

British Printing Industries Federation Limited

Focused monitoring visit report

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

The British Printing Industries Federation Limited (BPIF), based in Meriden, is a not-for-profit organisation, which provides business support and representation for the United Kingdom print, printed packaging and graphic communications industry. It has a contract with the Skills Funding Agency to provide intermediate and advanced apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes. Currently, 247 apprentices and 93 Train to Gain learners are on BPIF programmes.

Ofsted published its most recent inspection report in June 2010. Inspectors graded BPIF satisfactory in overall effectiveness, capacity to improve and in all aspects of the provision including engineering and manufacturing technologies. Since the inspection, the provider has introduced programmes in business administration and law. This report focuses on the themes explored during the focused monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the provider made in its self-assessment and quality improvement planning to improve provision since the last inspection? **Reasonable progress**

The last inspection identified that the self-assessment report was overly descriptive and insufficiently judgmental. Self-assessment is now thorough and the current report analyses provision more critically. BPIF has revised the self-assessment process, which now fully includes the views of the various boards of the federation, staff, employers and learners. The current report is more judgmental. However, it does not fully explain the current challenges of the industry sector. Development planning is good and it is improving provision. The development plan accurately links to the self-assessment report, identifies what the key improvement priorities are and those responsible for actions. Monitoring of the development plan is thorough and includes the whole organisation. However, the plan makes insufficient use of quantitative targets.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has the provider made in improving learners' outcomes since the last inspection? **Reasonable progress**

Since the last inspection, apprenticeship overall success rates have continued to increase. According to latest published data rates for 2010/11, the increase is 10 percentage points on the previous year. Rates are now around the national average. The completion of apprenticeship programmes within the planned duration is also

now around the national average. Apprentices in two regions have not succeeded as well as other regions but this is due to employers who have ceased trading or have had redundancy programmes. Since the last inspection, the provider has much improved the tracking of learners' achievement and current learners are making satisfactory progress, relative to the planned timescales, of the individual components of their apprenticeship framework. Train to Gain overall success rates are satisfactory but marginally declined in 2010/11. However, completions within the planned timescale are now well below the national rates. These completion rates have been significantly affected by business closures and redundancy programmes. The provider is taking actions to alter the planned duration of these programmes, to reflect more closely the sectors' economic circumstances, to improve timely completions.

The standard of learners' work in portfolios of evidence is good. The emphasis on health and safety in the sector's high-risk environments is strong.

Quality of provision

What progress has the provider made in ensuring the programme design and timely provision of key skills assessments relate to the learners' starting points?

Significant progress

At the last inspection, the provider had implemented several recent initiatives to improve the achievement of key skills. However, some learners were still making slow progress in achieving the application of number and communication components of their apprenticeship framework.

BPIF now provides key skills training earlier in the learners' programme. At the last inspection, learners spent almost two years on programme before they undertook their numeracy and literacy tests. Current learners are undertaking their tests within seven months of joining the programme. The results of their initial assessment of literacy and numeracy levels, lead to a thorough diagnostic assessment of their specific needs and assessors focus well on supporting learners to achieve identified areas for development.

The provider has developed a good range of key skills learning activities, which link to learners' main subject area, to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. The overall pass rate for key skills tests has increased greatly from 64% in the year 2009/10 to 91% in 2010/11.

What progress has the provider made in supporting learners to continue to succeed when experiencing job losses?

Significant progress

At the last inspection, negative economic conditions had badly affected the printing industry, which resulted in a considerable number of learners becoming redundant. Adverse trading conditions continue to impact strongly on the industry.

Unemployment in the sector since 2009/10 has increased and last year alone, a substantial number of jobs were lost in the sector. The provider has implemented a series of actions to support learners made redundant from their jobs to continue with their qualifications. Assessors ensure awarding bodies accredit each unit of the NVQ as soon as it is completed, which allows learners to obtain early certification for their work. BPIF uses local information on trading conditions well to identify any learners who might be at risk of redundancy. Several learners have received additional support to finish their qualification considerably earlier than their planned date. In the last year, BPIF has helped and supported around half of those made redundant to find a new position and complete their qualifications.

Leadership and management

What progress has the provider made in improving the promotion of equality and diversity during the review process?

Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, although learners' understanding of equality and diversity was satisfactory, assessors did not always make the best use of progress reviews to further promote the understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace.

BPIF has recently developed a set of topical questions to promote equality and diversity with its learners during the progress reviews. Assessors have received satisfactory training on how to use these questions and raise learners' awareness. However, not all assessors are using these sufficiently well. In a few instances, assessors do not record the learners' response in the progress review forms and they focus their comments on monitoring whether learners have experienced any equality and diversity issues at work. The provider continues to offer learners a satisfactory introduction to equality and diversity topics during the induction to their learning programme.

What progress has the provider made in improving its user engagement strategies?

Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, the user engagement strategy was satisfactory but was an area requiring further development. Since then the provider has devised a formal learner and employer strategy. It has identified the opportunities to collect feedback from all of its stakeholders. These are wide ranging activities and include employers' forums and special interest groups. BPIF now also makes collection of formal feedback available through electronic questionnaires, which has increased response rates. The provider acts upon the results of learners and employers' feedback. It produces a "you said and we have done" leaflet to advise learners of its actions as a result of feedback. BPIF is highly responsive to the views of employers and meets with its federation members bi-annually to discuss programme improvements.

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