

Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		01-05 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of apprentices and learners previously on Train to Gain programmes have successfully achieved their programmes within their planned timescales.
- Apprentices develop good personal and employability skills, enhanced by working in good quality environments.
- The majority of apprentices benefit from good training and learning activities provided in their workplaces by the provider's trainers and their own employer's staff.
- Trainers and assessors provide high levels of support to apprentices by frequent and flexible visits to their workplaces, including at week-ends and for 24 hour shift work.
- The company is led and managed very well and has a sound track record of successful quality improvement strategies and actions.
- Trainers and assessors participate in good staff development activities which prepare them well for changes to programmes.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- No training and learning sessions are of outstanding quality.
- Trainers are not consistently collecting enough information about apprentices at the recruitment stage to be able to plan and make full use of their workplace visits for training and assessment from the outset, starting with a really challenging pace on programme.
- Managers' recent strategy to increase participation by the new priority group of 16-24 year olds is not yet showing sufficient impact.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop trainers' skills and learning resources further to become consistently of a high standard, by providing opportunities for trainers to share good practice, by introducing more use of information technology into learning, including web based resources and by rigorously monitoring and improving key training processes to support trainers.
- Recruitment processes for apprentices should be revised to ensure they include consistently thorough scoping of workplace learning and assessment opportunities and full recording of apprentices' prior attainment, experience and learning and their learning support needs, in order to deliver individualised programmes from early in their programmes, instead of making these decisions at subsequent work-place visits.
- Review the level of participation by the new priority group of 16-24 year old apprentices. Increase these levels by evaluating managers' recent business planning and speeding-up arrangements with prospective new employers for recruiting new apprentices.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes are good. Success rates have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The majority were high in 2010/11 and well above national averages.
- Intermediate business administration and customer service apprentices' success rates were particularly high in 2010/11, at 96 percent and 91 percent respectively. Train to Gain level 2 programmes in administration and business management in 2010/11 had high success rates at 92 percent and 95 percent.
- Apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes in retail and cleaning have been highly successful since their inception. Only the latest addition in 2010, of warehousing intermediate apprentices, has low success rates and slow progress for current learners.
- Most apprentices make the progress expected of them when they started their learning programme and achievement within expected timescales is high. Apprentices on management and administration programmes in particular develop knowledge and skills to enable them to take on higher levels of responsibility at work.
- There is little difference in the achievement of apprentices from different backgrounds, except in 2010/11, when numbers of Indian apprentices increased suddenly and they achieved a high success rate of 96percent. Male apprentices' success rates have steadily improved to narrow the achievement gap and be in line with female apprentices. Success rates for apprentices with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who made up 15 percent of learners in 2010/11, have improved, narrowing the achievement gap while increasing in numbers.
- Apprentices' attendance and punctuality is good for the majority of Business Management Resources (BMR) activities which are for individual appointments on employers' premises and these are generally well supported by employers. Apprentices working in the service industries, such as hospitality management and cleaning, are adversely affected by late alterations of their shifts or having to cover for absent colleagues and attendance and punctuality were not as good, especially for group sessions.
- Apprentices in administration and business management make good progress in developing key skills, self-confidence and relevant customer service skills. Warehousing apprentices show high

levels of understanding of health and safety regulations and can relate these well work-place practices.

