

BPP Holdings Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

26–29 September 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for learners	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governance is strong. The executive board has a very good understanding of the programmes and the skills and knowledge to challenge senior leaders and managers to improve provision.
- Senior leaders and managers make sure that employers are fully involved throughout apprenticeship programmes, and they make sure that apprenticeship standards meet professional job roles.
- Employers support their apprentices very well.
- Tutors, assessors and skills coaches use their professional knowledge well to make topics easily understandable to apprentices.
- Apprentices are proud of their contribution to the workplace; they can clearly say what they have learned, why they have learned it and how it will help them in the future.
- Apprentices value their programmes in helping them to improve their confidence, to manage work relationships and develop appropriate work behaviours.
- Achievement rates have improved significantly in the current year and almost all current apprentices make at least the progress expected of them.
- In a small minority of cases, the checking of learning is superficial and feedback does not help apprentices improve their work.
- On a few occasions target-setting focuses on task completion rather than helping apprentices improve their wider skills.
- Not all apprentices are confident about or have sufficient awareness about the threats from radicalisation and/or extremism.

Full report

Information about the provider

- BPP Holdings Limited (BPP), through its professional apprenticeship scheme, provides work-based learning and apprenticeships in the financial services and law sectors. These allow apprentices to gain the qualifications and experiences they need to become business professionals. BPP works with many high-profile organisations and companies in cities across the country. The company currently has around 1,500 apprentices on programmes at levels two and three and on higher apprenticeships. Many are on programmes aligned to apprenticeship standards in conjunction with major employers.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Tutors, assessors and skills coaches should provide effective and constructive feedback and targets that encourage apprentices to work to high standards and reach their potential through the development of skills and personal attributes.
- Leaders and managers need to make sure that teaching staff are more confident to better support apprentices in their understanding and appreciation of extremism and radicalisation.
- Leaders and managers should continue to concentrate on increasing the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications, particularly within the planned timescales.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of their business. They have a clear vision to be the leading provider of apprenticeships within their specialist professional areas. They have quickly responded to the expectations of apprenticeship standards. They work with employers to make sure that these qualifications meet the needs of their businesses and job roles, and the career pathways of apprentices.
- Leaders and managers understand well the importance of monitoring the quality of training that apprentices and trainees receive. They have well-devised arrangements in place to make sure that programmes are academically demanding. Learners are working at least to the expectations of their qualifications, and many beyond that.
- Leaders and managers know their provision well. They have produced an effective quality improvement plan to deal with key areas for improvement. Managers report to the executive committee on apprentices' progress monthly. Last year, leaders and managers identified a drop in achievement rates and put successful actions in place to make sure that more apprentices make better progress and achieve their qualifications.
- Teaching staff value the peer observation process, which is supportive, structured and helps them to produce better sessions for their learners. They receive and act on good oral feedback, and suggestions and ideas from their colleagues on how to improve sessions. However, teaching staff do not routinely record these observations and so managers are unable to set clear improvement targets for all tutors.
- Leaders and managers have made sure that the vast majority of employers are involved well throughout the apprenticeship and traineeship programmes. Large employers contribute to programme development effectively. Apprenticeship programmes designed for large employers fit job roles very well. Leaders and managers support employers to identify the key values and behaviours that they expect from their apprentices and build these into programmes of study.
- Leaders and managers have supported staff well through regular training and updates to help them understand British values and equality and diversity. Staff make sure that learners understand the professional values and ethics relevant to their qualifications, their workplaces and life in modern Britain. Tutors, assessors and skills coaches have the relevant professional background to help apprentices and trainees understand the ethos and expectations of their employers.
- Leaders and managers are working very effectively to provide targeted traineeships with a large employer. This widens participation for learners who are from disadvantaged backgrounds, for example care leavers.
- Leaders and managers have good systems in place to give staff feedback on their performance and support them to improve. Skills coaches have weekly meetings with their line managers to discuss the progress of their apprentices. Managers give good support to staff who need to improve their performance. However, not enough staff have contributed to the appraisal process with their managers. As a result, a small minority of tutors, assessors and skills coaches do not have effective support to help them improve further.

