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Mr James Hammill  
Director of Apprenticeships  
BPP Holdings Limited  
One Reading Central 23  
Forbury Road  
Reading  
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Dear Mr Hammill

### **Short inspection of BPP Holdings Limited**

Following the short inspection on 18 and 19 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in September 2010.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

BPP Holdings has increased vastly the size of its provision since the previous inspection and currently has around 1,700 apprentices. You recruited additional leaders and managers, which has strengthened the arrangements for learner recruitment, safeguarding, support and quality improvement. Although the majority of learners are accountancy apprentices, you have broadened the curriculum to include subjects such as law, human resources and business. You introduced very successfully the 'trailblazer pilot' in September 2015 for apprentices with banking and finance partners.

Leaders and managers have taken very effective action to address all the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Managers introduced a systematic approach to observing teaching and learning, which is helping to ensure good-quality apprenticeship training. They strengthened apprentices' progress reviews and target setting so that learners now have accurate individual learning plans that are updated where appropriate. All staff receive regular and comprehensive equality and diversity training, which they use to good effect during training sessions and progress reviews.

Since the previous inspection, managers use data more incisively to track apprentices' progress and interrogate the reasons for any dips in performance. This has helped sustain good outcomes for learners, who consistently achieve better than learners on similar programmes nationally. Senior leaders and managers continue to provide excellent leadership. They focus relentlessly on meeting the

needs of the profession and providing high-quality training. Managers enhanced many of the key strengths from the previous inspection, particularly the good progression opportunities for apprentices, learning resources and support. While apprentices develop good vocational, professional and personal skills, not all improve their English and mathematical skills sufficiently. Managers recognise that they need to gather more comprehensive data about apprentices' destinations and have started to address this.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and take effective action to safeguard apprentices. Management of safeguarding is particularly good, with the dedicated team approaching all aspects enthusiastically and diligently. Apprentices and staff have good mechanisms for informing the team of concerns and these are dealt with very effectively. Staff receive good safeguarding training, which they use productively to discuss a wide range of personal and work-related safety topics with apprentices. Apprentices feel safe while learning with BPP, but not all have a good understanding of being safe online. Most staff have received training about the risks of extremism and radicalisation, but are at an early stage in using this to develop apprentices' understanding. 'Prevent champions' have been introduced in each training centre and staff have access to pertinent and current information on the company's intranet pages.

### **Inspection findings**

- Managers use a wide range of very effective systems to judge and improve the quality of training and assessment. They make good use of their observations of training sessions and progress reviews to manage staff performance. Managers know where improvement is needed and take swift action to improve performance.
- Staff training and development are good. Newly appointed staff receive a thorough and extensive introduction to the company, which prepares them well for their role. Staff benefit greatly from observing their peers when they are teaching, which has helped them enliven their own learning by introducing quizzes, pair work and problem-solving activities.
- Staff discuss equality and diversity topics successfully with apprentices during regular progress reviews. Apprentices have a good understanding of diversity in the workplace and are sensitive to the needs of different colleagues and customers.
- Leaders inspire staff to celebrate diversity. Groups, such as 'lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender' and 'women in leadership', strive to challenge preconceptions and unconscious bias amongst staff, employers and apprentices. A culture of openness and tolerance permeates the organisation, which has increased the number of learners raising concerns with staff or disclosing a special educational need or disability.
- Partnerships with employers are very good. Managers, staff and employers work productively to ensure that training is highly relevant to apprentices' current and future job roles. They successfully deliver training and recruitment sessions jointly with employers, which has increased

participation by under-represented groups such as those aged 16 to 18, men and young adults who were previously in care.

- Apprentices benefit from very flexible training programmes. They access a wide range of good-quality learning activities through group training sessions, individual coaching and online learning. Apprentices enjoy learning at their own pace, which they can modify to meet business priorities.
- Apprentices receive highly effective support, which helps them achieve. They benefit from a wide range of internal and external help, such as counselling, psychology and legal assistance. Apprentices have good access to adaptive technology and learning resources to meet their individual needs.
- Apprentices have clear and precise targets, which they review frequently with staff and their line manager. They understand the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. Apprentices use online progress monitoring tools productively, such as the 'achievement ladder', to help them plan their learning and prepare for external tests.
- Apprentices do not develop English and mathematical skills sufficiently. Not all apprentices have targets for the achievement of these skills. Although staff correct apprentices' errors, such as in grammar or spelling, they do not help them develop strategies to prevent them making similar mistakes again.
- BPP Holdings offers apprentices excellent progression opportunities to degree-level and industry qualifications. Progression by accountancy and professional services apprentices onto higher-level qualifications is good.
- Managers do not collect sufficient information about business, financial services and payroll apprentices' destinations after they complete their programme. They recently implemented a strategy for gathering this information, but it is at a very early stage.
- Apprentices develop a good range of personal, social and employability skills relevant to their job role. Many improve the quality of written reports, business emails and presentations. Apprentices become confident in, and talk knowledgeably about, specific business processes.
- The vast majority of apprentices achieve their qualifications well, and achievement by accountancy apprentices is consistently very high. Most apprentices make good progress and achieve on time. Staff have high expectations from apprentices and motivate them to succeed.
- Achievement by the small, but growing, number of business management apprentices requires improvement. A newly recruited programme leader has changed the training programme and introduced systems for tracking learners' progress. Although more apprentices have recently passed external unit tests, it is too early to judge improvements in qualification achievement.

## **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- managers devise effective English and mathematics teaching and assessment strategies and train staff to be confident in helping learners to improve their skills in English and mathematics
- managers monitor closely the effectiveness of steps being taken to improve achievement by business management apprentices and take swift remedial alternative action if needed
- the destinations of all apprentices are tracked and evaluated to judge the effectiveness and impact of all programmes.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Rodgers  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Ofsted Inspectors assisted by the head of student engagement, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors met with managers, staff, employers and learners and looked at past and current work. They observed lessons and progress reviews. Inspectors reviewed key documents including those related to self-assessment, quality improvement plans, learners' achievements and safeguarding.