

BIOR Business School Limited

Monitoring visit report

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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 ESFA 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 themes set out below.

BIOR Business School Limited started to deliver recruitment-related apprenticeships in 2016 as a subcontractor to two providers. In March 2017, the company received public funding to deliver training in its own right. BIOR Business School Limited currently provides training for 166 levy-funded apprentices, of which over half are over 25 years of age. Three quarters study apprenticeships at level 3, and the rest at levels 2 and 5. Almost all apprentices are on standards-based apprenticeships and over one third enrol on a level 3 apprenticeship in HR support. The remaining apprentices are on apprenticeships in administration, business management and media and communication. The company works with 127 employers across England.

Themes

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

Insufficient progress

The BIOR Business School Limited strategy to provide high-quality and high-impact provision has not been realised. The significant turnover of staff, including managers and tutors, has meant that, until recently, leaders and managers have not begun to identify or address the weaknesses in the apprenticeship provision. Recently appointed managers have put in place a comprehensive range of actions to bring about improvements, but at the time of the monitoring visit it was too soon to judge the impact.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that they meet all the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship. Most apprentices do not receive enough off-the-job training. Leaders and managers have not ensured that all employers commit to ensuring that their employees have enough time to take part in high-quality training and development. The plans that leaders have put in place to stop working with employers, who do not commit to supporting apprentices, have been too slow. Leaders do not apply these plans consistently across all employers.

Leaders and managers have only recently put in place rigorous arrangements to ensure that they place apprentices on the most appropriate apprenticeship. These actions have not been quick enough to stop one third of apprentices from leaving their course early without achieving their qualification. Two thirds of apprentices who left their course early were over 25 years of age and one third were on level 3 apprenticeships in HR support. It is too soon to assess the impact of the new arrangements for initial information, advice and guidance.

Data management is poor. Leaders and managers do not receive accurate or timely reports about the progress that apprentices make. They are unable to identify which of the actions from their quality improvement plan are having the greatest impact on identified weaknesses.

Governance arrangements are not yet effective because they are too new. Membership of the governing board includes a broad range of stakeholders including an independent governor from a training provider, and apprentice and employer representatives. Clear terms of reference are in place which include challenge of senior leaders. It is too early to judge how effectively governors challenge leaders and managers, or whether this leads to improvements in the quality of apprenticeship programmes.

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

Too many apprentices do not develop substantial new skills, knowledge and behaviours. Leaders and managers have not put in place effective actions to ensure that they employ high-calibre tutors. Too many apprentices have had multiple tutors or experienced significant delays in getting replacement tutors.

Many apprentices have been in their job roles for a considerable number of years. The apprenticeship is accrediting what they already know or can do. Most apprentices are making slow progress. One quarter have gone past their planned timeframe or have taken a break from their apprenticeship.

The quality of teaching and learning that apprentices experience is not of a high enough standard. Tutors do not use the information they collect about apprentices' skills, knowledge and behaviours effectively to plan learning that challenges apprentices to reach their potential. Leaders and managers have only recently implemented systems to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have yet to identify support and development needs for all tutors.

Managers do not ensure that apprentices experience well-planned on- and off-the-job training. Employers are not routinely involved in planning apprentices' training and too many of them are not clear enough about the requirements of an

apprenticeship. Tutors do not tailor apprentices' off-the-job training plans to reflect their distinct workplace and job roles. Consequently, most apprentices make slow progress.

The actions that leaders and managers have put in place to develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills have been too slow. Tutors do not routinely develop apprentices' English and mathematical skills or set them specific targets to improve any weaknesses. A significant minority of apprentices do not have regular support from the English and mathematics functional skills tutor. As a result, the proportion of apprentices who pass their English and mathematics examinations at the first attempt is too low.

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

Leaders and managers take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of apprentices. A suitable safeguarding policy and 'Prevent' duty action plan are in place. Staff follow safeguarding procedures when reporting concerns. The designated safeguarding officer and deputy, who are appropriately qualified, deal with safeguarding incidents swiftly and effectively. They have in place external partnerships and links to agencies across the regions in which apprentices are located. Leaders and managers have established safer recruitment procedures. The checks they carry out on staff are appropriate to ensure that they are suitable to work with apprentices.

Online safety training that tutors deliver to apprentices is thorough. Apprentices have a good understanding of how to remain safe online. Staff follow robust health and safety policies and practices. For example, they carry out rigorous workplace risk assessments with apprentices at the start of their programme. Apprentices put into practice what they have learned throughout their programme. Consequently, they feel safe in and outside of their workplace.

The safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training that apprentices receive gives them a basic understanding of topics such as radicalisation and extremism. Tutors do not extend or reinforce apprentices' knowledge sufficiently so that they gain a deeper understanding of these topics.

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