

Vocational Training Services Care Sector Limited

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit.

Vocational Training Services Care Sector Limited (VTS) 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.

Vocational Training Services Care Sector Limited (VTS) is an independent learning provider. It provides training across Essex and in the immediate surrounding areas. It was established in 1994. VTS specialises in providing apprenticeships and adult learning courses for staff in the care and education sectors at level 2 to level 5. VTS provides training in the workplace for a range of settings, including hospitals, residential homes, children's nurseries, and schools.

At the time of the monitoring visit, the company was providing training for 263 standards-based apprentices. Over two thirds of apprentices are on childcare standards from level 2 to level 5. Most of the remainder are on adult care apprenticeships from level 2 to level 5. There are nine apprentices on healthcare standards at level 3. There are 15 adults studying in healthcare and childcare programmes from level 3 to level 5. Thirteen apprentices receive additional learning support.

Themes

What progress have leaders and governors made in embedding statutory requirements for safeguarding and the safe recruitment of staff and assessing the impact on apprentices and learners?

Significant progress

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to ensure that statutory safeguarding requirements are applied throughout the organisation. All staff regularly undertake essential safeguarding training. For example, administration staff recently completed safeguarding awareness training. They are now alert to learners' and apprentices' behaviours in meetings and on the telephone, and staff know what steps to take should they have concerns. As a result, the welfare of learners and apprentices is considered from their first interaction with VTS.

Governors and senior leaders meet frequently to discuss the safeguarding risk assessment and to consider any current learners or apprentices on their risk register. Leaders recently reviewed and updated all their safeguarding policies. Safeguarding

policies take account of the latest legislation and industry expectations. The revised safer recruitment policy is accompanied by a robust implementation plan. Leaders have successfully applied this improved process to new appointments to VTS.

Senior leaders responsible for safeguarding are knowledgeable about regional and local safeguarding concerns. They gather information by attending regional safeguarding forums and frequent meetings with the regional 'Prevent' coordinator. Leaders use this information to update staff on key developments. As a result, tutors and staff are confident to apply their safeguarding knowledge in their everyday duties.

Leaders ensure that tutors check learners' and apprentices' understanding of safeguarding frequently. Level 2 early years practitioner apprentices discuss safeguarding at every review with their tutor. Child development and well-being learners improve their understanding of local risks by reading the informative monthly student newsletter. As a result, learners and apprentices develop a sound understanding of how to stay safe.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that the starting points of adult learners are used to plan and sequence courses so that learners gain substantial new knowledge? **Reasonable progress**

Leaders and tutors use their learners' starting points effectively to plan their training programme. For example, if learners start their training with a secure understanding of children's general development, tutors quickly move on to more advanced discussions about brain development in children. As a result, most learners swiftly learn new knowledge, which they then apply in their work setting.

Tutors plan the curriculum in a sensible order that takes account of learners' prior learning and experience. For example, learners start their training by considering how to work with different stakeholders and parents. This helps learners interact with others more effectively at work. Learners then develop an understanding of educational theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs or Piaget's stages of child development. Learners are then able to apply these theories in their everyday practice. As a result, learners become more effective at work.

Learners who started their training after the previous inspection are making good progress in the development of substantial new skills and knowledge. Learners take on additional responsibilities at work. For example, health and social care learners implement person-centred plans effectively. They carry out effective team meetings in a supported living project. However, a small minority of learners who have been in training for longer continue to make slow progress towards the completion of their programme.

What progress have governors made in providing effective scrutiny and holding leaders to account to continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of education?

Reasonable progress

External governors bring expertise and a good sector awareness to governance arrangements. They provide effective scrutiny and challenge, along with motivational support, to VTS leaders. Minutes of governors' meetings are detailed, with robust accompanying action plans. For example, governors challenge leaders by setting ambitious key performance targets. Governors have introduced a thorough annual curriculum review process. As a result, leaders' impact on learners' and apprentices' progress is effective.

Leaders gather and use data and management information with skill and confidence. Leaders track current learners' and apprentices' progress closely. They apply effective interventions, such as individual action plans, when apprentices fall behind. As a result, leaders have reduced the proportion of learners and apprentices who are past their planned end dates.

Leaders' improvements to learners' progress reviews and internal quality assurance arrangements are showing positive impact on learners. Current learners and apprentices, particularly those recruited since the previous inspection, are making sustained progress towards completion of their programmes. However, it is too early to see how these improvements will impact on apprentices' achievement rates.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that learners and apprentices receive ongoing, high-quality and impartial careers guidance so that they know how to identify and access the choices available to them and achieve their aspirations and career goals?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and tutors have improved the provision of careers advice and guidance for learners and apprentices. Tutors now include information on learners' and apprentices' progression opportunities in learning plans. Learners and apprentices now complete an enrichment module that focuses on career planning. This topic is regularly revisited and reviewed by tutors, learners and apprentices. For example, early years apprentices know the steps they need to take to progress from an early years setting to providing learning support in schools. They know what new skills and knowledge they need to develop to be successful.

Tutors and employers work together to create opportunities for learners and apprentices to have exposure to career areas they might consider in the future. For example, level 3 apprentices in adult care interested in speech and language development, or physiotherapy, participate in specialist sessions at work. This gives

them greater insight into this type of work. As a result, learners and apprentices raise their aspirations and develop their ambitions.

Apprentices now receive ongoing, high-quality impartial careers advice. Those apprentices who complete the enhanced enrichment training develop a good understanding of the career options available to them on completion of their training. However, learners and apprentices in training for longer have not benefitted from a consistent approach to career planning and are less aware of their career options.

What progress have leaders made in ensuring that apprentices and learners know about the local risks that can affect them at work and in their personal lives?

Reasonable progress

Leaders fully understand the risks that may apply to their learners and apprentices. For example, via updates from the Essex 'Prevent' team, leaders became aware of the rise of white supremacy in Clacton. This information was shared with a tutor working with learners in the locality who discussed it during the learners' and apprentices' reviews. As a result, learners and apprentices develop an increasing awareness of local issues and how they may impact on them.

Leaders ensure that most learners and apprentices understand local risks and how they might apply in their work setting. For example, learners and apprentices discuss topical child neglect cases. This enables learners and apprentices to reflect on their practice and consider the signs they must be alert to in their work with children. Learners and apprentices know that anti-social behaviour is a local concern, and they are keen to provide a positive role model for children. As a result, most learners and apprentices apply their knowledge of local risks effectively in the workplace and in their personal lives.

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