

Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

10–13 January 2017

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Apprenticeships Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	
Outcomes for learners	Good	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- A high proportion of apprentices successfully achieve their qualifications and within the planned timescale.
- Most apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeships sustain employment and a very small minority gain additional responsibility or early promotion.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills that enhance their effectiveness within their workplaces. Their work is of a high standard.
- Apprentices benefit from high expectations and are motivated well to achieve. They receive particularly good support from knowledgeable tutors.
- Apprentices' progress is accurately identified through regular progress reviews. Actions are implemented quickly to ensure that most apprentices make at least the progress expected of them.
- The development of personal and social skills, such as self-confidence and teamwork, is good and supports apprentices effectively in their workplace roles.
- Apprentices benefit from training that effectively develops their understanding of diversity within the context of their work role and personal life.
- Leaders and managers have effectively addressed most areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Performance management is good. Staff underperformance is identified quickly and, where necessary, appropriate action is taken.
- Partnerships with employers are strong, resulting in coherent training plans and provision that is responsive to the needs of employers and apprentices.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Business Management Resources (UK) Limited (BMR) is an independent learning provider, with its senior managers and administrative staff based in Telford, Shropshire. 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. At the time of the inspection, 219 learners were on apprenticeship programmes in business administration, customer service, call centre operations, retail, team leading, management and warehousing and storage. The majority of learners study for an apprenticeship at level 2, with a minority working towards an advanced apprenticeship. A few learners are working towards a higher-level apprenticeship in management.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all apprentices have the opportunity to consider the next stage of professional development throughout their programme.
- Ensure that all trainers routinely encourage all apprentices to make full use of the online training resources to support and extend their independent learning between planned training sessions.
- Ensure that leaders and managers make better use of quantitative data and other evidence sources to help them drive up performance and standards for apprentices aged 19 to 23 and those apprentices on programmes in call centre operations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and senior managers have a clear vision and strategic direction and set high expectations which they communicate well to staff. The company's values and strategic aims are clearly set out in the operational plan and all staff support and understand them. Aspirations are high and management expectations of staff and for apprenticeship success are well defined and demanding.
- The director and senior managers plan and manage the curriculum well, based on accurate labour-market information about local and national employment and training needs. The director works very effectively with other training providers through the local skills provider network to respond to the priority needs identified by the Marches local enterprise partnership (LEP). Managers have developed particularly close working relationships with employers to ensure that apprenticeship programmes contribute well to their business, as well as benefiting individual employees. Successful partnership working with a range of external stakeholders, including other training providers and the LEP, provides mutual benefit for apprentices and employers. The training provision meets needs well. For example, leaders at BMR are well prepared for the introduction of new standards-based apprenticeships in management, which is one of the LEP priorities.
- Leaders' strategic approach to developing apprentices' English and mathematics skills is good. Managers ensure that trainers integrate English and mathematics well into training programmes, using vocationally relevant vocabulary and scenarios. This ensures that most apprentices appreciate and make good progress in these essential skills.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Leaders have developed clear complaints and equality and diversity policies, which they convey to apprentices and staff effectively. They take swift action to respond to any areas of concern. Staff and managers receive appropriate training and understand their role in relation to equality and diversity. As a result, they are skilful at making equality and diversity relevant to apprentices during planned training and assessment visits to the workplace. BMR staff create an inclusive culture where all apprentices are treated with dignity and respect.
- Trainers benefit from well-developed and clear performance management arrangements. Managers regularly observe trainers' interactions with their apprentices, both in planned and unannounced observations, and collect the views of apprentices and employers continuously. Annual appraisal reviews draw appropriately on a wide range of information, including achievement rates, observations of teaching, learning and assessment, records of staff professional development activities and feedback from apprentices and employers. Managers set, and rigorously monitor, targets for improvement at quarterly performance monitoring meetings. Leaders and managers provide good support to those trainers who need or wish to gain additional qualifications for their role, such as higher-level teaching qualifications. Trainers value these opportunities; most have undertaken relevant additional training that has boosted their confidence and helped them make successfully the transition from assessor to trainer. In a very few cases where trainers have not been able to reach the standards expected by the company, they have quickly left the company's employment.
- Self-assessment is a highly self-critical process that involves all staff and makes good use

of the feedback gathered from apprentices, trainers and employers, as well as the outcomes from observations of trainers and assessors to build an accurate understanding of the overall strengths and areas for improvement of the provision.

