

SSG Services (Est 2003) 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.

SSG Training is an independent learning provider based in Bedford. It is part of a larger limited company, SSG Services (est 2003) Ltd. The provider delivers study programmes, traineeships, adult skills and learning programmes through subcontracting arrangements with other organisations. SSG Training joined the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers in 2017 in respect of levy paying employers. At the time of the monitoring visit, they had five apprentices in learning; two were completing framework qualifications and three were working towards standards-based apprenticeships in customer care level 2. SSG Training has centres across Bedfordshire, Bedford and Hertfordshire.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

Directors do not have clear plans that demonstrate how apprentices will develop the new knowledge they need to be successful. Assessors do not involve employers sufficiently well in planning apprentices' training. As a result, employers do not know what skills and knowledge they can help apprentices gain through their job role.

Directors do not monitor apprentices' off-the-job training or other training activities well enough. They do not monitor or review the activities that apprentices record against their off-the-job activities to ensure they are relevant to their apprenticeship. Assessors do not record in sufficient detail the training activities and contact they have with apprentices. As a result, directors cannot monitor what training apprentices receive or whether they are fulfilling off-the-job requirements.

Directors have not ensured that apprentices understand what they need to do to pass their apprenticeship exams. Assessors have outline plans indicating relevant activities to help apprentices prepare for exams. However, these are not put into practice or shared sufficiently well with apprentices. As a result, apprentices do not know how, or when, they will be assessed.

Directors have failed to ensure that staff understand the requirements of apprenticeship programmes. Directors value their staff and support them to gain higher-level qualifications relevant to their job roles, such as teaching qualifications and first aid at work. However, they do not focus enough on how to deliver standards-based apprenticeships effectively. As a result, assessors do not understand how to plan and deliver high-quality training that meets the principles of an apprenticeship.

Directors do not accurately identify what they need to improve within their apprenticeship provision. The observations of teaching, learning and assessment are too focused on teaching rather than learning. Assessors receive overly positive feedback on what they need to do to improve their training skills. Directors cannot demonstrate how findings from observations are used to improve assessors' skills and knowledge.

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

Insufficient progress

Assessors do not plan in sufficient detail what apprentices need to learn. They do not use apprentices' reviews to monitor or record what they have learned. Assessors do not link the knowledge that apprentices gain through the completion of independently researched projects to their job roles.

Workplace supervisors help apprentices to develop the skills and behaviours needed for their work role. However, because employers are not sufficiently involved with the planning of apprentices' training, they do not link these skills and behaviours to the apprenticeship standards. Consequently, apprentices do not relate this learning to the knowledge they need to gain for their programmes.

Directors do not ensure that apprentices who are studying towards English and mathematics qualifications receive effective training. They do not gain the knowledge needed to be successful. Apprentices work independently through past exam papers in these subjects. They do not receive enough advice and guidance on how well prepared they are to take the exams.

Apprentices do not receive independent careers advice to help them achieve their longer-term career plans. Workplace supervisors discuss potential job opportunities with apprentices. Consequently, apprentices only understand what promotion opportunities and new job roles are available to them if they stay with their current employer.

Directors recruit apprentices with integrity. They work closely with employers to match job descriptions to relevant apprenticeship qualifications. They help employers recruit suitable apprentices to available job roles. However, they do

not ensure that employers and apprentices, once on the programme, understand all the requirements of the apprenticeship.

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

Directors have detailed and effective safeguarding processes in place. They are well informed of all safeguarding issues through detailed reports at their frequent meetings. A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) maintains close and regular contact with a well-trained safeguarding team. The DSL has a good overview of all current safeguarding cases and ensures they are managed well.

The DSL has close and relevant links with a range of external agencies. As a result, he is well informed of local concerns, such as county lines and knife crime. He ensures that staff are kept up to date with these issues.

Directors ensure that safer recruitment checks of staff are followed rigorously. Checks on identification, qualifications and suitability to work with young people are carried out prior to engagement. Disclosure and barring checks are renewed every three years. Directors keep these records securely.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to report safeguarding incidents and concerns if needed. They have a detailed knowledge of safeguarding through their job roles. They attend their individual employer's regular training to ensure their knowledge is kept up to date.

Directors and assessors do not do enough to ensure that apprentices understand threats posed by extremism or help them identify how radicalisation and terrorism may affect them in their daily lives.

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