- Apprentices develop good personal and thinking skills through the guidance of their trainers and assessors. Development of their English and mathematics skills is satisfactory, and they recognise how these enhance their self-confidence, personal skills and their work roles.
- Apprentices' exit interviews are analysed well and information is used for future information, advice and guidance. Most apprentices remain in their employment on completion of their apprenticeships and some are promoted and/or progress onto further programmes to enhance career opportunities, although numbers doing this are proportionally low.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall, and this is reflected in the high success rates. Teaching and learning on business management, administration and customer service programmes with 319 apprentices is good, but requires improvement for the 103 apprentices on warehousing, service enterprises and retail subjects. Assessment across all subject areas is satisfactory overall, requiring improvement.
- The provider has a good and much improved focus on training for apprentices, delivering many off-the-job sessions over the first few months of the apprenticeship, with sessions that focus well on key skills, technical certificates and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) unit requirements. Arrangements for training are very flexible to meet the needs of apprentices and employers, including their shift patterns, with a good variety of group and one-to-one sessions.
- In the better off-the-job training sessions, experienced trainers demonstrate good expertise in planning and delivery of theory. They have high expectations use a good variety of teaching methods and set challenging tasks. In the weaker sessions, trainers focus insufficiently on apprentices' differing skill levels and the content is not sufficiently challenging for the more experienced apprentices.
- Trainers use paper-based learning resources well, including for topics such health and safety, as well as communication and numeracy, and some trainers use electronic presentations and video clips well to support learning. However, the use of information communications technologies (ICT) in teaching, learning and assessment is underdeveloped. Although trainers use some web-based resources and encourage apprentices to research via the internet, there is currently no virtual learning environment for them to access support materials.
- On-the-job training and support are good. Working relationships between apprentices, trainers/assessors and employers are productive. In warehousing and cleaning, employers provide training effectively to meet the needs of the job role. However, in all subjects, the quarterly reviews of apprentices' progress are ineffective, with insufficient employer involvement and incomplete recording of progress and action planning.
- Overall, initial assessment is satisfactory. Effective discussions at the start ensure apprentices enrol onto appropriate apprenticeships and levels relevant to their job role and the new on-line diagnostic tool for literacy and numeracy is very effective and well-received by staff and learners. However, initial assessment does not effectively inform individual learning planning, as it does not identify apprentices' relevant job skills and competence sufficiently to plan for relevant individual skills development needs.
- Assessment, when carried out, is good, thorough and well-recorded, and apprentices have a good involvement in the process. However, assessment during the programme is introduced too late, particularly for apprentices who already have substantial job experience. In addition, the written feedback by assessors on workbooks is insufficient and does not effectively highlight areas for improvement, although verbal feedback is good.
- The development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills is satisfactory. Initial assessment generally identifies accurately current skill levels, and apprentices are placed on the

appropriate level of key or functional skills. Where apprentices require additional support, trainers provide this effectively and specialist support is available for trainers and apprentices when requested.

- Information, advice and guidance meet apprentices' needs effectively. At the start of their programme, apprentices receive accurate information and advice on appropriate courses and levels and are asked at their exit interview if they would like additional training. The provider's website is a very good source of information for apprentices and employers.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning is satisfactory and apprentices feel fairly treated in the workplace, with no reported instances of bullying and harassment. In some sessions, good discussions take place to raise awareness of particular issues, such as safeguarding and discrimination. However, in other sessions opportunities are missed to explore apprentices' understanding and improve awareness, even when topics are particularly relevant, such as barriers to communication.

Warehousing and distribution and service enterprises

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Training, learning and assessment requires improvement and it does not correlate with the three year improving trend of success rates which are high and well above averages for both apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes. Recruitment to programmes altered in 2012 reflecting external changes, and numbers joining the highly successful retail and cleaning programmes declined greatly, yet there has been a small increase in numbers on warehousing apprenticeships.
- Trainers provide satisfactory learning sessions, which develop apprentices' subject knowledge and personal and employability skills. Trainers' preparation and planning is very thorough and detailed, including a good range of learning materials, but plans are over-ambitious for some apprentices, while for others with more experience and knowledge of the topics they are insufficiently challenging.
- Apprentices receive good support for learning from trainers and employers. Trainers and assessors are very flexible in arranging visit times to suit apprentices' shifts, including evening and week-end work. Trainers and assessors have relevant occupational expertise, although they are not always fully up-to-date with current practices and at times do not always use appropriate examples relevant to apprentices' work.
- Apprenticeship programme delivery was changed in 2012 to an initial training period of about seven monthly visits focusing on key skills and knowledge input relating to NVQ requirements and technical certificates. Apprentices' assessment meets awarding body requirements, but is introduced much later than in previous years, which is delaying assessment of skills and knowledge apprentices have learnt through workplace training.
- Assessors' practices are good and they provide useful feedback that is valued by apprentices in improving their performance. Tracking systems do not provide a good record of apprentices' learning, and as assessment in 2012 is starting late in programmes, progress recorded is slow. Internal verification that provides assessors with support is not always completed in the planned timescales.
- Trainers make effective use of initial assessment of apprentices' literacy, numeracy, previous qualification levels and work roles to provide good information, advice and guidance on eligibility for funding and choices of appropriate apprenticeship subjects and levels. Apprentices' prior experience directly related to the apprenticeship content is not adequately assessed at recruitment to plan for individual needs and provide a challenging pace from the start.

- Apprentices receive clear information about further qualifications to enhance their career goals or extend employability opportunities. Numbers taking advantage of these are low although there are good examples of progression, in particular to customer service and management qualifications following completion of cleaning programmes. Employers' input to enhance planning and review of apprentices' programmes and link workplace activities to award requirements are not used fully and apprentices' mid-programme reviews are not always completed to planned timescales.
- Apprentices' development of English and mathematics' skills is satisfactory, although trainers' expertise is too varied to be able to provide consistently good offer of support across the provision, although specialist support is available.
- Trainers' and assessors' promotion of equality and diversity with apprentices is satisfactory. Trainers' inclusion of equality and diversity with apprentices is particularly effective when related to their occupational area and employers' industry. Trainers do not sufficiently use naturally occurring opportunities to expand discussions.