- Managers plan well for improvement. Although leaders were slow to recognise the decline in achievement that began soon after the previous inspection, quality-improvement arrangements have now been strengthened. Leaders ensured that the poorly performing provision in health and social care was quickly discontinued and that apprenticeship recruitment was focused on strong areas of the company's provision. Actions taken by leaders have resulted in a significant improvement in the number of apprentices who successfully complete their programme and within the planned time. Trainers now routinely share good practice in the monthly standardisation meetings, which they all attend. These meetings ensure that trainers are familiar with each other's caseloads and can step in to support or cover for a colleague's absence.
- Managers' use of management information requires improvement. Information and data analysis is not always presented in a useful format that allows managers to make informed decisions about the quality of provision and to prioritise actions for improvement.

The governance of the provider

- Governance and oversight of the apprenticeship provision are good. Governance has been strengthened by the involvement of external 'critical friends' whose role is to scrutinise achievements, monitor the quality of key processes and report to the director. Those in this role know the provider well and robustly hold staff to account for their contribution in ensuring that apprentices achieve well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they meet current government requirements and guidance. Staff training to comply with the 'Prevent' duty has benefited from strong contributions from the local authority and the regional Prevent coordinator, and is reinforced during the regular staff meetings.
- Staff assess the locality hazards associated with particular geographical areas before signing up any apprentices, so they can brief learners about precautions to take to keep themselves safe. Computer systems are appropriately filtered and monitored, including when apprentices use trainers' laptop computers to access their electronic portfolios or the company online resources. Staff recruitment checks are appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Good links with employers ensure that job roles and responsibilities match closely learners' needs and the requirements of the apprenticeship programme.
- Employers work well with BMR staff when planning training and assessment activities. As a result, current apprentices make good progress and their vocational knowledge and technical skills reflect the high standards in the industry sectors in which they work.

- Care and support for learners are good. Trainers are adept at supporting apprentices to develop quickly their confidence in acquiring new skills. Apprentices enjoy their learning and value their frequent contact with trainers through regular individual and group tutorials delivered in the workplace. Trainers support apprentices well whenever they raise any concerns that may affect their learning.
- Assessment of apprentices' starting points is good. Trainers accurately assess learners' skills on entry to the apprenticeship programme, including clear identification of their prior learning, vocational experience and skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT). Employers contribute well to the identification of appropriate learning qualifications that reflect accurately their employees' day-to-day work and the areas in which they need to specialise.
- Trainers are appropriately qualified and they use their extensive experience well to plan and deliver highly personalised learning, using a wide range of activities to meet the individual needs and learning styles of each apprentice. Trainers used good questioning techniques to probe and reinforce apprentices' deeper understanding of vocational topics. As a result, sessions are lively, apprentices enjoy their learning and they develop quickly new skills that are highly relevant to their work roles. All apprentices have access to extensive online learning resources and a large majority use these well to further their independent learning. However, a small minority of learners are less confident in using these materials and, as a result, they do not always extend their learning between planned training sessions.
- Most apprentices make good progress in developing their vocational knowledge and skills relevant to their job role and, as a result, become much more confident, both at work and in their learning. For example in retail, apprentices quickly demonstrate good customer service skills; while in business administration and management, learners pay close attention to producing accurate sales invoices, planning marketing events and preparing bids for contracts and tenders. However, the planning of learning is less effective for apprentices in call centre operations and, as a result, not all make the expected levels of progress.
- Assessment is thorough and reviews are frequent. Trainers visit their apprentices regularly and at times that enable them to observe routine work, including during unsocial hours. Tutors use technology effectively to support assessment and to accurately track apprentices' progress through the e-portfolio system. Apprentices produce a good standard of work for their qualification and demonstrate good subject knowledge. They respond well to the good and constructive oral and written feedback provided by trainers following assessment; this helps them understand what they have done well and where they need to make improvements. Most employers participate fully in reviews and contribute to the planning of future activities to enable apprentices to achieve their qualifications.
- Most apprentices improve their English and mathematics skills, gain their qualifications and continue to develop these essential skills in their daily work to the benefit of themselves and their employer. For example, employers in estates and lettings comment positively on the improved accuracy of apprentices' report-writing skills, particularly in documents that are required to meet legal requirements, such as conveyancing and writing up sales particulars. In warehousing and storage, apprentices accurately work out the correct value of goods, weights, sizes and delivery schedules. A few tutors do not always correct

apprentices' spelling, punctuation and grammar when giving feedback or provide tips and strategies to help further develop and extend their writing skills.

