

Professional Apprenticeships Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2625247
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after 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.

Professional Apprenticeships Limited have held a contract to provide apprenticeships since 2019. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 103 apprentices including five under the age of 19. Apprentices study digital technologies or business administration at level 3 and management at level 5. All are standards-based apprenticeships. Nearly all apprentices are based in south Bristol and the remainder are located in the wider southwest.

The impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Staff have developed a curriculum that develops apprentices' skills beyond those required for their qualifications. Apprentices swiftly develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to complete their apprenticeship. They also learn other knowledge and skills that will help them in their planned, future careers. For example, apprentices studying the level 3 digital marketing learn about non-digital marketing techniques, such as producing brochures and copy writing.

Staff work closely with employers to identify their requirements for apprenticeships. Staff carefully ensure that the employer can provide sufficient opportunities for apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours at work. These high levels of communication result in an effective and productive relationship that supports each apprentice to make rapid progress in learning new knowledge.

Training staff systematically develop apprentices' skills and behaviours, such as their confidence and appearance, and their speaking and listening skills. As a result, apprentices develop a sense of pride and are prepared well for their future careers.

Staff use available information effectively to make improvements. For example, following feedback from apprentices, managers have centralised all learning resources so that apprentices can quickly locate course materials. Managers have developed a system that staff use effectively to monitor the progress apprentices make towards completing their apprenticeships. Staff quickly identify apprentices who need support. As a result of the rapid intervention of staff, nearly all apprentices are on track to complete their apprenticeship on time.

Governance is highly effective. Governors are well-qualified and experienced educational leaders. They provide high levels of challenge and support to the senior leadership team. For example, governors inform staff frequently of the criteria they need to meet or exceed and monitor this closely. They challenge all staff to identify and continually improve the positive impact they are having on apprentices' experiences.

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

Tutors work systematically with employers to devise, plan, and review the apprenticeship curriculum. This ensures that training continues to meet the needs of the employer and those of apprentices. For example, the level 3 digital marketing apprentices develop an awareness of social media in business before learning how search engines can be used more effectively to promote their own organisations.

Apprentices are very ambitious and highly motivated. They are supported well by highly qualified and enthusiastic tutors. Tutors review and provide feedback on apprentices' progress from their starting points frequently and effectively. Tutors use their specialist vocational experience and highly effective assessment practice to teach apprentices well. As a result, apprentices rapidly develop substantial new knowledge, skills, and behaviours that have a beneficial impact on their employers' businesses.

Tutors work closely with employers to identify specific training requirements for apprentices. For example, employers highlighted that apprentices needed to improve their communication and time management skills. Tutors included additional taught sessions so that apprentices improve in these areas.

Tutors teach English and mathematics very effectively as part of apprentices' curriculum. As a result, apprentices have improved their English and mathematical skills. For example, level 3 digital marketing apprentices have developed

sophisticated English skills to enable them to write persuasive and evocative phrases used in advertising. They can also calculate 'return-on-investments' as a measure of social media success.

Apprentices have a clear understanding of the importance of 'Prevent' and fundamental British values within their workplaces and home lives. Tutors use contemporary events, such as the recent local civil disturbances to inform the discussions. Level 3 digital marketing apprentices developed a podcast, which highlights fundamental British values. Other apprentices talk articulately of the potential dangers of the improper use of digital technologies at work and outside of work.

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

Leaders have created a strong and proactive safeguarding culture across all levels of the organisation. They ensure that appropriately trained staff provide good support and information to both apprentices and employers.

Managers take great care to create a safe working environment for apprentices. This enables apprentices to thrive in their roles. Apprentices feel very well supported by provider staff and their employer and are confident to seek help if they need it.

Managers promote safeguarding, 'Prevent' and British values very effectively using a range of well-designed resources they developed for staff, apprentices, and employers. Apprentices demonstrate well their understanding of how these impact on them in the workplace through their knowledge and practice.

Leaders and managers work hard to remove all barriers to apprentices participating in the apprenticeship. This includes financial and mental health support and offering a wide range of solutions. For example, the provision of transport, to enable apprentices to succeed in their roles.

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