Business and customer service

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good for the majority of apprentices which is reflected in the high success rates in business management, administration and customer service apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes.
- Apprentices are employed in a variety of high quality commercial and industrial organisations across England, including hotels, food manufacturers, retail businesses, call centres and warehousing and distribution companies. Employers provide work-related training and further learning takes place by working with more experienced colleagues.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning with BMR trainers and produce good standards of work in sessions. They recognise how their new knowledge, skills and confidence has further enhanced their workplace performance and enabled them to have roles of increased responsibility, which employers have also noted in their feedback.
- Apprentices benefit from the high expectations of their trainers who set them appropriately challenging work that is effective in extending their knowledge and understanding of familiar and new topics. Trainers are highly motivating, sessions are energised and their subject and workplace knowledge is used particularly well to relate learning to apprentices' work.
- Trainers are increasing their use of good information communications technologies to enhance learning, such as electronic presentations, video and internet clips, including the viewing of these on apprentices' mobile telephones. Good sessions are interactive and stimulating discussions are enhanced by trainers' use of open questioning techniques.
- Trainers' use of paper-based activities and resources are satisfactory and workbooks are used extensively but written feedback is insufficient. Verbal feedback is good, but this is less easily remembered to aid improvements.
- Trainers are aware that BMR's plans to develop e-learning have been slow, which has delayed apprentices using additional centrally located learning resources to reinforce learning between trainers' visits to their workplaces. However, for some apprentices session tasks are not sufficiently stretching and they ask trainers for additional work to do between their visits.
- Initial assessment processes are used well identify apprentices' prior attainment levels, literacy and numeracy abilities and work roles and match these to apprenticeship programme subjects and levels. Additional diagnostics introduced in August 2012 use on-line testing supporting the

change from key skills to functional skills and providing better identification of apprentices' precise learning needs, such as spelling and grammar.

- Assessment overall is satisfactory. Programme changes in 2012 introducing personal development, employability skills and key/functional skills early in the programme, have delayed the introduction of assessment. This slows apprentices' accredited progress, despite some being ready for assessment as they have the knowledge and skills gained through workplace learning.
- Assessment practices are good, with thorough questioning and accurate observation of natural performance, including good feedback to apprentices with useful suggestions for further improvement. Assessors are highly responsive to ensuring fair access for apprentices to assessment of naturally occurring opportunities in these fast moving industries, with shift work and demanding business targets.
- Apprentices' support from their trainers and assessors is good, as they have a clear appreciation of apprentices' work demands and a strong commitment to supporting their individual needs, such as providing an extra visit for support and encouragement before a key skills test and arranging visits to fit with shifts and weekend work. Not all trainers have sufficient expertise to provide good support in English and mathematics for their apprentices, although specialist support is available.
- Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Employers are involved initially when apprentices are recruited to BMR programmes and they provide useful information, advice and guidance to help match apprenticeship choice to their work roles. Employers are not always sufficiently involved in apprentices' 12-weekly progress reviews which dilutes the impact of a fully inclusive review to include on-and off-the-job learning and assessment opportunities.
- Apprentices' development of English, mathematics and ICT knowledge and skills is good. For example, a work-based project enabled a level 3 management apprentice to produce a highly successful presentation for her company's directors, using graphs and statistics to illustrate the cost benefits of purchasing new equipment.
- Equality and diversity is promoted effectively with apprentices. Trainers relate topics well to work-place situations and a particularly good example is of a discussion on the use of non-verbal communication with hearing impaired customers. Less effective is the use of set questions asked in a formulaic manner.

The effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
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- Leaders and managers at BMR are good and have a track record of successfully implementing improvement strategies and achieving high success rates overall. Performance on programmes steadily improved up to in 2010/11 when a high proportion of apprentices and learners achieved qualifications within planned timescales.
- Leaders and managers implemented ambitious changes to training programmes in 2012 to improve continuously and respond to external requirements. The amount of training for apprentices has increased greatly. The impact of these changes on the quality of training however is not consistent across all programmes and the progress and achievement of a minority of apprentices currently on programme is insufficient.
- Managers have researched for business development planning well, identifying local and national priorities. The company are prioritising the need to expand provision for 16-18 year olds and 19-24 year olds, in line with government directives and their Skills Funding Agency (SFU) contract. Strategic objectives are planned and reviewed effectively, although implementation is slow to take effect.
- Effective partnership initiatives lead to the achievement of some strategic objectives, for example securing new funding streams for over 24 year olds' training. Leaders and managers carry out much good evaluation of specific initiatives. However, overall evaluation of progress in

meeting strategic objectives is underdeveloped and expansion of the priority age groups' participation has made slow progress.

