

B&M Retail Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	2654172
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Type of provider:	Employer
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

B&M Retail Limited is an employer provider based in Liverpool. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 167 apprentices in learning. Apprentices study across three different apprenticeship standards. These include 55 on level 2 customer service practitioner, 103 on level 3 team leader or supervisor and nine on level 5 operations or departmental manager. The provider does not subcontract any of their provision.

Themes

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

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear strategy to establish an ambitious apprenticeship curriculum that supports long-term career progression for their staff. In return, their organisation benefits from knowledgeable and confident staff who are successful in their jobs.

Field trainers hold the appropriate qualifications and experience to train apprentices. Leaders provide field trainers with effective training to develop their teaching skills further. For example, training sessions on the use of effective questioning skills and how to use assessment to identify gaps in apprentices' learning.

Leaders have established useful systems to track apprentices' progress in developing new skills and to record the amount and type of on- and off-the-job training. This helps to ensure that apprentices get their entitlement of time to study and practise their new skills.

Leaders and field trainers ensure that apprentices are well prepared for their final assessments. Apprentices aspire to achieve the highest grades and know what they need to do to achieve these.

Leaders have effective processes to monitor the quality of their provision and staff performance. For example, they carry out observations of training and review the quality of trainers' feedback that apprentices receive. As a result, the large majority of apprentices make at least their expected progress towards developing substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Managers carefully consider the well-being and workloads of staff. They provide a wide range of support which staff appreciate. For example, in relation to managing finances and, mental health and well-being.

A small minority of team-leading apprentices have not completed their apprenticeships on time. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to ensure apprentices swiftly complete their apprenticeships.

The process for collecting, recording and using information about what apprentices already know and can do needs to be strengthened. A few field trainers do not routinely use this information well enough to individualise apprentices' learning. Leaders have effective governance arrangements in place.

Those responsible for governance are suitably experienced to carry out their roles. They carefully monitor the progress that leaders make in improving the quality of education for apprentices.

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

Field trainers plan the order of teaching in a logical way to build apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours over time. This helps apprentices to recall their learning and apply it at work. Team-leader apprentices learn about different leadership styles and how to motivate people. They move on to more complex aspects such as managing difficult conversations with staff in their teams. Customer service apprentices learn about the different types of organisations and customers. After this, they learn how to confidently manage challenging customers. As a result, the large majority of apprentices make at least their expected progress.

Field trainers effectively coordinate on- and off-the-job training with store managers. They ensure apprentices have the time they need to complete their off-the-job training and to apply and practise their skills at work. This helps most apprentices to swiftly develop skills that help them to be successful at work. For instance, team-leader apprentices successfully redesign store and product layout. Customer service apprentices skilfully complete store health and safety checks. Over one third of current apprentices have already received promotion.

Field trainers and store managers provide apprentices with useful feedback that helps them to improve their practical skills. For example, customer service apprentices improve their visual merchandising skills to display products. However, too many apprentices do not receive effective feedback on how to improve their written work.

Most apprentices improve their English and mathematical skills as a result of their apprenticeship. For example, customer service apprentices accurately calculate stock levels. They speak clearly and respectfully to customers. However, in a few instances, field trainers do not correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in apprentices' written work. This leads to apprentices continuing to make the same mistakes.

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

Senior leaders and managers place a high priority on keeping apprentices safe. They ensure that all members of the safeguarding team are suitably qualified. All staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and deputy, receive appropriate training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know how to report any concerns they may have about themselves or others. Team leader apprentices are highly aware of their duty of care for their team.

Leaders have completed an appropriate 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan. Although apprentices receive training on potential risks of radicalisation and extremism, they do not understand how these concepts relate to their personal and working lives.

During the monitoring visit, leaders rectified minor administrative errors in their staff recruitment processes. They now have a more robust procedure for safely recruiting new staff.

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