Inspection of BMS Progress LLP

Inspection dates: 13 to 16 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quality of education</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour and attitudes</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership and management</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apprenticeships</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall effectiveness at previous inspection</td>
<td>Not previously inspected</td>
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Information about this provider

BMS Progress LLP (BMS) is an independent learning provider based in Warrington, Cheshire. It specialises in training for sales and management professionals. BMS began to offer apprenticeship training to levy-paying employers in August 2019.

At the time of the inspection, there were 190 apprentices studying the level 4 sales executive apprenticeship standard and 29 apprentices following the level 3 team leader or supervisor apprenticeship standard. A very small cohort of apprentices were on the level 5 operations or departmental manager standard. BMS provides training for apprentices across all regions of England.
What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Trainers and development coaches are welcoming and professional when teaching workshops and delivering coaching sessions. They create inclusive learning environments where all apprentices feel safe to participate and contribute to group and individual sessions. Apprentices benefit from dedicated online discussion groups where they converse freely with each other and offer peer support.

Apprentices enjoy their courses and feel fully supported by staff and their employers. They are highly motivated to learn. Apprentices display positive attitudes to their learning and a desire to succeed both in their apprenticeships and at work.

Trainers and development coaches enhance the apprenticeship curriculum with relevant topics that they weave seamlessly into training and coaching sessions. These include healthy eating, the importance of sleep, positive thinking and managing stress. This wider curriculum helps apprentices to cope successfully with issues that arise professionally and personally.

Apprentices develop high levels of confidence, resilience and a willingness to take on more responsibilities and increasingly complex tasks, such as negotiating larger sales deals and aspiring to become key account managers or progress to regional sales manager positions. Level 4 sales executive apprentices describe how they deal confidently with negative behaviours from their customers. They use the skills that they learn successfully to calm emotive situations. Level 3 team leader or supervisor apprentices contribute positively to a range of local community projects, such as sponsored walks, and charities to support those in need.

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

Leaders, trainers and development coaches (coaches) promote a culture of high expectations. Their curriculum is effective and reflects the needs of most employers and their apprentices. However, in a very few instances, employers feel that coaches do not always understand the nature of their businesses well enough.

Leaders have developed an ambitious level 4 sales executive curriculum for an industry that experiences a high turnover of staff and that does not yet benefit from a set of nationally agreed professional standards. It is leaders’ resolute aim to raise the standards of professional selling and to empower salespeople with the knowledge and qualifications to work in line with other professions, such as marketing and human resources.

Trainers and coaches plan the curriculum in a logical order. They provide regular opportunities for apprentices to aspire to distinction grades. Consequently, apprentices feel well prepared for their roles as sales executives or team leaders.

Trainers and coaches routinely extend apprentices’ learning beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. Apprentices undertake online learning...
in a range of topics and put this learning into practice at work. For example, team leader or supervisor apprentices enhance their understanding of how to undertake difficult conversations with team members and facilitate these meetings successfully.

Most apprentices benefit from the effective coordination of on- and off-the-job training. Coaches review this regularly at milestone meetings with the apprentice and the employer. Apprentices in large employers feel that the mix of on- and off-the-job training helps them to perform better in their roles. However, in a few small employers, apprentices feel that the planning of their on- and off-the-job training is not coordinated sufficiently well by their line managers. As a result, they do not receive the same timely opportunities to practise their new skills at work.

Coaches ensure that apprentices retain learning in their long-term memory. They make effective use of repetition and recall activities to consolidate learning. As a result, apprentices describe confidently the substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that they develop and how they apply them successfully in the workplace. In a few instances, apprentices accredit their new skills and knowledge to their securing of high value contracts that they would not have achieved prior to starting their apprenticeship.

Workshop trainers and coaches are well-qualified and vastly experienced in sales and management. They are passionate about their subjects. They deploy their enthusiasm and knowledge of their industries to motivate and inspire apprentices to achieve and progress in their chosen sectors.

