

Fitch Learning Limited

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

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Fitch Learning 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.

At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 391 apprentices aged 18 and above studying a range of standards-based apprenticeships at levels 3, 4, 6 and 7. These included investment operations specialist, investment operations technician, compliance and risk, financial services administrator, financial advisor, financial services professional, data technician and data analyst. The largest standard taught at Fitch Learning is the investment operations specialist standard at level 4 with 140 apprentices. Teaching takes place under a hybrid model, with a mixture of both online and in-person sessions and workshops.

Themes

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality teaching, including face-to-face sessions, and developmental feedback that helps them improve their work and complete their apprenticeships on time?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have taken suitable action to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders make sure they give apprentices the support they need to make progress in their studies. Leaders revised their curriculum plans across different courses and rightly increased the frequency and number of face-to-face sessions they teach. Apprentices attend group workshops, master classes and revision workshops taught by experienced tutors. They also receive effective support from skills coaches through regular one-to-one sessions. Consequently, most apprentices make expected progress and are on track to complete their apprenticeships on time.

Staff successfully use a range of teaching methods, such as presentations, explanations and case studies, to develop apprentices' knowledge and understanding of different topics. In most cases, tutors ask questions, and use quizzes and polls to check apprentices' understanding effectively. Apprentices revisit previously taught content and the topics they struggle with and practise completing exam-style assessments. They feel well prepared for their final assessments and professional examinations. Most apprentices who stay on their courses achieve their qualifications at first attempt and gain distinctions.

Staff give apprentices useful developmental feedback on written work, so they know how to improve it. Skills coaches challenge apprentices to think about whether the examples they choose are the most appropriate ones to demonstrate the depth of their understanding. They explain the importance of referencing correctly and using detailed analysis. Apprentices produce work of the expected standard for the level of their studies.

Leaders have revised and improved their monitoring processes. They hold employers accountable to make sure apprentices have sufficient time for their studies. Skills coaches offer apprentices additional one-to-one sessions and signpost them to relevant learning resources and workshops to help them prepare for their examinations and final assessments. The number of apprentices who stay on their courses and achieve their apprenticeships has improved. However, it is not high enough.

What progress have leaders and managers made in providing apprentices with a curriculum that develops their knowledge, skills and interests beyond their vocational learning, including an effective careers programme and the promotion of fundamental British values?

Reasonable progress

Since the previous inspection, leaders and managers have made reasonable progress in implementing a suitable curriculum that develops apprentices' skills beyond their vocational learning. Staff provide apprentices with structured and individualised careers advice and guidance. Skills coaches share appropriate information with apprentices to promote a clear understanding of fundamental British values.

Staff teach apprentices effectively about different progression opportunities in the financial services sector. They teach them useful employability skills such as professional etiquette, writing a CV and creating online professional profiles and networks. Skills coaches and tutors use their industry experience to give apprentices suitable guidance about different careers and job roles, including working in wealth management, investment operations and human resources. Most apprentices know what they need to do to prepare for their next steps. However, apprentices are not aware of wider career and further study options beyond their employers and financial services sector.

Most apprentices have a suitable understanding of fundamental British values and how these apply in their workplaces and personal lives. Staff use real-life analogies to describe the concepts of mutual respect, accountability and democracy in the workplace. Apprentices explain confidently the importance of treating colleagues and clients with respect. They explore how the rule of law affects their work and know it is a civil offence to disclose confidential information. However, in a few cases, staff

do not discuss these topics in sufficient detail. Consequently, a few apprentices do not have a thorough enough understanding of fundamental British values.

Apprentices gain confidence through their courses. They have helpful discussions on a range of topics, including mental health, and attend additional courses on subjects such as public speaking and spreadsheet software. They work more effectively in their workplace when dealing with colleagues and clients. Apprentices who complete their apprenticeships sustain employment and gain additional responsibilities.

What actions have leaders taken to ensure skills coaches are competent to develop apprentices' understanding of how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation and extremism?

Reasonable progress

Leaders provide suitable training to skills coaches on how to start meaningful discussions with apprentices on radicalisation and extremism and develop their understanding of how to keep themselves safe from the risks they pose. They make sure that skills coaches update their knowledge of these risks frequently.

Skills coaches do not consistently discuss these topics in sufficient detail. In some cases, they do not revisit these topics frequently enough. Consequently, apprentices' understanding of the dangers posed by extremism and risks of radicalisation varies. While some apprentices have a suitable understanding of how to stay safe online and the risks associated with social media, others struggle to recall this. Skills coaches do not teach apprentices sufficiently well about risks specific to their sector. For example, they do not discuss the threats of terrorist cyber-attacks on financial institutions and money laundering to fund terrorist activities. Apprentices, therefore, do not have a clear enough understanding of how these specific risks can affect them at work.

Apprentices feel safe. They know what signs to look out for if someone is being radicalised. Staff provide suitable information to apprentices on external sources of support and help regarding issues of radicalisation and extremism. Apprentices know how to report any concerns at the provider and within the workplace, including externally to the police.

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