

Outstanding WBL

On 11th March 2015 the Prime-Minister announced the introduction of nine new degree level apprenticeship programmes in chartered surveying, electronic systems engineering, aerospace engineering, aerospace software development, defence systems engineering, laboratory science, nuclear; power engineering and public relations.



“Equipping people with the skills they need to get on in life and backing businesses to create jobs are key parts of our long-term economic plan. Degree apprenticeships will give people a great head start, combining a full degree with the real practical skills gained in work and the financial security of a regular pay packet. They will bring the world of business and the world of education closer together, and let us build the high-level technical skills needed for the jobs of the future. I want to see many more businesses and universities begin to offer them.” P.M. David Cameron

The research report **‘Evaluation of the Apprenticeship Trailblazers’** was released by the Department for Business, innovation and Skills on 12th March 2015. The report presents the progress made on the pilot schemes and details issues around the comparability of standards, timings of synoptic assessment, to grade or not to grade, the emergence of a core and options approach and specification of workplace skills. The top three in demand apprenticeships are Business and Administration, IT and telecoms, Retail and Commercial Enterprises whereas Construction and Engineering still have a shortage of applicants. The report notes the increase in the specification of ‘workplace behaviours and skills’.



Inclusion of workplace behaviours and skills

“A point of departure for the Trailblazers from the current apprenticeship frameworks lies in the incorporation of ‘behaviours’ and ‘skills’ specified alongside competence and knowledge. The inclusion of behaviours was not specified by policymakers in the original guidance; rather their inclusion has stemmed directly from employers and Trailblazer networks. While still not a requirement, specifying behaviours is now an option highlighted in the latest guidance”.

What makes grade one?

The following quotations are taken from the Ofsted inspection report for Aspire, Achieve and Advance Limited (AAA) published in November 2014. AAA achieved Ofsted's highest accolade of four Grade one inspection judgements. The quotations illustrate what makes a grade one and reading the full report is recommended..

- The proportion of apprentices who succeed within the planned period is extremely high and well above the national rate.
- Considerable time and effort is taken to match apprentices to suitable jobs and employers. Most apprentices occupy key roles within their work place and become pivotal to their businesses very quickly. Employers are involved effectively in the selection of apprentices and in the choice of relevant programme units. This highly collaborative process often leads to additional apprentices being employed and very high retention and success.
- English and mathematical skills are integrated effectively throughout the apprenticeship programmes. Apprentices who need extra support with functional skills attend bespoke workshops and as a result achieve their qualifications.
- Managers are rigorous in monitoring the performance of different groups and there are no significant differences between them. They have ambitious targets to improve the participation of under-represented groups and have successfully increased the participation of young women into technology apprenticeships. Black, Asian and minority ethnic participation is well above the Skills Funding Agency national average.
- Apprentices demonstrate outstanding professional attitudes. They wear business dress in academy sessions and display excellent standards of respect and behaviour.
- Trainers and assessors skilfully use a multitude of engaging activities to generate pertinent discussion, develop effective practical skills and deepen apprentices' understanding. In most lessons trainers use technology very effectively.
- Trainers and assessors use feedback very effectively so that apprentices understand clearly how to improve. In progress reviews, apprentices and assessors negotiate challenging targets for improvement and development which leads to excellent progress and completion within the planned timescale.
- Trainers and assessors have highly relevant industry experience and make constant links between theory and the workplace so that apprentices understand how to use their skills and knowledge more effectively.
- All staff offer extremely high levels of personal, pastoral and professional support to apprentices and employers. Assessors make very frequent visits to apprentices' workplaces, exceeding contractual obligations.
- Staff communicate exceptionally well with employers. Employers are fully informed of what apprentices are learning and use this information well to provide excellent opportunities for them to practice and consolidate skills in the workplace.
- Trainers and assessors expertly explore equality and diversity issues with apprentices to develop their understanding of how these affect them in modern Britain.
- Classrooms are bright and well-equipped. Motivational and informative posters are ubiquitous and promote a range of thought-provoking issues...

Ofsted grade one judgements

Consider the seven key criteria for teaching, learning and assessment as listed below, reflect on your own provision and decide how far your provision matches the examples of WBL outstanding practice.

No.	Ofsted criteria	Outstanding WBL judgements
		✓ High match ? Near match X Low match
1	Learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff	Managers, tutors and apprentice masters have high expectations of apprentices. Tutors encourage apprentices to work independently, challenge themselves and improve their self-reliance, which encourages them to recognise their potential early in training. Lessons are characterised by high levels of challenge and enjoyment
2	Staff use their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet each learner's needs	In the well-planned and very effective training sessions learners benefit from a wide range of stimulating activities that engage their interest, motivate them, developing their confidence and skills and enabling them to learn and make progress
3	Staff initially assess learners' starting points and monitor their progress, set challenging tasks, and build on and extend learning for all learners	Apprentices complete appropriate initial skills assessment tests and the outcomes are used effectively to plan learning. These results confirm apprentices' starting points and their support needs in college and the workplace.
4	Learners understand how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff following assessment of their learning	Assessment is well-planned, constructive and thorough. Feedback is accurate and allows individuals to reflect on where they need to improve performance.... Learners receive motivating and very constructive feedback from assessors that clearly highlights how they can improve their work
5	Teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims	Apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills significantly during training in functional skills and at work. All apprentices recognise that their skills in English and mathematics have improved.
6	Appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance supports learning effectively	Learners benefit from the extremely knowledgeable assessors who are very up-to-date in their subject area. They make use of their extensive vocational knowledge and experience to support learners through their programme and provide relevant advice about future career and training opportunities.
7	Equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning.	Staff are confident in their approach to equality and diversity topics and skilfully embed them into learning through induction, use of good resources and through other opportunities in the training programme.

One of the best sources of examples of Ofsted recommended good practice for WBL is the report ***Apprenticeships for Young People*** published in April 2012. This report was based upon outstanding practice observed across 15 WBL providers.

Vocational good practice

CAVTL key characteristics

Ofsted has endorsed the following key characteristics of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) for good practice in vocational education.

- 1. A clear line of sight to work on all vocational programmes;*
- 2. 'dual professional' teachers and trainers who combine occupational and pedagogical expertise, and are trusted and given the time to develop partnerships and curricula with employers;*
- 3. access to industry-standard facilities and resources reflecting the ways in which technology is transforming work;*
- 4. clear escalators to higher level vocational learning, developing and combining deep knowledge and skills.*

Provision that demonstrates these characteristics stands a good chance of being vocational and effective. But if these characteristics are missing or weak, then, in the Commission's view it will not be vocational, and is unlikely to be good.

A **clear line of sight to work** is critical because vocational learners must be able to see why they are learning what they are learning, understand what the development of occupational expertise is all about, and experience the job in its context.

OFSTED good practice

In January 2014 Ofsted released ten 'good practice' examples of the CAVTL characteristics in action across a variety of providers and across different vocational areas as follows:

- Barking and Dagenham College (Employability skills)
- Barking and Dagenham College (Motorsport)
- Bridgwater College (Land-based)
- Exeter College (Hospitality and Catering)
- Foxes Academy (SLDD)
- Hull College (Creative applications of IT)
- Leeds City College (Theatre and Media)
- Wendy Shorter Interiors (Upholstery)
- People and Business Development Ltd (Childcare)
- University Hospital Southampton (Health & Care)

The reports provide many excellent examples of current good VET practice and all may be accessed at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/20140001