

BPP Holdings

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50795

Name of lead inspector: Charles Clark HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 September 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: BPP Holdings PLC
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Information about the provider

1. BPP Holdings (BPP) is a provider of education and training in the legal and finance industries. It is part of Apollo Global Incorporated which operates in many countries. BPP's head office is based in London and has 23 training centres across the United Kingdom. BPP offers a wide range of training programmes to employers to meet both basic training needs and more advanced continuing professional education up to postgraduate level qualifications. BPP has recently been granted university status.
2. BPP contracts with the Skills Funding Agency. The contract is focused specifically to provide training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in accounting and payroll qualifications. A very small proportion of the total provision is government funded and BPP had 84 funded learners at the time of inspection. None of the learners are employed by BPP. Approximately 36% of learners are men and 21% are from minority ethnic groups.
3. BPP has a national funding manager who is responsible for the government funded apprenticeship programmes. BPP employs over 200 teaching staff on all its courses and has in excess of 40 assessors and 5 internal verifiers.
4. BPP provides training on behalf of many providers including:
 - Kent County Council
 - Levicks Accountants
 - Haines Watts
 - Menzies LLP
 - BT
 - University College London.
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of BPP:
 - None.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	88 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Business, administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of BPP's provision is good. The chief executive and the senior management team provide excellent leadership and have managed a significant restructure very well. Learning is good. BPP works well with employers to provide flexible training to meet the different needs of learners and employers. Learners achieve very good success rates as well as acquiring good work and personal skills. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, although it is insufficiently reinforced during the training programmes.

Main findings

- Achievement rates are good and above national rates. BPP recognised that a low number of learners were achieving their qualification within the allotted time. It took effective action to improve this number to be significantly above national rates.
- Learners develop good work and personal skills. They gain confidence and take on additional responsibilities such as preparing final accounts and VAT returns. Young learners are able to contribute more fully at a senior level within busy accounting environments.

- Progression for learners is good. Many learners progress from level 2 through to level 4 of the accounting technician qualification. Many of these progress further to higher professional accounting qualifications and many gain promotions within their company.
- Teaching and learning are good. Well qualified and experienced tutors use their own commercial experience well to enliven teaching and motivate learners. Tutors use a wide variety of good resources and methods to enable high quality interactive learning.
- Resources to support learning are very good. Training centres are spacious and well equipped with computers. Learners have access to online resources and very high quality paper-based materials. All resources reflect the most recent changes in the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) standards.
- Support for learners is good. All staff who undertake work-based visits are sufficiently qualified and experienced to provide all the support that learners may require. This support is readily available by email or telephone at all times as well excellent online support.
- Target setting on the individual learning plans does not always accurately reflect the learning experience. Plans are not always updated when changes occur within an individual's training programme.
- Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is very good. Provision is available during the day, evenings and at weekends at a variety of locations. Online resources are very good for revision and distance learning. BPP delivers training very flexibly to meet the individual needs of learners.
- Leadership is excellent. The chief executive and the senior staff have a clear perspective of the needs of the profession and how the company needs to develop. Continuing professional development opportunities are very good and communication is excellent.
- Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Staff and learners have sufficient understanding of equality and diversity issues, although there is insufficient staff training and insufficient reinforcement for learners during training. Managers use data well to identify any performance differences between groups.
- Quality improvement is very effective. Initiatives to extend the way in which training is delivered have been very successful. Procedures to assure the quality of delivery are very thorough. BPP has significantly increased the number of learners achieving their qualifications on time. BPP does not carry out systematic observations of teaching and learning.
- BPP provides good value for money. High quality training is delivered very effectively using very professionally produced materials. Electronic media are used to good effect and the training centres are well resourced.

What does BPP need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the high success rates and the good quality of provision.

