

BPP Professional Education Limited

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Steve Lambert, Her 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

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 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 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

BPP Professional Education Limited (BPP) forms part of the BPP group of companies, which is involved in a broad cross section of education and training activities in the UK and abroad. BPP's mission is to provide programmes that help employers develop the talents and skills they need, today and in the future.

The provision, in scope for this inspection, included apprentices on apprenticeship standards from level 2 to level 5 in a range of professional vocational areas including accountancy and financial services. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were around 1,750 apprentices.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Executive directors, leaders and managers at BPP share a vision and ambition to provide high-quality apprenticeship training for the accounting and financial services sector. They work closely with employers to implement apprenticeship programmes that support young people in gaining the skills they need to work in this sector. Leaders and managers support employers in the careful recruitment of individuals for the apprenticeship programme. Consequently, the proportion of apprentices who remain on their programme is high.

BPP has seen a significant increase in the number of apprentices starting programmes. As a result, directors have successfully ensured that they maintain the capacity to support apprentices by increasing the number of managers and coaches they employ. Leaders and managers recruit coaches from the accounting and financial services sector, who all have considerable experience, which benefits apprentices.

The apprenticeship programme meets the requirements for off-the-job training. Apprentices take part in a variety of good learning activities, such as webinars, group

sessions and one-to-one coaching. Apprentices produce evidence of their off-the-job training, which coaches frequently review with them. Coaches ensure that apprentices' learning is relevant to the industry, and provides a record of their continuing professional development.

Leaders and managers have sufficient oversight of the progress that apprentices make towards achieving their apprenticeship, including at their subcontractors. They ensure that apprentices complete their programmes in the planned timescale. They use their apprenticeship management and steering groups to monitor closely the progress that apprentices make towards achieving their apprenticeship. They hold staff to account effectively for this. The majority of apprentices make good progress.

Leaders and managers have established a process for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, in their observations they pay too little attention to evaluating the impact of teaching on what apprentices learn. Consequently, they do not support tutors well enough to make further improvements in their teaching.

Leaders and managers have put arrangements in place to support the few apprentices who need to achieve functional skills English or mathematics qualifications. Apprentices access a range of support, including dedicated English and mathematics coaches and online resources. However, the proportion of apprentices who achieve functional skills qualifications is too low.

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

Apprentices are highly motivated and enjoy their apprenticeships. For many apprentices, this is their first job. They rapidly develop new skills, knowledge and behaviours relevant to their job roles. For example, apprentices improve their analytical skills, such as exploring financial balances and identifying what a prospective buyer of a company may question. Apprentices describe how their confidence improves when they make presentations which include a range of different media.

Apprentices have frequent contact with their coaches, through effective progress reviews and assessments. Coaches ensure that if apprentices fall behind or miss sessions, they are able to use the online resources to catch up. As a result, the majority of apprentices make their expected progress.

Coaches are well qualified and experienced in the specialist subject areas they teach. They use this knowledge skilfully to extend apprentices' learning beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship.

Coaches provide apprentices with helpful feedback and advice on how to improve their work, including how to demonstrate their competence in the behaviours they develop at work. Coaches check apprentices' progress carefully, including whether

they receive their off-the-job training. They set apprentices clear and helpful targets regarding their next steps.

Apprentices' managers routinely take part in, and make valuable contributions to, progress reviews. They give feedback on apprentices' performance at work. Apprentices' managers have good access to work which apprentices have submitted as part of their programme. This enables managers to link learning at work with the requirements of the apprenticeship and provide good support to apprentices to gain the skills they need to achieve.

Apprentices do not always know what they need to do to achieve high grades, and a few do not see the value in achieving these. As a result, to date a relatively low proportion of apprentices have achieved high grades in their externally assessed examinations.

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

Directors and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Managers and coaches establish a strong culture of safeguarding, and apprentices understand well how to keep themselves safe. Apprentices receive appropriate safeguarding training at induction, during discussions at progress reviews, and through compulsory online courses.

The designated safeguarding leads all receive appropriate training. The main designated safeguarding lead is responsible for monitoring and reporting any disclosures, of which there are few. The main designated safeguarding lead records all incidents on a central register, which executive directors review frequently. This register provides sufficient detail to enable leaders and managers to monitor trends, and to take the appropriate preventative steps. Leaders and managers follow up on all incidents identified on the register. Directors and all staff attend frequent safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.

The designated safeguarding lead has established safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty champions in each of the provider's centres around the country. These champions have effective links with local safeguarding groups. As a result, if there were a safeguarding incident in another part of the country, it is clear what measures managers and staff would take.

Managers support coaches well to integrate safeguarding, British values and the threats associated with radicalisation and extremism into their discussions with apprentices at progress reviews. However, in a few cases the quality of how well they deliver this is too variable, and sometimes superficial. As a result, apprentices cannot always relate how the risks of radicalisation and extremism and British values relate to their work context.

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