

Bauer Radio Ltd

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Martin Ward, Her Majesty's Inspector

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. Ofsted's intention to carry out monitoring visits to these new providers was first announced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in November 2017. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Bauer Radio Ltd began providing apprenticeships using levy funding in July 2017. The Bauer Academy delivers apprenticeships. The academy currently provides training for around 120 apprentices, all of whom are on level 3 standards-based programmes. They follow courses in digital marketing, junior content production, team leadership, and junior journalism. The Bauer Media group of companies in England employs most of the apprentices. In addition, the academy currently provides apprenticeships for two external employers: '7 Stars' and 'Space and Time'. There are no subcontractors. Bauer Radio Ltd has not previously provided apprenticeships as a subcontractor.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Senior leaders within the academy have developed a clear strategy for the development of apprenticeships. They specialise in apprenticeships which relate to the creative industry and the Bauer Media Group. They plan for annual cohorts of apprentices.

Leaders are determined to develop skills, knowledge and behaviours in the workplace, through standards-based apprenticeships. The director is committed to inspiring apprentices by using the expertise of tutors who have recent industrial experience. Leaders and managers are addressing a few initial challenges convincingly, and they now fulfil this commitment.

Leaders are suitably self-critical, and within six months of starting the apprenticeship programme carried out a detailed review to ascertain its strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders recognised early on the need to improve the guidance given to apprentices at the start of the programme, and for better management of apprenticeships. The actions taken following this review have had a positive impact on the experience of current learners, who receive good-quality training. Leaders and managers have significantly improved the process of recruitment for the next cohort of learners. Current apprentices are now much clearer about what they need to do in terms of study and assessment.

Most apprentices are on the right course and level, although a few apprentices who hold managerial positions, or have been employed for some time, are on apprenticeships at too low a level. Apprentices develop new skills that aid them in their job and provide benefits for their employers. Apprentices are clear about the opportunities for progression following completion of their apprenticeship.

Leaders have worked hard with apprentices and their line managers to ensure that they understand the value and importance of off-the-job training. Leaders describe this training as dedicated development time, and line managers support this. Most learners receive suitable off-the-job training and record this promptly.

The senior team has established appropriate and demanding key performance indicators. Its members receive regular reports on retention and in-year achievements. The few apprentices who have taken external examinations in functional skills and professional journalism qualifications have passed.

Tutors and development coaches understand and monitor effectively the progress of learners. Learners progress well. Managers' monitoring of apprentices' progress towards the achievement of higher grades within the standards-based apprenticeships requires improvement.

Leaders and managers have developed an effective model for the design of apprenticeship programmes. They have structured programmes well so that they include appropriate initial and on-programme assessments, sufficient and relevant reviews, and preparation for the end-point assessment. Leaders involve employers effectively in the design of the course and are flexible in response to the working patterns of the department or industry. For example, managers move assessment points to avoid peak working times.

Leaders and managers are clear about the importance of developing apprentices' English and mathematics skills. They have developed effective initial assessment activities which relate well to the creative industries. This means that learners can see the relevance of the activity, and this reduces their initial reluctance to return to learning English and mathematics. Where learners are not at the required level, they attend an intensive period of training. All relevant learners attended these sessions and all achieved their functional skills qualification.

Senior leaders have developed good systems and roles to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. A single lead tutor exists for each apprenticeship standard to ensure that assessment is rigorous and consistent.

Senior leaders manage the performance of tutors and coaches well. Leaders and managers meet with them frequently in addition to the annual performance review. They discuss the progress of learners, learners' feedback and information from internal observations. This enables tutors to respond quickly, if necessary, to improve their performance.

The director of the academy reports frequently to the human resources (HR) director of Bauer Media Ltd. The HR director has a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of the provision and challenges and supports the introduction of new standards well.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have developed an effective model for teaching and supporting apprentices. Tutors teach apprentices to acquire the appropriate professional skills, knowledge and behaviours. Development coaches support apprentices effectively to reflect on their progress, targets and next steps. Each apprentice has a tutor and a development coach. The apprentice meets with them frequently.

Tutors are well qualified in their professional field and have appropriate experience. Leaders have planned for all tutors to complete a teaching and learning qualification before the end of the year to enhance their teaching practice.

Senior leaders ensure that all apprentices undertake a comprehensive assessment of their starting points that includes English and mathematics, vocational skills and previous qualifications. The identification of learners with specific additional learning requires improvement. Development coaches work closely with employers and line managers to develop training and assessment plans that take account of apprentices' prior experience and the demands of the job role.

Apprentices develop new skills and knowledge because of their training. They use these skills well in the workplace to the benefit of their business. For example, one apprentice used her new-found knowledge of website design to make significant improvement to the website of a current affairs magazine. Another apprentice has developed leadership skills which he has used to develop his team. He introduced individual coaching and reported on the impact it had on improving the performance of the team.

Apprentices are well-motivated and ambitious to achieve their best. They are keen to implement their new skills in the workplace and to play their part in ensuring that their teams are successful. Learners' work is of a high standard. Their written work is of good quality.

Tutors and development coaches work very well with learners to help prepare them for their end-point assessments. Apprentices know what they need to do to succeed in their apprenticeship.

Apprentices develop excellent attitudes and behaviours that reflect well the industry in which they work. For example, one apprentice, recently promoted, now uses this learning to undertake performance-management tasks using excellent interpersonal skills.

Development coaches and tutors work very well together to ensure that apprentices make good progress and achieve their planned milestones. They use questioning effectively to deepen and extend learners' understanding. They are highly effective in supporting learners to identify recent or planned projects, which demonstrate the skills and behaviours that the standards require. Tutors set specific, achievable and

timely targets for apprentices. Most apprentices achieve these targets by the deadlines.

Leaders and managers have worked well to ensure that apprentices benefit from outstanding learning resources. Learners complete exciting projects or work-shadowing opportunities, which motivate them to achieve their best. Tutors use well a mixture of online learning resources and group activities to stimulate discussion. They encourage the effective sharing of ideas. Apprentices report that they enjoy their learning and that it has increased their interest in their work.

Not all tutors provide appropriate and timely feedback on apprentices' work. In some cases, apprentices submit the work online and the tutor returns the work to the learner without a comment. The assessor judges the work to meet the standard. Neither identifies the strengths nor the improvements that the apprentices should make.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers make safeguarding a high priority for staff and apprentices. They have appropriate policies and procedures in place for safeguarding apprentices. Staff understand these and use them effectively. All staff receive training on safeguarding as part of their induction and online training and external speakers reinforce this. The designated safeguarding officer has completed the appropriate training. She has not received any safeguarding concerns in the 11 months that the apprentices have been on programme. Managers are aware of external experts and have good links with the local authority designated officer. During the year, senior managers identified learners' understanding of safeguarding as an area for improvement. They have focused on providing appropriate information and learning opportunities. This has had a positive impact on learners' understanding.

Apprentices feel safe in their workplaces. They know to whom they should report any incidents or occurrences that make them feel unsafe. Learners are clear about how they can keep themselves safe online. They are aware of the dedicated email address that they can use if they have concerns. Apprentices demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in the workplace and online.

Bauer Media Group Ltd personnel department staff appoint employees to the academy. They ensure that they recruit employees in line with the safer recruitment guidelines.

Most apprentices have only a basic understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. This requires improvement. Leaders have developed new learning resources to address this issue, but it is too early to see any impact.

Senior leaders do not currently receive a summative report on the progress made in the areas of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

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