- Implement a systematic approach to observing teaching and learning to include more formal assessment criteria.
- Improve the use of individual learning plans to reflect more accurately the learner experience and record all revisions to the planned programme.
- Promote equality and diversity thoroughly through more staff training and more reinforcement in learners' progress reviews.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- excellent resources
- classroom tuition
- really great tutors
- flexibility and options for the courses
- excellent support
- electronic progress monitoring.

What learners would like to see improved:

- tuition to be provided every week
- more efficient timetabled slots for assessment feedback.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- being involved at all stages of the programme
- links between on and off the job training
- flexible delivery of programmes
- communications with the assessors
- course materials
- meeting employers' needs.

What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing reported.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. BPP has held the current contract for two years and has made good progress implementing the training programmes. The company has been completely restructured with a new senior management team. The strategic vision and management are excellent and have been communicated very effectively to all staff. The quality improvement plan is clear and has been used to good effect to improve the quality of the provision such as increasing the number of learners who complete within the allotted time span.
8. The self-assessment process is good and includes contributions from staff, learners and employers. The self-assessment report is well written with constructive self-criticism, but some of the key strengths identified are basic to satisfactory provision. The quality of the provision has improved, including the development of electronic learning materials for distance learning and also to support classroom teaching. Course materials are under continual review and constantly being improved. BPP has developed a new system to track learner progress and can produce an electronic portfolio on a CD on completion. BPP has sufficient well qualified staff within an appropriate management structure to maintain and improve the provision. Overall success rates for learners are good.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Overall achievement rates for learners are good and above the national average. The number of learners who completed their qualifications within the allotted time was low but this has now improved to be significantly above the national rate. Current learners are carefully monitored and are making good progress achieving their learning goals within the prescribed time.
10. Learners are developing good accounting skills and knowledge which enable them to make a significant contribution in the workplace. Learners work very effectively on a range of accounting applications and managers value the benefits this brings to the organisation. Learners are increasing in confidence and in personal skills such as organisation, communication and team working.
11. Learners are currently making good progress and many apprentices progress through all the various levels of the accounting technician qualification. Some learners are encouraged to take a fast track option which speeds progress towards AAT membership even further. Many learners gain promotion during their training programme. After completing level 4 AAT many learners progress onto further study with BPP to work towards a range of professional accountancy qualifications. Learners also progress very quickly to complete key skills portfolios and pass the external exams at the first attempt.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors skilfully facilitate discussion of various workplace accounting practices, making good use of their own and learners' experiences. Learners enjoy their learning and feel safe both at college and in the work place. They are motivated by the interactive approach, and the good mixture of theory and practice. Tutors give good individual coaching and support to learners who need more explanation. Work based assessors provide effective coaching, especially for those apprentices requiring key skills tuition.
13. Resources to support learning are very good. Well-qualified and experienced tutors use smart-boards effectively to build a visual display of key accounting processes. Learners have good access to computers in the spacious training centres, and use online resources competently. Paper-based resources are very effective, and include specialist textbooks and course manuals, as well as revision cards and supplementary exercises. All resources reflect the requirements of the new AAT qualifications well.
14. Assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Apprentices are tested for key skills early on in the programme and job roles are carefully matched to ensure the apprentice starts at the correct level of the accounting qualification. Learners are also screened to determine their preferred learning style, but the results of this are not used to inform the subsequent teaching style used. The introduction of electronic tracking has speeded up the assessment of evidence, and learners benefit from being able to access the records to see how well they are progressing. Learners receive constructive feedback on work from their tutors and assessors.
15. Progress reviews are thorough and assessors coordinate classroom training and subsequent workplace practice very well. The targets on individual learning plans are, however, often too general to promote timely progress towards individual learning goals effectively. Some targets do not reflect fully individual learner's skills and opportunities. On occasions targets are vague with others only time-bound by the planned exam dates. Some individual learning plans also contain minor errors or omissions but the provider has recognised this through various quality audits of key documentation.
16. The provision meets the needs of learners particularly well. The range of provision is good. Learners are able to progress from levels 2 to 4 and then on to professional accountancy qualifications. Learners are offered totally flexible training at various locations. They can select from day release, evening courses, weekend revision or distance learning. The introduction of the new on-line tutor system also enables all apprentices to reinforce key topics and also to view video-taped lectures in their own time.
17. Partnership working is very effective. BPP works well with local schools, the careers service and employers. Relationships with line managers are particularly good. Learners benefit by this because the employers plan work schedules to coincide with the teaching of a topic at college to reinforce the off-the-job

