

Little Learners Montessori Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2626878
Name of lead inspector:	Michael Worgs, Her Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Employer
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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.

Little Learners Montessori Ltd (LLML) is an employer provider based in Watford. LLML operates four nurseries across North-West London and Watford. It provides the level 3 early years educator standards-based apprenticeship to its employees at the new training centre in Watford. Most apprentices study the level 2 functional skills English and mathematics qualifications. At the time of the visit, 17 apprentices were on programme. There are no apprentices in receipt of high needs funding and the provider has no subcontractors.

Apprentices have continued working and training throughout the pandemic in line with national COVID-19 restrictions. 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?

Insufficient progress

Leaders have not designed an ambitious curriculum that meets the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. For example, they have been slow in developing a secure strategy to support the English and mathematics needs of apprentices. As a result, apprentices' preparation for their English and mathematics assessments have been delayed. Leaders are taking steps to deal with this issue, but it is too early to see any impact.

Governance arrangements are ineffective. Leaders have no external scrutiny to provide oversight or to challenge them on the quality of their apprenticeship programme. Leaders do not have a comprehensive view of the specific strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship programme. They rely solely on the awarding body evaluation report of their level 3 diploma qualification to inform them about the quality of the apprenticeship programme.

Leaders have recruited experienced and well-qualified staff to provide high-quality training. Assessors plan training to meet the needs of the apprentices and the expectations agreed with workplace mentors. For example, assessors changed the content of the curriculum to focus on learning about forest schools, to help apprentices prepare children for this type of learning environment.

Leaders do not ensure that assessors and workplace mentors support apprentices' aspirations to achieve high grades. For example, apprentices' complete mock professional discussions and receive written feedback on their coursework but are not given clarity on how their work relates to the grades in their final assessments. As a result, apprentices do not know what they need to do to improve, or what level of progress they are making.

Leaders do not provide apprentices with a robust careers advice and guidance offer that prepares them effectively for their next steps. Leaders now encourage apprentices to complete a personal and professional development portfolio, but it is too early to see how this may enable apprentices to have a good oversight of their career options.

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

Apprentices develop new knowledge, workplace skills and positive professional behaviours that enhance their performance at work. For example, they develop a secure understanding of effective behaviour management. They apply this understanding in the workplace to promote positive behaviours in children, such as taking turns and sharing their toys. Apprentices learn to become more compassionate and empathetic towards children. They develop effective team working and communication skills. Apprentices learn about different theoretical perspectives of child-development and how this can influence the planning of different child-centred activities. Apprentices understand the Montessori principles and ethos of the employer thoroughly. They know how these principles relates to supporting children in their learning and understanding of their world.

Assessors do not carry out effective reviews to ensure that apprentices are set clear expectations. For example, apprentices do not receive frequent and purposeful reviews that track their development and improvement over time. Assessors set review targets that focus too narrowly on task completion and do not sufficiently promote the development of knowledge and skills. As a result, a few apprentices are making slow progress.

Assessors effectively evaluate apprentices' prior experience and knowledge at the start of the programme. They use this information to plan an individualised

programme for the few apprentices with significant childcare work-experience. As a result, these apprentices make swift progress. Apprentices use existing documentation and participate in professional discussions early in their programme to provide evidence for assessments. Apprentices are motivated to succeed and show high levels of commitment to their studies.

Workplace mentors are supportive of apprentices' positive contribution to the business. For example, apprentices have become more confident in their job roles since starting the apprenticeship. They show a higher level of understanding about children's needs when communicating with parents.

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

Workplace mentors adapt training to include enhanced safeguarding training at the start of the apprenticeship. As a result, apprentices quickly develop their knowledge of safeguarding and healthy eating, specific to young children.

Apprentices carry out safe working practices. They know about preparing food hygienically and safely. They carry out frequent risk assessments and follow ongoing government guidelines on implementing Covid-19 safety arrangements at work.

Leaders do not have a robust strategy in place to record and monitor the safeguarding or welfare concerns of apprentices. Leaders current strategy is designed for the children in their nurseries, not for apprentices. Leaders are taking steps to rectify this issue.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. For example, they are vigilant to any changes in children's behaviour and their use of language. However, apprentices understanding of specific local issues related to the 'Prevent' duty is underdeveloped.

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