

Oxford Energy Academy Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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 ESFA 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 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Oxford Energy Academy Limited (OEA) is based in Witney and it started offering apprenticeships as a prime provider in late 2017. They provide framework apprenticeships in plumbing and heating and electrical installation at levels 2 and 3. Just under 40 apprentices are currently on programme, with the large majority studying plumbing and heating. OEA also works with two local general further education colleges as a subcontractor, although these apprentices were not in scope for this monitoring visit.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a well-planned vision for their company. They use their detailed professional knowledge to inform their apprenticeship offer. Leaders understand well the needs of employers and make sure that their apprenticeships satisfy these fully. They have a clear strategy for moving to new standards apprenticeships in the future. Leaders check carefully that apprentices are satisfying apprenticeship requirements.

Leaders know their employers well. They act rapidly and decisively if they have concerns about the quality of employers. Employers value the clear and frequent communication with staff members. Although most employers understand the progress their apprentices make, staff at OEA do not formally involve employers in review meetings.

Leaders have developed an effective system of governance. Governors receive clear and detailed reports on topics such as safeguarding and apprentices' progress. This enables them to hold directors to account effectively.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of their company well. They plan successfully for improvement. However, they do not set measurable targets in their action plan. As a result, they are not always clear when, and how well, they have achieved their actions. Leaders acknowledge the need to individualise their

apprenticeship programmes more to consider in greater detail apprentices' starting points and prior knowledge.

Leaders observe teachers frequently to check their effectiveness in the classroom. They provide teachers with detailed and useful feedback from lesson observations. However, they do not revisit the small numbers of identified weaknesses in subsequent observations in order to check that teachers have quickly improved. Although teachers receive useful training to help them improve their professional knowledge, they receive too little development on how to further improve their classroom skills.

Leaders and managers discuss apprentices' progress in detail during monthly meetings. They act quickly to support those at risk. Almost all apprentices are making good progress. Retention of current apprentices is very high.

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

Apprentices benefit from well-planned and motivational lessons that are taught by skilled staff. They develop new knowledge and skills which enable them quickly to become proficient and valued employees. Apprentices understand fully the requirements of their apprenticeships. They benefit from the useful induction and the guidance that they receive throughout their apprenticeship. They record their off-the-job training in detail.

Teachers use their high levels of industry expertise to enthuse apprentices. They plan individual lessons and the curriculum very carefully to ensure that apprentices quickly develop high levels of practical and theoretical knowledge. Teachers provide apprentices with clear and detailed feedback on their practical and written work that enables them to improve their work rapidly. They support the few apprentices who fall behind, successfully and flexibly.

Assessors plan reviews carefully and set useful short-term targets for apprentices. Apprentices know in detail what skills they need to develop and how to achieve their targets. Although a few apprentices are unclear about the progress they are making, all know that they will achieve their apprenticeships by their planned end dates.

Teachers plan carefully to make sure that apprentices develop their mathematics skills. Apprentices become confident about making the calculations they need for their work. Most apprentices pass their information and communications technology and English functional skills examinations at the first attempt.

Teachers make sure that apprentices develop their personal and social skills to a high level. They help apprentices improve their planning and time management skills by encouraging them to take ownership of their assessment visits. Employers benefit

from the improvements in apprentices' confidence, behaviour and attitude to work. They are justifiably extremely positive about the skills that their apprentices develop. A few employers are not fully aware of the topics covered during training, and they are, therefore, unable to develop apprentices' learning in the workplace.

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

Staff at OEA place a high priority on keeping apprentices safe. The well-trained designated safeguarding leads record safeguarding concerns in detail. They refer those who need help with safeguarding concerns to external agencies.

Leaders make sure that staff and governors update their safeguarding training frequently. They understand the local risks for apprentices, which they indicate in a clear and useful 'Prevent' duty action plan. Although leaders make sure that they carry out appropriate security checks on new staff, they do not routinely request references when they appoint new staff.

Apprentices feel safe and know who to contact if they have concerns. Although staff check their knowledge of safeguarding in reviews, too few apprentices know how to recognise early signs of radicalisation. Leaders make sure that appropriate filters are in place to keep learners safe when using computers. They recognise the need to improve apprentices' knowledge of how to stay safe online.

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