

# Inspection of B&M Retail Limited

Inspection dates:

23 to 25 May 2023

**Overall effectiveness****Inadequate**

The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Apprenticeships

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

**Information about this provider**

B&M Retail Limited is an employer provider based in Liverpool. At the time of the inspection, there were 17 apprentices in learning. There were five apprentices studying the level 5 operations or departmental manager apprenticeship standard, six apprentices studying the level 3 team leader or supervisor apprenticeship standard and four apprentices studying the level 2 customer service practitioner apprenticeship standard. All apprentices are over the age of 19. Apprentices are based at the provider's sites across the country. The provider does not subcontract any of its provision.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Almost all apprentices that started their apprenticeship have left. Some have left the employment of B&M retail and others remain employed but do not want to continue with their apprenticeship. Apprentices were ill-advised and unsupported.

The very small number of apprentices who remain on programme enjoy their learning. They are highly motivated and committed to completing their qualifications despite their disrupted learning and falling behind with their work. Support for current apprentices is effective. Apprentices value the one-to-one support they receive from their field trainers to help them complete their qualifications and prepare for final assessments. Leaders and managers have provided apprentices with more frequent visits to help them to catch up.

Apprentices have access to a range of employee services to support their health and well-being. For example, discounted gym membership and access to mental health first aiders, to keep them mentally healthy and resilient. However, there is no wider curriculum content provided to apprentices to teach them about topics such as healthy living or to develop their interests outside of the workplace.

Apprentices do not always receive effective careers education, information, advice and guidance to help them plan their longer-term career goals within the company. Most are unaware of the wider opportunities available to them. However, a few receive information from their line managers about promotion opportunities within the organisation.

Apprentices are aware of their employer values such as treating people with respect and understand how they link to fundamental British Values. They display these values when interacting with colleagues and customers.

Apprentices feel safe and know who to go to if there are any issues or concerns. Field trainers discuss local issues, such as knife crime, with apprentices. Most apprentices have an awareness of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremist behaviours. Apprentices know how to keep themselves and others safe.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and managers have been too slow to identify and rectify the weaknesses in the quality of education and training. This has resulted in the large majority of employees who started their apprenticeship making very slow progress and leaving the programme without achieving their qualifications. Leaders and board members have acknowledged that this has been the result of ineffective initial advice and guidance and apprentices leaving the organisation to seek alternative employment after the pandemic.

Since the previous new provider monitoring visit, leaders have reviewed the apprenticeship programme and taken the strategic decision not to recruit apprentices onto the current programme. For the very few apprentices who have successfully completed their final assessments, most have progressed within the organisation with promotion.

Managers are currently monitoring the progress of the small number of apprentices who have remained on programme and who are significantly beyond their planned end date. They provide intensive support to help them to achieve as quickly as possible. These apprentices are now making sustained progress towards their final assessments.

Leaders and managers do not plan a sufficiently ambitious programme for all apprentices. Field trainers do not use the information gathered on apprentices' starting points to plan learning for apprentices to learn substantial new knowledge and skills. Apprentices' progress towards achieving their qualifications is too slow.

Field trainers have appropriate experience and knowledge of the retail sector. They use their experience to plan the delivery of the curriculum in a logical order that allows apprentices to gain knowledge, skills and behaviours which increase in complexity over time. For example, apprentices on the level 5 operations or departmental management standard learn about leadership skills first and then progress onto more demanding skills such as project management.

Field trainers present information clearly to apprentices and use effective questioning to check their understanding. This helps apprentices increase their knowledge and skills on topics such as how stereotyping and unconscious bias may influence them when providing feedback to their staff. Level 3 team leader or supervisor apprentices learn how to carry out a SWOT analyse to identify potential risks within their workplace.

Employers value the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices gain and apply in the workplace. For example, apprentices on the level 3 team leader or supervisor programme now have difficult conversations with team members and are more confident when dealing with conflict within their teams. This helps improves productivity in the workplace.

Field trainers do not always provide apprentices with useful feedback on their written work. Consequently, apprentices do not know how to further improve the quality of the work they produce. Apprentices across all levels of programmes are not encouraged to improve their English written skills. Poor spelling, punctuation and grammar is accepted and, as a result, apprentices repeat errors. The assessment of apprentices' work is not always timely. For example, a few apprentices have waited several months for their work to be assessed and feedback given.

Quality improvement processes are ineffective. Leaders and managers have not fully rectified weaknesses identified at the monitoring visit. The quality of training has declined. Leaders do not use the findings of quality improvement processes to

inform actions that will improve the quality of education and training that apprentices receive. For example, they carry out learner surveys but do not analyse or act upon the findings to improve the provision.

Field trainers are appropriately experienced and qualified. They are supported to undertake teaching qualifications to help improve their teaching practice and update their vocational expertise. For example, field trainers shadow store managers in the retail shops.

Leaders are considerate of staff workload and provide staff with a range of services to support their well-being. For example, counselling and debt management.

Board members are passionate about encouraging young people into a career in retail and supporting existing employees in their career development. They are strong advocates of the B&M brand. However, they acknowledge that they have experienced difficulties in delivering a high-quality apprenticeship. The vast majority of staff enrolled to an apprenticeship have disengaged from the programme.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have appropriate policies and procedures in place to inform staff on how to safeguard apprentices. All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. Leaders ensure that there are staff who are trained to undertake the role of the designated safeguarding lead. Leaders carry out pre-employment disclosure and barring checks to assess the suitability of staff who work with apprentices.

Leaders meet their 'Prevent' duty responsibilities and have completed a Prevent risk assessment and action plan. Staff provide apprentices with information on how to keep themselves safe and how to report any concerns they may have.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders should ensure that apprentices are provided with effective initial advice and guidance so that they are suitable for an apprenticeship and are placed on one that meets their needs.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that staff use the information on apprentices' starting points to plan an ambitious programme that supports apprentices to develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that all apprentices receive feedback on their written work so that they can improve the quality of the work they produce, including their English written skills.

- Leaders and managers should ensure that all apprentices are provided with information that will enable them to plan and know the career opportunities available to them within the organisation.
- Leaders and managers should review quality improvement processes to ensure that they can quickly identify weaknesses in the quality of education and put actions in place to increase the pace of improvement.

**Provider details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	2654172
<b>Address</b>	The Vault Dakota Drive Speke Liverpool L24 8RJ
<b>Contact number</b>	0151 728 5400
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bmstores.co.uk">www.bmstores.co.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Alex Russo
<b>Provider type</b>	Employer
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	n/a

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of apprenticeships and employability, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

Elaine Price, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Greenhalgh	Ofsted Inspector

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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