

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: England and Wales Cricket Board
Limited
Date of visit: 12 August 2009

Context

The England and Wales Cricket Board Limited (ECB) is the national governing body for first class cricket clubs in England and Wales. Each club has an academy programme, which is licensed by the ECB. The academy programmes started in 2001 and in December 2006 the advanced apprenticeship in sporting excellence (AASE) was introduced. The work of the programme at the ECB is overseen by the national performance manager and managed by the apprenticeship coordinator. Some programme management is subcontracted. Work in the academies is supported by the AASE contract funded by Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council. Currently, 69 learners are attending the programme at 17 clubs.

The head office of the ECB is based at Lords cricket ground in London. Each cricket club operates its own academy headed by a director and a team of highly experienced coaches. The ECB provide specialist support to academy players, for instance in science, medicine and lifestyle. Assessment, internal verification and reviews are conducted at the academies by the subcontractor and assessors appointed by the academies. Almost all learners are in full-time education and typically attend coaching and personal development sessions during evenings and weekends. Learners do not have to undertake the technical certificate of the AASE framework if they study, or have previously acquired, specific equivalent academic and vocational qualifications on an exemption list.

The previous inspection judged all aspects of the provision to be satisfactory with the exception of capacity to improve which was judged to be good, grade 2.

Achievement and standards

What progress has been made in achievement and standards since the previous inspection?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

At the previous inspection achievement and standards were satisfactory overall. The AASE programme had recently started and learners were making satisfactory progress. The development of physical and cricket skills was identified as a key strength and this remains the case. Since then, the number of learners achieving the

apprenticeship has significantly increased. For example, during 2007/08 only 23% had achieved it, compared with the validated figure up to end of June for the 2008/09 cohort of 68%. The provider's up-to-date data show further increases in success rates which are now above the national average for the AASE. Current timely success rates are double those in 2007/08 and, validated to the end of June, are nearly 50%. However, there are still some regions with low success rates. The provider's own data show that learners' retention rates have improved from 79% at the time of the previous inspection to 100% currently. Learners' attendance at training sessions and academy workshops remains high.

Since the previous inspection the ECB has introduced an effective system to monitor and manage learners' progress. This system is regularly updated and allows staff and learners to see how much progress they have made within each framework component.

Quality of provision

How well are learners involved in the development of their portfolios? How effectively do staff manage this involvement to improve learning?	Significant progress
--	----------------------

The previous inspection identified insufficient learner involvement in portfolio development as an area for improvement. The ECB has made significant progress in resolving this. Staff now give learners more responsibility and ownership of their portfolio development. In particular, they support and encourage learners to take greater responsibility for the careful monitoring of evidence. Learners now have a good understanding of how evidence matches the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) requirements and they demonstrate improved understanding and involvement in their work. They speak positively about how the NVQ benefits their cricket training and their game. Both learners and coaches can describe clearly how the NVQ improves tactical and technical skills development. The ECB has plans to increase further the involvement of learners in portfolio development through the introduction of e-portfolios.

Managers and the subcontracted provider have given academy staff high levels of support to develop their confidence and understanding of the assessment process, in particular with regard to learner involvement. This has included formal training and regular standardisation activities. The quality of assessors' work is now more consistent and assessment arrangements have improved. Internal verification is an effective and supportive process. The lead internal verifier has developed an effective risk assessment tool to monitor the work of both individuals and cricket club.

How effective are learners' progress reviews?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

At the previous inspection the monitoring and assessment of learners' progress were generally satisfactory, however, some reviews were insufficiently detailed and targets were poor. Reviews included insufficient information about learners' progress and well-being at school or college. These issues have now been resolved.

The learner review document and individual learning plan now monitor learners' progress across their framework effectively. Reviews now include sufficiently detailed targets which assessors set and monitor carefully. They give learners useful comments and supportive feedback and use reviews successfully to reinforce learning. The process is now much more inclusive and effectively links learners' cricket development with the apprenticeship. Learners know the progress they have made and what they still have to achieve.

Managers support assessors well and they now feel confident in undertaking successful reviews. They use the process effectively to check and reinforce aspects of equal opportunities and health and safety. For example, the success of the women's cricket team was used well to discuss gender differences within sport.

Monitoring is effective and the internal verifier observes reviews to identify areas for support and best practice. This now forms part of the internal verification system. Staff use reviews to inform the monitoring system, effectively monitoring progress and identifying any learners at risk.

Leadership and Management

Has the engagement of all academies in the apprenticeship programme improved? How well has this process been managed?	Significant progress
---	----------------------

At the time of the previous inspection the implementation of the apprenticeship programme in some of the county academies was slow. More recently, to resolve this, the ECB board has strongly promoted the AASE framework. The restructured senior management team has worked hard with academy staff both to develop a shared understanding of the programme and to support the quality and consistency of its delivery. The national performance manager and the apprenticeship coordinator regularly visit and work with staff in all of the academies. They have encouraged academy staff to focus on key issues, including improving their involvement with schools and with parents, and developing the delivery of the programme to ensure that learners are at the centre of the learning process. To support these developments, and to share good practice, senior managers have organised a number of national meetings and a regular series is planned. Senior managers have ensured that academy staff have had the opportunity to contribute to the content of the new licensing arrangements which will be in place in the autumn. These arrangements will clearly define the responsibilities of the academies

and the ECB's monitoring arrangements. Senior managers have effectively supported the academies to establish a shared agenda for development.

How effective are quality assurance systems in improving learners' experience?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

At the time of the previous inspection quality assurance arrangements were underdeveloped. These arrangements have improved and are now having a measurable impact on learners' experience. Senior managers have visited each academy and carried out a detailed audit of performance. This information is being used to structure action plans to improve quality and consistency. These will be in place in the autumn. Learner feedback is collected and analysed. Most of the learners' comments are positive; however, where problems are identified, the feedback is not presented in a sufficiently specific way to allow managers to be clear about remedial action. The questions do not align with nationally collected data and the information cannot easily be used to benchmark performance. At the time of the previous inspection the observation of teaching and learning was not sufficiently formalised. A standard form is now being used in all academies for peer observation. Some academy staff have experience of observations and are comfortable with this process. However, some find peer review challenging and sometimes have difficulty in giving constructively critical feedback. Managers have recognised this and more training is planned in the autumn. Senior managers review the feedback from observations and are planning to develop this further as a moderation process. The subcontracted provider has revised and improved the internal verification system and this is now good.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How effective are the self-assessment process and the quality improvement plan in improving quality?	Reasonable progress
--	---------------------

The self-assessment process is generally inclusive and the report is largely accurate. Staff in the academies contribute satisfactorily to the development process, but they are not familiar with the detail of the final report. The overarching quality improvement plan is comprehensive and addresses the key issues identified during the previous inspection, but the progress identified is insufficiently detailed. However, the national performance manager and the apprenticeship coordinator meet regularly and review and record progress in detail on a useful working document. This is a good management tool which effectively monitors impact and progress.