- Leaders and managers have effective processes to deal with staff who do not improve quickly enough. Staff benefit from an exceptional talent identification programme to recognise future managers. Leaders have put in place a comprehensive training programme, with projects and mentors, to advance talented individuals in the organisation.
- Leaders and managers have arrangements in place to identify learners who progress after their apprenticeship is completed. The latest leavers' survey shows that almost all responded, with over half going onto a higher-level course. Almost all former apprentices are still in employment.
- Apprentices' understanding of how to recognise and keep safe from radicalising or extremist behaviour is often superficial. Staff do promote these topics well during the induction process. However, assessors and skills coaches do not revisit these subjects often enough to make sure that apprentices improve and develop their understanding of possible threats.
- Assessors support apprentices well to improve their skills throughout the apprenticeship. However, they do not always make sure that the development of both English and mathematics skills is prominent throughout the programme. Managers acknowledge that a clear strategy would benefit all apprentices and trainees, including those who have already achieved high grades in English and mathematics.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is strong. The executive board demonstrates a very good understanding of the apprenticeship programmes. They have the knowledge and skills to challenge senior leaders and managers to improve provision. They recognised that in previous years the numbers of apprentices achieving their programmes had declined and successfully took action to make sure that more apprentices complete and achieve their programmes.
- A steering committee meets frequently to provide operational challenge to managers. This focuses on the further development of apprenticeship standards. All senior leaders and managers have a key performance indicator relating to the achievements of learners. Committee members monitor performance against targets very well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive and benefit from appropriate training and regularly update their knowledge. Managers check regularly that apprentices understand how to keep themselves safe, are safe, and know whom to report any concerns to in their workplace.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. Effective safe recruitment checks ensure that all staff are carefully vetted for their suitability to work with vulnerable adults and apprentices under the age of 18.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Tutors use their professional knowledge and expertise particularly well to make topics, such as accounting terms and formulas, easily understandable for apprentices. Tutors,

assessors and skills coaches are professionally qualified, hold teaching qualifications and have worked in senior positions in relevant sectors of law, business and financial services. Apprentices value the personal and sector-specific examples that tutors use to explain processes such as case law research.

- Tutors make exceptionally good use of interactive technologies during webinars and classroom sessions, for example highlighting key points on a multimedia projector to explain financial concepts or using different colours during online sessions to explain accounting calculations and formulas. Many apprentices can choose between attending face-to-face sessions and online learning, depending on their preferred learning style.
- Apprentices make very good use of the wide-ranging, high-quality online resources to study and learn. Online teaching sessions are easy to access and allow groups of apprentices to participate in well-structured lessons from a variety of locations. Apprentices make effective use of chat-room facilities and questions posed by the tutors to make sure they understand topics. Recordings are available to those who miss a lesson or need to revise. Occasional technical problems cause frustration for apprentices.
- Tutors', assessors' and skills coaches' knowledge of the new apprenticeship standards is very good. The large majority of apprentices receive good advice and guidance to help them progress and develop personal and professional skills. Apprentices on standards make good use of workplace activities to complete practice modules. In reviews before end-point assessments, skills coaches carefully check apprentices' ability to reflect on their own performance and skills development.
- Employers support their apprentices very well. They take part in reviews of progress and make sure apprentices have sufficient time to study, attend courses and examinations. Several employers have helped to design suitable practice modules for the new paralegal standards. Many allocate a workplace buddy or mentor to help apprentices make good progress and develop their skills effectively.
- The large majority of apprentices receive constructive detailed written feedback from their assessors on written work and assignments. Tutors make sure that learners know what they need to improve to gain high grades in examinations and final assessments.
- Assessors and coaches work closely with apprentices, giving them the support and encouragement they need to make good progress. The majority of apprentices receive frequent and well-structured reviews that often include very effective professional discussions. Apprentices who make slower than expected progress or who are at risk of not completing their courses receive additional reviews and support. However, targets set during reviews for a small minority of apprentices focus on tasks that need to be completed and do not focus on the workplace and personal skills that apprentices need to develop.
- Tutors do not use a sufficiently wide range of strategies to check apprentices' understanding during a small minority of training sessions. The most able apprentices often complete tasks quickly and are not encouraged by tutors to extend their knowledge and skills, especially during online sessions. A few tutors do not take sufficient account of apprentices' starting points and workplace experiences to expand their knowledge and enrich their learning.
- A significant minority of business administration apprentices become frustrated by the distance learning approach used on the programme. Communication between assessors,