- Trainers' teaching and reinforcement of equality and diversity topics, particularly during reviews, are very productive and apprentices acquire a good level of knowledge and understanding that prepares them well to live and work in modern Britain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Apprentices are well motivated, enjoy their learning and attend regularly. They quickly become more confident in applying effectively their newly gained skills, including teamwork and problem-solving, in their workplaces. Managers are good role models for apprentices.
- Apprentices successfully lead projects to improve performance, quality and compliance in their workplaces. Standards of apprentices' work are high, with many examples of close links to targets for improving company performance. For example, a management apprentice working in estates and lettings successfully developed a project to increase customer satisfaction with conveyancing services, resulting in the company's satisfaction scores increasing on average by around 10 percentage points.
- Apprentices who have been in post for a considerable period of time consolidate their skills and develop new knowledge and confidence about their roles and responsibilities thanks to the good-quality training they receive. Trainers guide apprentices well by setting challenging targets to encourage them to become more independent learners and develop good study skills. As a result, they become more productive and effective within the workplace.
- Good initial advice and guidance ensure that most apprentices join programmes that match their needs well. However, a small minority of apprentices do not always receive sufficient timely information about possible next steps, or how they might take advantage of progression opportunities at work to further their careers as they near the end of their programme.
- Apprentices make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills and the proportion gaining their qualification in these essential skills at the first attempt is high. In contrast, apprentices who speak English as an additional language do not have enough opportunities to develop their speaking skills.
- Most apprentices understand the importance of equality and diversity, including British values and the potential threat posed by radicalisation and extremism. They benefit from a well-considered learners' handbook that contains much useful information that assists their deeper understanding of life in a multicultural society and the importance of the 'Prevent' agenda. In one workplace, apprentices recognised the need to show respect and tolerance to staff from a subcontractor where most of the operators were from eastern European countries. In a few cases, apprentices are less well informed about extremism, particularly where they have not been able to reinforce what they learned during induction.
- Apprentices are encouraged by trainers and employers to consider how to improve their general health and fitness through healthy lifestyles, in order cope with the demands of working shift patterns and unsocial hours. For example, one employer uses display boards

and posters to provide information about the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

- Apprentices feel safe and work safely. They have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Apprentices who have children make good use of their increased knowledge of e-safety to discuss with their children at home potential hazards, such as cyber bullying, associated with using the internet or social media sites and how to keep safe while online.
- Apprentices value the secure portal which enables them to access useful online learning resources and upload work for their portfolios, although only the few apprentices who have started in the last three months are active users of these resources.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Outcomes are good because most apprentices develop their skills and knowledge well and almost all of them go on to sustained employment with corresponding increases in pay. A very small minority of apprentices gain early promotion with additional levels of responsibility.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications in the planned timescale has markedly improved in the current contract year, to now being well above the national rate. According to the provider's own data, the rate at which current apprentices complete their qualifications within the agreed time has rapidly increased. The large majority now make at least the progress expected of them, with most making good progress from their initial starting points.
- Achievement rates for intermediate-level apprentices have been uneven over time. Current year data shows that these learners now achieve well and achievement rates are now above those of other similar providers. Outcomes for the minority of advanced apprentices are high and most achieve within the planned duration. The proportion of learners who progress from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships is low.
- Success rates for the few apprentices who are aged 16 to 18, and the very large majority of older apprentices aged 24 and over, are high, and well above the performance of their respective peer groups nationally. Outcomes for the few apprentices aged 19 to 23, while improving over time, are still too low and require improvement. There are no significant achievement gaps for apprentices by different ethnic heritage or for learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Differences in the achievement rates of males and females, while fluctuating over time, are narrowing.
- Most learners who join the apprenticeship programme without a GCSE at grades A* to C in English or mathematics successfully achieve their functional skills qualifications at the first attempt. However, outcomes for a few apprentices who study functional skills mathematics and ICT are too low and require improvement.
- Apprentices enjoy their training and develop their vocational and broader employability skills well. A small minority benefit from undertaking additional vocational qualifications beyond those required for the apprenticeship programme. Employers value the contribution apprentices make in the workplace.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50103
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	452
Principal/CEO	Deva Odedra
Telephone number	01952 210 848
Website	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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	6	119	2	76	1	15		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the operations manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

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Kathryn Townsley	Ofsted Inspector
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