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Mr David Graveney OBE
National Performance Manager
England and Wales Cricket Board Limited
Lords Cricket Ground
St Johns Wood Road
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Dear Mr Graveney

Short inspection of England and Wales Cricket Board Limited

Following the short inspection on 24 and 25 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in November 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) apprentices make very good progress in their practical cricketing skills through excellent coaching and training from highly skilled professionals. Working closely with the county cricket clubs, who employ the apprentices, ECB ensures that the training apprentices receive in their respective county academies enables them to either progress to being a full-time cricketer, or to higher education or employment.

Since the previous inspection, the relationship between the academy directors at county level and the ECB has been further strengthened, towards a shared determination to train world-class cricketers who are able to successfully represent their counties and country. Apprentices highly value the support, encouragement and high-quality training they receive.

Managers, academy directors and assessors have improved the consistency of assessment practice across the county academies so that the evidence the apprentices produce better reflects the sporting excellence standards. However, further improvement is required to ensure that apprentices' written work is of a sufficiently high standard, both to reflect the level of the qualification and to support their progress to further training or higher education.

Safeguarding is effective.

The ECB continues to place a high priority on ensuring the safety and well-being of apprentices, and the good safeguarding measures identified at the previous

inspection continue. Set against the background of apprentices training in county cricket facilities dispersed across the country, academy directors work effectively within the ECB's policies and guidance to ensure that apprentices know how to play and train with due regard to their safety and that of other players.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are clear and understood well by staff. Key processes, such as safer recruitment, are in place and effective. ECB senior managers have incorporated safeguarding procedures into their annual performance review of each county cricket academy to ensure that their statutory duties are fulfilled.

Managers have made a good start in ensuring that assessors have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and they in turn have started to help apprentices develop their understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Managers recognise that there are further opportunities to align this work and that of the promotion of British values with the standards expected of professional sports players.

Inspection findings

- The apprenticeship management team have continued to work effectively to ensure that almost all apprentices achieve their qualifications and develop excellent cricketing skills within the planned timescale. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of apprentices. For example, male and female apprentices achieve at the same high rate.
- Staff at the county academies have a very good understanding of their apprentices and the challenge that being an employed apprentice and being in full-time education bring. Coaches in particular give apprentices very clear and direct feedback on what it is they need to do to improve. As a result of this, apprentices make very good progress with both their apprenticeship and with their academic studies, with many examples identified of apprentices achieving excellent grades in their A levels and progressing to university.
- Staff are very positive role models for apprentices and they inspire them to achieve at the highest level. A high proportion of academy directors, assessors and coaches have been professional cricketers previously, bringing an in-depth knowledge of the world of professional cricket to the learning environment.
- Apprentices' written work is not always of the same high quality as their practical skills. In too many cases, assessors do not give accurate and clear feedback to apprentices on the quality of their work or their English skills. For example, assessors do not comment on or correct poor spelling or presentation, so that the apprentice knows what they need to improve next time.
- Cricket coaches set very clear and precise targets for improvement which are specific to each apprentice and the progress they need to make to develop their cricketing skills further. However, the targets set by assessors for apprentices, especially those that relate to the completion of written work for the more theoretical units of the apprenticeship, are too general

and are not sufficiently specific to the progress each apprentice needs to make.

- Apprentices develop very good skills for work. They attend their coaching and training sessions punctually and often. They pay very good attention to their safety in such situations as batting and bowling practice in indoor cricket nets. They know what protective equipment or clothing they should be using and they wear it without prompting from staff.
- The facilities available to the apprentices at the county academies and at the ECB training facilities in Leicestershire are of a very high standard. Apprentices have access to indoor and outdoor training facilities, performance analysis software and sports psychologists, which they use well to help improve their performance.
- Apprentices receive good training to support their development and welfare either into careers as professional cricketers or into higher education. The quality and content of these sessions are not always fully effective in supporting this progression for a small minority of apprentices.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe from potential extremism and radicalisation. Through initial training in the topic, they understand how the principles of playing sport at a professional level align with British values.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and managers should ensure that:

- the quality of apprentices' written work continues to improve to reflect the high standards achieved in their practical cricketing skills and the level of the qualification
- the targets that assessors set for apprentices, especially for their written work, are specific and relate to the individual areas for improvement that an apprentice needs to make
- assessors help apprentices to develop their English and mathematics further by providing them with written and oral feedback which clearly identifies how they can improve these skills
- they regularly review the content and effectiveness of the personal development and welfare sessions to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the apprentices as they progress to careers as professional cricketers or to their next step in education.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Pemble
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors were assisted by the apprenticeship project officer, as nominee. We met with apprentices, assessors, academy directors, coaches and senior managers. Inspectors observed coaching sessions and reviewed apprentices' assessments and written work. We reviewed key policies and documents, including those relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We also considered the views of apprentices.