with apprentices about careers. However, it is too soon to see the impact of this development.

Leaders have not yet ensured that all adult learners have sufficient access to careers guidance. Those on longer courses, such as level 3 combined beauty therapy skills, have clear guidance from their tutors. Tutors dedicate teaching time to focus on self-employment. This includes finance, marketing, tax, and insurances. As a result, learners are confident they have the right information and skills to start their own businesses. However, while learners on short English and mathematics courses know which courses they could complete next, they do not access any support to know

which careers they could move on to. As a result, they are only able to identify career opportunities that they know through their social networks.

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