apprentices and their line managers is sometime poor. Assessors do not always ensure that business administration apprentices understand how to apply the generic business principles to their job roles.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices and trainees are motivated to learn and take great pride in their work and achievements. They attend their learning sessions well and contribute to effective online lessons with their tutors and peers. Almost all apprentices are highly satisfied and enjoy their learning activities. They value the progress they make in achieving their qualifications and gaining valuable skills that help them in their careers.
- Apprentices benefit from an inclusive and comprehensive recruitment and selection process. They are matched well to their prospective job roles. Staff work effectively with the large majority of employers. They make sure that apprentices are able to gain the behaviours and skills to achieve the recently introduced apprenticeship standards across a wide range of professional and financial sectors.
- Because of the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment and support from their employers and skills coaches at BPP, apprentices quickly gain confidence. They develop further their specialist skills in the financial and business professional workplaces. Almost all produce very good standards of work and are well prepared for their final assessments. A good proportion of apprentices gain promotions and take on extra responsibilities during their apprenticeship, often by moving into supervisory or management roles.
- Employers speak highly of apprentices and the value they bring to their workplace. Many apprentices become apprenticeship champions and mentors to new recruits. Apprentices deal confidently with their peers and clients as part of their job role. Work colleagues hold apprentices in high regard.
- Apprentices receive good advice and guidance that helps them make informed decisions about their prospective work and study options. Almost all apprentices remain in sustained employment when they finish their programme. Most trainees gain apprenticeships after they finish their short and intensive traineeship programme. Apprentices benefit from good advice and guidance on their next steps and almost half progress to a higher-level professional qualification within their chosen profession or in a similar job role.
- Apprentices are punctual and attend well. They demonstrate positive behaviours and attitudes, with good levels of mutual respect. They work effectively with their peers and are aware of the expectations of their programmes and their employers. Assessors and employers make sure that apprentices identify with the positive behaviours expected in the apprenticeship standards. Participation by apprentices in online learning sessions is very good. They demonstrate good communication skills in online chat rooms and support each other well through electronic media.
- Apprentices adopt safe working practices, they feel safe and know whom to contact should they have any concerns. Apprentices' understanding of how to stay safe in work and when online is good.
- Too few apprentices are confident to recognise the threats from radicalisation and/or

extremist groups. However, most apprentices demonstrate an appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe while working in diverse organisations and easily adopt the expected working practices.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Apprentices and trainees make good progress from their starting points and achieve well. The large majority of apprentices complete their programme. The majority of apprentices now complete within their planned timescales.
- The very large majority of apprentices currently on programme make the progress expected of them. Most are on target to achieve in their expected timeframes. However, the numbers of higher apprentices who achieve their qualifications in their planned timescale requires improvement.
- Trainees achieve very well. Almost all complete their traineeship and the very large majority gain an apprenticeship with a prestigious international organisation. The very few who do not gain an apprenticeship are supported well to find alternative employment or to take up further training.
- Apprentices produce work of a high standard as expected by their employers. They behave professionally in financial, banking and legal settings. For example, they are able to produce financial reports to a good standard and contribute effectively to meetings and presentations in a legal environment.
- The large majority of the small number of apprentices and trainees who require English and mathematics qualifications achieve these well. The majority of apprentices pass their English qualifications at the first attempt. Tutors, assessors and skills coaches promote the use of English and mathematics well with apprentices and trainees.
- Almost all apprentices continue working for their employer when they finish their apprenticeship. Around half the apprentices completing an advanced apprenticeship progress to a higher-level qualification. Many gain promotions at work. For example, many former apprentices have taken up jobs in investment banking and accountancy and become apprenticeship champions or mentors in their organisation.
- Managers monitor data and information about different groups of learners well. They are aware of the small achievement gap between female and males apprentices and have effective actions in place to monitor the performance of all apprentices.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50795
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1600
Principal/CEO	Professor Tim Stewart
Telephone number	020 8740 2211
Website	www.bpp.com

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	93	69	260	357	237	427		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	14		-		14			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	N/A							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	N/A							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the associate dean of academic affairs (partnerships), as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Steve Hunsley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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