Managers and coaches carry out thorough information, advice and guidance activities for all new cohorts of apprentices and their line managers. They use professional discussions effectively, to test apprentices’ prior knowledge, skills and behaviours before accepting them into their apprenticeship programmes. However, too many apprentices previously left the level 4 sales executive programme early without achieving. Since the new provider monitoring visit, leaders have improved their recruitment processes to rectify this weakness. However, the impact on the retention of sales executive apprentices is not yet fully evident.

Coaches provide helpful and constructive written and verbal feedback that helps apprentices to improve their work. Most apprentices’ work is at least of the expected standard and the majority of apprentices’ work is of a high standard. Work produced by level 3 team leader or supervisor apprentices is professional and academically referenced to research sources where relevant. Apprentices demonstrate high levels of understanding of key concepts, such as Rosenshine’s theory and the ‘rule of three’ in persuasive discussion. Apprentices’ work shows improvement and a deeper understanding of concepts over time.

Trainers and coaches ensure that apprentices with additional learning needs achieve as successfully as their peers. For example, leaders agreed with the awarding organisation to adjust final assessment arrangements to meet the specific needs of apprentices. Apprentices with identified learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, can
now provide a video presentation for their work-based project rather than submitting the extensive written assessment.

Leaders provide a range of training for coaches and trainers, such as how to use assessment effectively, how to provide developmental feedback and how to support learners with dyslexia or dyscalculia. All trainers and coaches have a basic teaching qualification. They update their occupational knowledge of the sector routinely. The range of development activities that staff receive further enhances the standard of apprentices’ training.

Leaders have effective processes to assure the quality of education that apprentices receive. They routinely observe trainers’ and coaches’ teaching, and they support sessions. Leaders provide effective and supportive feedback to staff that helps them to understand how to improve their teaching and support skills.

Coaches provide apprentices with suitable careers advice and guidance. Most apprentices aspire to gain more responsibility and to move to more senior roles within their organisations, the majority of which have established career progression routes.

Since the previous monitoring visit, senior leaders have strengthened their governance arrangements by recruiting additional advisory board members who are appropriately qualified in sales and education. Advisory board members understand their responsibilities fully. They receive a range of high-quality information from leaders. This helps them to hold leaders to account in order to raise the standard of the training that apprentices receive.

**Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers prioritise safeguarding. They have a detailed understanding of the risks to apprentices’ health and personal safety. This includes online risks when learning remotely. Apprentices know how to keep themselves safe and who to contact if they have any concerns.

Apprentices understand fully the risks posed to them relating to radicalisation and extremism. Most apprentices learn about the specific risks in their region, such as the growth of involuntary celibate ideology in the East Midlands.

All staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and deputy, receive appropriate training on safeguarding and the ‘Prevent’ duty. Leaders complete a range of appropriate checks when appointing new staff to make sure that they are suitable to work with their apprentices.

Development coaches know their apprentices very well. They check on apprentices’ health and well-being routinely. Coaches provide a range of effective support to
apprentices, such as additional telephone calls or online meetings, if they have any concerns.

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

- Leaders and managers should ensure that they understand and take account of all employers’ business cycles and demands when designing and teaching the curriculum.

- Leaders and managers should ensure that all line managers, including those in small employers, plan and coordinate on- and off-the-job training effectively to enable apprentices to implement new knowledge and practise their new skills routinely in their job roles.

- Leaders and managers should continue to ensure that they recruit the right people to their level 4 sales executive apprenticeship to ensure that they remain on their programmes and achieve their apprenticeships.
**Provider details**

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**Contact number** 07976 546148  
**Website** www.bmsprogress.com  
**Principal, CEO or equivalent** David Bill  
**Provider type** Independent learning provider  
**Date of previous inspection** Not previously inspected  
**Main subcontractors** None
Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of quality and curriculum, 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 visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners’ work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider’s documentation and records.

Inspection team

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