- Leaders and managers set ambitious achievement targets for apprentices and provide clear direction for staff ensuring operational objectives are well communicated. Trainers and assessors demonstrate commitment to securing sustained improvement and seek to work in partnership with employers, although in a minority of cases, such as in a large London hotel, employers are not sufficiently engaged in planning and reviewing learning.
- BMR staff work effectively with apprentices, providing a good flexible and responsive service to them in the workplace with a high level of good individual support. The majority of apprentices are well motivated and effectively develop good employability and transferrable skills.
- Strategies for improving the standard of training, learning and assessment are supported particularly effectively by good staff development which is very well managed and resourced in advance of changes.
- Support for individual members of staff is good, but the small number of trainers and assessors are being allocated apprentices from across an increasing range of subjects which is proving challenging for them. Inspectors saw the negative impact of these widening case-loads, when examples to illustrate key points and booklet were used relating to another occupation which lessened the potentially good impact of relating learning to work for apprentices.
- Systems to improve teaching and learning are good and contribute to rigorous performance appraisal. Good practices are shared across the organisation and staff work well as a team to develop the provision and improve it. However inspectors saw no outstanding training and learning.
- Suitable quality improvement systems are in place. The approach to quality assurance has improved over time although with the rapid pace of change some key processes, such as initial assessment and recording of individual plans do not perform consistently to meet the required standard.
- Overall the management of training programmes is good. The majority of apprentices and their employers have a clear understanding of what is required of them and arrangements for training are implemented well. The use of ICT and web based resources to support learning is underdeveloped which BMR recognises and has plans to improve.
- Training programmes are accessible. BMR staff operate flexibly and responsively providing training and assessment at employers' workplaces. Apprentices' and employers' needs are clearly understood and trainers and assessors visit at times to best suit the employment context.
- The self-assessment process is good with strong impact on improvement particularly in 2010/11. The 2011 report involved all the staff team and is suitably self-critical. The report is reviewed on a regular basis throughout the year and quality improvement planning actions are updated appropriately.
- Data is used very effectively to monitor, evaluate and plan the provision and the highly visual performance reports ensure key data points are highly accessible. Apprentices' progress is monitored by trainers/assessors and managers although the current method does not measure pace and progress towards accredited learning sufficiently rigorously.
- Managers collect the views of apprentices and their employers and these inform improvement planning. Apprentices and employers complete feedback questionnaires several times a year and results are published on the company website. The most recent results show high satisfaction levels and a very high response rate.
- The company promotes equality and diversity effectively. Positive messages are communicated via the web site to encourage apprentices of all abilities, needs and backgrounds. Managers evaluate participation, progress and achievement for different groups of apprentices and have successfully closed gaps in achievement between, for example, males and females although 16-18 and 19-24 year olds are under-represented.
- Many apprentices are mature learners and have good employability skills and attitudes. Trainers and assessors review their experience at work regularly and apprentices take part in personal reviews with these staff where, for example, issues concerning bullying or harassment are

discussed. Health and safety arrangements are thorough and the provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2				2				
Outcomes for learners	2				2				
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2				2				
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2				2				

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Warehousing and distribution	3
Service enterprises	3
Business	2
Customer service	2

Provider details

Provider name	Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year (2011-12)	Full-time: 0
	Part-time: 867
Principal/CEO	Deva Odedra
Date of previous inspection	18 September 2008
Website address	www.bmrtraining.com

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	20	270	0	165	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A 							

Additional socio-economic information

Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd's head office is in Telford, Shropshire, where senior managers and administrative staff are based. Apprentices do not visit these premises. The small team of trainers and assessors work from home and operate across England, providing training and assessment at apprentices' workplaces. Employers recruit their own apprentices and/or identify existing employees for training and contact BMR who enrolls them onto programmes. The highest density of BMR apprentices is in the North-West, West Midlands and Greater London areas. The company was set up in 2002, initially to offer retail skills training for a range of different multi-national companies. It now offers eight subject areas and has 458 apprentices currently, as well as delivering privately funded specialist training for Valero Texaco employees, using its two mobile training units.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Julia Horsman HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operational manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They travelled across England to observe learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews at employers' premises. The inspection took into account the majority of the provision at the provider. It did not include the 36 new apprentices in performing manufacturing operations and food proficiency. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and graded the subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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