

First Step Education and Training Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2691306
Name of lead inspector:	Cath Jackson, His 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

Ofsted undertakes to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision funded 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.

First Step Education and Training Limited began to deliver apprenticeships in September 2021. At the time of the monitoring visit, 38 apprentices were following the level 4 sports coach standard, with fewer than five on the level 2 community activator coach standard. Nearly all apprentices are aged over 19.

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 clearly expressed rationale for meeting the needs of employers who provide sports-related activities in schools and communities. Leaders' intent for the level 4 sports coaching apprenticeship is to address a regional and national shortage of school sports coaches, with a view to tackling the issue of childhood inactivity and improving children's health and fitness. The programme's aim is to equip apprentices with the knowledge and skills needed to provide coaching activities for children in schools, community settings and holiday clubs.

Leaders and managers have recruited a specialist team of tutor assessors with significant coaching experience in sport. Tutor assessors are qualified and experienced experts in the subjects that they teach, all having degree-level qualifications in sports or dance- and exercise-related disciplines. Leaders ensure that tutor assessors have opportunities to update their expertise through professional development. For example, tutor assessors complete additional training to be able to support their apprentices with specific sports, such as netball coaching.

Employers value the training that their apprentices receive. Employers and leaders work well together to ensure that apprentices receive their entitlement to high-quality on- and off-the-job training that supports apprentices in their development of knowledge, skills and behaviours. As a result, apprentices make rapid progress in their understanding of coaching, session planning, understanding the national curriculum and safeguarding.

A board of directors is in place with responsibility for governance. Directors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and use external scrutiny well to hold leaders and managers to account for improving the quality of the apprenticeships they provide. As a result, leaders have identified areas that they can improve, such as putting a greater emphasis on recruiting apprentices from a more diverse range of backgrounds and improving apprentices' understanding of local risk and how to protect themselves and others.

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

Tutor assessors plan and sequence the curriculum logically. For example, they teach apprentices about curriculum design, session planning, coaching theories, safeguarding principles and the importance of understanding the national curriculum when working in school settings. As a result, apprentices quickly learn how to plan and run coaching sessions independently in settings including school physical education sessions, football clubs and holiday clubs.

Tutor assessors support apprentices well to develop their use of coaching terminology and their communication skills. Apprentices who have additional needs, such as dyslexia, receive support and additional time for assignments. As a result, apprentices gain in confidence, including in producing written work and when communicating with school leaders and parents on issues such as coaching activities, safeguarding and behaviour management.

Apprentices effectively link their new knowledge to the skills that they need in the workplace. They see the importance of behaviour management as a way of improving their coaching practice, and they enjoy trying out new strategies. As a result, apprentices learn to plan sessions effectively in order to support children, including those who have special educational needs, and to implement different strategies to manage children's behaviour.

Apprentices confidently embed inclusivity and promote fundamental British values into their sessions by promoting respect and tolerance throughout their coaching activities with children.

Most apprentices and employers understand what is involved in end-point assessments. Apprentices nearing the end of their programmes feel that their tutor assessors have provided helpful support and preparation.

Apprentices do not receive impartial careers advice and guidance that prepares them for their next steps. While tutor assessors provide informal support and guidance on request, a few apprentices are unaware of further learning opportunities or potential career opportunities other than with their current employers. Leaders and managers rightly recognise that careers guidance is an area for further development.

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

Leaders and managers have appropriate processes for reporting and dealing with safeguarding incidents, and they act on cases in a timely and appropriate manner.

Leaders have appointed a designated safeguarding officer and deputy designated safeguarding officer with suitable training to perform these roles. Leaders and managers have in place appropriate processes to ensure safe recruitment of staff. All teaching staff have disclosure and barring checks and receive comprehensive training in how to safeguard children and young people.

Leaders and managers are taking reasonable steps to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. A comprehensive 'Prevent' duty risk assessment is in place, and managers have established contact with the regional 'Prevent' duty coordinator as a source of information and guidance. Leaders inform their apprentices about the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Apprentices are safe and say that they feel safe. However, they have limited understanding of local risks impacting on the communities where they live and work.

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