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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Ms Helen Taylor
Apprentice Programme Operations Manager
Mercedes-Benz Cars UK Limited
Training & Development
Delaware Drive
Tongwell
Milton Keynes
MK15 8BA

Dear Ms Taylor

Short inspection of Mercedes-Benz UK Limited

Following the short inspection on 26 and 27 April 2017, 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 November 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

You and Mercedes-Benz UK Limited's (MB's) directors and senior managers (the management team) have worked hard to successfully maintain the good quality of apprenticeship provision since the previous inspection. The main government-funded programmes are intermediate to higher-level apprenticeships covering light and heavy vehicle maintenance and repair and parts specialisms. You have almost doubled the number of apprentices recruited to your main dealers and franchised retailers in the last two years. There are currently 550 apprentices. Recruitment is underway and you anticipate that an additional 280 apprentices will be recruited in 2017. You have successfully increased your recruitment of female apprentices and are close to your organisation's target of 6%.

Managers have made further progress in a number of areas, particularly developing and using well a wide range of relevant performance data in the very effective management of your partner, REMIT Resourcing. This ensures good assessment practice which promotes a consistently high standard of apprentices' skills. The quality of teaching and learning in the well-resourced academy and in the workplace remains good. Apprentices continue to achieve exceptionally well.

The management team is aware, through effective self-assessment, that there are still aspects of the apprenticeship provision which have not improved as much as it would like; for example, the further development and enhancement of safeguarding and delivery of functional skills.

Safeguarding is effective.

Managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and effective action is taken to safeguard apprentices. Apprentices feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe when they are in the academy and in their workplace. Managers work very effectively to ensure that apprentices are safe when staying in local residential accommodation when they attend the academy. Hotel managers and staff work well with MB staff to ensure the safety and well-being of the apprentices.

The MB safeguarding team has a comprehensive understanding of all safeguarding referrals, including those relating to potential radicalisation and extremism. Managers' referrals to local designated persons have been made and timely and appropriate actions have been taken where concerns have been raised. We were concerned about the tracking and monitoring of all vulnerable apprentices. During the inspection, MB managers took decisive action and arrangements are now effective.

Apprentices' understanding of fundamental British values is mostly very good. However, apprentices often struggled to explain their understanding of the 'Prevent' duty and what it means in relation to their lives and work. You accept that you have more work to do to make staff and apprentices more aware of the 'Prevent' duty and the potential impact on their lives. All apprentices interviewed during this inspection demonstrated that they had a very good knowledge of how to keep safe online. You acknowledge that safeguarding needs to be discussed more fully at senior management meetings.

Inspection findings

- Apprentices' achievements over the previous three years are exceptionally high, as is the number of apprentices who remain on their programme. The large majority of apprentices successfully achieve within planned timescales and continue in full employment on completion. Many apprentices go on to achieve additional competences required by MB, progress onto higher-level learning and gain promotion. Managers monitor closely the achievements of different groups of apprentices and the results show very little difference between groups. Current apprentices are making very good progress towards completing their programme and the vast majority of apprentices have a very good idea of what stage they have reached in their apprenticeship programme and what they need to do to complete.
- MB managers work very closely with, and support very effectively, managers from the main dealers and franchise network of employers to ensure that apprenticeship training meets their recruitment, succession planning and training needs. Workplace supervisors and a network of mentors ensure that apprentices have good opportunities to experience a range of relevant and developmental work tasks and complete their qualifications. Partner staff from REMIT Resourcing carry out thorough reviews and rigorous assessments and MB staff monitor closely the quality of these activities. The strong assessment process is

reflected in the very high achievements of apprentices.

- Mangers have maintained the good quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Trainers provide apprentices needing additional support with good one-to-one tuition. Apprentices appreciate and benefit from this extra support. Trainers plan learning sessions extremely well. Trainers use high-quality resources to provide apprentices with opportunities to use equipment they will find in the workplace; for example, using high-quality diagnostic systems to diagnose faults in vehicle sensors such as speed sensors in wheels.
- Apprentices' understanding of equality and diversity is very good. This was an area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. MB and REMIT staff make good use of opportunities to explore broader aspects of equality and diversity both in the academy learning sessions and in reviews in the workplace. Apprentices feel confident to raise any issues or concerns and know who to go to for support. Staff arrange a good variety of monthly 'hot topics' to support apprentices' understanding. These include cyber bullying, drug awareness and the effects of workplace discrimination.
- MB's managers continue to successfully use self-assessment and quality improvement planning as a means to highlight areas for improvement and target specific areas for further development and raise standards of provision. However, you accept that progress towards some key aspects has been slow and more work is needed to move them forward at a faster pace. These include aspects of quality improvement, safeguarding and support to improve apprentices' English and mathematics skills. Actions for improvement are unclear, not sufficiently prioritised and targets are not sufficiently specific. The management team accepts that the monitoring of quality improvements needs to be more thorough.
- Most apprentices are extremely articulate and their standard of spoken English is generally high. Their standard of written work is often high. Many join the programme with a good standard of English and they make at least the expected progress in improving their mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Apprentices' first-time achievement of functional skills in mathematics is high. However, apprentices' achievements of functional skills in English are low. Trainers do not always focus well enough on this aspect and do not routinely identify and correct spelling and grammar mistakes. As a result, apprentices do not always know what they need to do to improve.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- safeguarding is discussed fully at management team meetings to ensure MB managers' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding continues to improve
- a programme of enhanced safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training is completed as a priority by all relevant staff so that they are fully up to date with current practice and so can better support apprentices to develop their understanding
- actions intended to improve the quality of apprenticeship training are clear, prioritised with specific targets, have identified impact measures and are

monitored rigorously by the management team

- apprentices are provided with structured support to help them develop their written English skills at a faster pace, improve the quality of their written work and achieve their qualifications.

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

Yours sincerely

Bob Cowdrey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors, assisted by you, the apprentice programme operations manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors met with managers, partner staff, trainers and assessors, apprentices and employers in Milton Keynes and around Kent and Norfolk. They observed learning sessions, assessments and apprentices' progress reviews. Inspectors reviewed key documents, including those relating to self-assessment, quality improvement plans, safeguarding and apprentices' achievements and progression.