

DA Training and Consultancy Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Montserrat Pérez-Parent, Her Majesty's Inspector

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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 '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.

DA Training and Consultancy Limited (DATC) is a family-owned training provider based in Botley, near Southampton. DATC first began training apprentices as a subcontractor to local colleges and, in 2019, extended their offer to directly funded apprenticeships.

At the time of the visit, there are 23 apprentices studying standards-based apprenticeships at level 3. Most apprentices are studying event assistant, junior content producer or business administration apprenticeships. The remainder are studying housing and property management or customer service apprenticeships. In 2020, DATC expanded its offer to include apprenticeships in the outdoor education and activity sector under the 'DA Outdoors' branding. There are four apprentices studying outdoor activity instructor apprenticeships.

Apprentices work for 16 different employers in the south of England. At the time of the visit, training is generally remote through live videoconferencing software. Apprentices studying the outdoor activity instructor apprenticeship have returned to face-to-face lessons. 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?

Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers at DATC rightly pride themselves in being responsive to the training needs of their customers. Employers value the detailed and frequent communication from staff at DATC. On the few occasions that employers or apprentices have felt the need to raise issues with DATC, leaders and managers have resolved them swiftly and successfully.

Leaders and managers recruit apprentices conscientiously. Managers carefully identify candidates' prior experience and work with employers to ensure that apprentices' job roles are right for the apprenticeships they want to take. Managers reject candidates when they identify that they would not be learning substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours through an apprenticeship.

Managers acknowledge that they do not use the information they collect about apprentices' starting points and their different job roles to effectively inform the content or the order of the training for apprentices. This is particularly the case in programmes where apprentices attend taught sessions in cohort groups, such as junior content producer and housing and property management. All apprentices learn the same content and in the same order. As a result, there is often little connection between the taught sessions and the training that apprentices receive at work.

Leaders, managers and members of the newly established governing board have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of training that apprentices receive. Managers have recently started to implement robust action plans to tackle areas that need improvement. For example, managers hold one-to-one coaching sessions with assessors to support them in improving their teaching skills. It is too early to judge the impact of these actions.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Most apprentices develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours that help them be more effective employees. Apprentices value their apprenticeships as a good way to learn the skills that they need for their jobs, which are new to many. For example, those studying junior content producer apprenticeships learn about the importance of brand awareness for their companies.

Apprentices gain in confidence throughout their apprenticeships. They improve how they relate to both customers and other members of their teams. Employers justifiably value the new skills and knowledge that apprentices gain through their apprenticeships. Many ensure that apprentices receive extra responsibilities and increased salaries as a result of their learning.

Assessors plan taught lessons carefully. They order topics sensibly so that apprentices gradually improve their knowledge and skills. For example, apprentices studying housing and property management initially find out about job roles and, when they are clear about these, learn about how legislation applies to different positions in the company. Most assessors use effective questioning to check apprentices' knowledge of the subjects they are learning.

Staff work closely with the small number of apprentices who need to complete functional skills qualifications. They organise bespoke and useful lessons that help them develop the skills they need to improve their knowledge. Assessors help apprentices develop their English skills as part of their taught sessions and through the useful feedback they provide on apprentices' written work. Apprentices become more effective in their written communication. Staff do not help apprentices develop their mathematical skills further during their apprenticeships.

Most assessors do not reinforce taught lessons with subsequent planned activities for apprentices to complete. As a result, although apprentices complete useful research, shadowing and other activities outside their taught sessions, they struggle to connect these activities with the modules that they study.

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

Staff at DATC support apprentices well. Apprentices can easily contact staff if they have any problems and managers take quick and effective action to resolve them.

Apprentices learn about safeguarding topics and the 'Prevent' duty during induction and through the completion of online learning modules. Assessors discuss topical news stories with apprentices in reviews. However, assessors do not explore these in enough detail to develop apprentices' understanding of these topics. As a result, apprentices struggle to apply the content of this training to their everyday lives and jobs.

Apprentices feel safe in learning and at work. They know who to contact at DATC if they have any safeguarding concerns.

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