learning. Employers are usually involved in the progress reviews. This enables prompt support to be given to any learners falling behind. Employers feel well informed and value the instructive responsive and helpful information from BPP. BPP has strong relationships with the awarding body AAT and the sector skills body.

18. Support for learners is good. Assessors communicate regularly by email and phone and are available at all times, including outside usual office hours. Good information and guidance are provided and tutors respond flexibly to any problems experienced by the learners. Effective guidance is given to learners when selecting optional units to ensure maximum exemptions can be claimed towards any future higher level professional qualifications.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

19. Leadership at BPP is excellent. The chief executive has a clear perspective on the market needs of the profession and the way in which the company needs to develop to meet those needs. The recent restructure has been managed very well with excellent communication at all levels. The management structure is designed to meet the needs of the newly awarded university status and there are plans to extend the provision. Staff are well informed and enthusiastic and make good use of the many opportunities for continuing professional development.
20. BPP has satisfactory arrangements for ensuring the safeguarding of learners. These are proportionate to the amount of time learners spend with BPP and the level of risk. BPP checks each employer to ensure that they have up-to-date and appropriate health and safety policies. BPP also completes its own health and safety risk assessments on each employer site and on all of its own training sites. Staff and learners have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and learners feel safe. Policies and procedures for bullying and harassment are in place and BPP has an effective complaints procedure.
21. Arrangements for equality and diversity are satisfactory. BPP promotes equality of opportunity well through its marketing literature with appropriate images and reference to current legislation. It introduces learners to diversity issues during their induction and this is reinforced in one of the training modules. However, this is not sufficient. The programmes are designed specifically to be flexible to meet the needs of learners and employers with good provision at weekends, evenings and through electronic media. Managers collect data about participation and success rates for diverse groups and recognise the gender imbalance in their learners. Plans are well developed to provide additional equality and diversity training to all staff.
22. BPP engages well with users to support and promote improvement. The staff work closely with the awarding body to keep abreast of new developments and to produce very high quality materials to support teaching and learning. Relationships with employers are excellent with BPP being the provider of

choice for many large companies. BPP has a very strong ethos of promoting the profession and extending their role in developing high quality training.

23. Quality improvement is very effective. The self-assessment process is good. BPP has involved staff fully in the production of the self-assessment report using feedback from employers and learners. The self-assessment report is satisfactory. It is well written and self-critical, although some of the key strengths identified are judged to be the norm rather than exceptional. The quality improvement plan clearly identifies areas for improvement and has been used effectively to develop the provision. BPP does not carry out formal observations of teaching and learning, although the quality of teaching is monitored through feedback from employers and learners.
24. BPP provides good value for money. Training is flexible so that learners can achieve their qualifications comfortably in the shortest possible time. Resources for teaching and learning are excellent. A staff team is dedicated to the production of very high quality books and electronic learning materials which are marketed to other providers. BPP has an excellent code of business ethics with a good emphasis on sustainability.

Information about the inspection

25. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's national funding manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report, development plans and data on learners.
26. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

BPP Holdings

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive	
Approximate number of enrolled learners			
Full-time learners	84	84	
Part-time learners			
Overall effectiveness	2	2	
Capacity to improve	2		
Outcomes for learners	2	2	
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a		
Quality of provision	2		2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
Leadership and management	2	2	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

*where applicable to the type of provision

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