

# Prostart Training

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 54006

**Name of lead inspector:** Robert Hamp HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 09 March 2012

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider  
Trent Valley Business Centre  
28 High Street

**Address:** Long Eaton  
Nottingham  
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## Information about the provider

1. Prostart Training was established in 1999 as the trading arm of Millbrook Management Services Limited. Its offices and training facilities are based in Long Eaton, Nottingham. The managing director is supported by 22 members of staff of whom 12 are assessors and seven are internal verifiers.
2. The Skills Funding Agency funds apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in accounts; business administration; contact centre; customer service; health and social care; information technology; management; retailing; sales; team leading and warehousing and two higher apprenticeships in accounts for learners in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire. The Young People’s Learning Agency funds a small foundation learning programme. Approximately 95% of income is generated through the Skills Funding Agency. Training in health and social care has been introduced since the previous inspection.
3. Currently, Prostart has 391 learners, with 270 learners on business administration and law apprenticeships at levels 2, 3 and 4. Forty-nine learners are on health and social care apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3. Twenty-nine learners are on the foundation learning programme. Forty-five learners are on apprenticeships at levels 2 and 3 in information technology and retailing and warehousing, which were not inspected. The profile of learners includes 73% females, 10% from minority ethnic backgrounds and 48% who have declared a learning disability and/or difficulty.
4. The following organisations provide training on behalf of Prostart:
  - BPP (business administration and law)
  - Mercia College (health, public services and care; foundation learning)

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
<b>Young learner provision:</b> 16 to 18	25 learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships	336 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Health and social care	3
Preparation for work	3
Business administration and law	2

## Overall effectiveness

- Overall effectiveness is good. The proportion of learners completing their apprenticeship frameworks is high and the proportion completing their frameworks within expected timescales is very high. Learners on the newly-introduced health and social care and foundation learning programmes are making at least satisfactory progress. Learners feel safe and really enjoy their learning and have good relationships with their assessors. They develop in confidence well, gaining valuable work-related skills and are valued by their employers. Many learners are taking on additional responsibilities in the workplace and progress onto higher level or additional programmes.
- The quality of training and assessment and coaching in the workplace is good. Training advisers are well qualified and have relevant experience. Training and assessment is provided flexibly and meets the needs of employers well. Partnerships with employers are highly effective. Employers are really supportive and provide good opportunities for learners to complete programme units and make progress. The range of programmes on offer for learners is good. Support for learners is outstanding. Learners are really positive about the support they receive both on and off their programmes. However, opportunities

to integrate key skills into learning programmes are not always taken. The promotion of equality and diversity and e-safety is not applied consistently during reviews.

7. Leadership and management are good. Managers demonstrate a total commitment to raising expectations and providing a supportive and aspirational culture for all learners. Demanding targets are set and met throughout the organisation. Arrangements to promote the safeguarding of learners are good and very good in health and social care. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The self-assessment process is good and the self-assessment report is accurate. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The quality assurance of sub-contractors is under developed.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are very good. Overall success rates have been consistently high for the last four years and are well above the national averages. Success rates for learners who complete their programme in the expected time are also very high. Learners on foundation learning and health and social care are making at least satisfactory progress. The standard of learners' work is generally high.
- Learners really enjoy their learning. They achieve good standards in their practical work and report that they feel safe. Health and safety are promoted well within the workplace. Learners gain in confidence and make good improvements in their social and economic well-being.
- Learners develop good personal social and employability skills. They display high levels of competence. Many learners are widening their job roles as a result of training and progress to higher levels of responsibility. Health and social care and foundation learners make good links with the local community.
- Training and assessment are good. Assessors provide very effective individual coaching in the workplace to build learners' confidence and skills. Assessors are well qualified and very experienced, particularly in business administration and management. Learners benefit from clear and prompt feedback which enables them to improve and progress. However, key skills are not always fully integrated into apprenticeship learning programmes and the progress of health and social care learners is not clearly recorded and monitored.
- The provision effectively meets the needs and interests of learners and employers. Learners benefit from the selection of units, often in discussion with their employer. Many learners progress onto other or higher-level qualifications or additional programmes. Foundation learners particularly value their community involvement which reinforces their practical and social skills.
- Partnerships with employers are good. Learners are employed within a range of good-quality organisations. Employers are keen for learners to successfully complete their qualifications and are knowledgeable of their learners' progress. Employers are highly complimentary of the flexible assessor visits which meet

both learners' and employers' needs. Assessors use their current industry experience effectively to identify and plan learning opportunities.

- Prostart provides outstanding guidance and support to learners. Staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their learners' needs and develop friendly supportive relationships which the learners value. Assessors generate high levels of enthusiasm and a commitment to learning in their learners. Learners say that Prostart's support and guidance are largely responsible for their success on their programmes.
- All Prostart's staff place the needs of learners at the heart of their work. Senior managers' open and approachable style promotes consistent staff understanding of the company's priorities, direction and challenges. Data are used very effectively to monitor progress against targets. While communications are good, record keeping for meetings lacks detail. It is too soon to judge the impact of the company's revised marketing strategy on improved apprenticeship recruitment.
- The company places a strong focus on safeguarding. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibilities and personal boundaries. A thorough risk-assessment process identifies increasing number of learners requiring sensitively managed intervention and counselling support. Arrangements to promote good health and safety are robust. Although safe internet use and personal safety are covered well in induction, they are not always reinforced sufficiently.
- Prostart uses a wide range of approaches to promote equality and diversity. Highly effective support helps reduce learners' barriers to learning. Widely circulated newsletters regularly include interesting equalities related topics. Very detailed analysis of data identifies any differences between groups to inform improvement, such as in the recruitment of males. However, assessors miss opportunities to reinforce equality and diversity and maximise the use of available resources.
- The improved collection and use of the views of learners and employers, through systematic quality review, generates a high response. Learners and employers value the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences. A good range of examples of improvement following feedback are evident. However, Prostart has no regular meetings with subcontractors' learners to elicit their views directly.
- Prostart's staff are actively involved in self-assessment and in implementing action plans. The self-assessment report is concise, appropriately judgmental and largely accurate. Self-assessment links well to the comprehensive quality framework. Prostart has streamlined its observation of the teaching and learning process, but insufficiently evaluative judgements are leading to over-grading and action points that lack detail.
- Managers recognise that their subcontractor quality arrangements are insufficiently rigorous. They have taken appropriate steps to minimise risk and recently increased their frequency of monitoring. However, the current monitoring arrangements are overly compliance based and do not promote

continuous improvement sufficiently. The self-assessment process for subcontractors is insufficiently evaluative or inclusive of their staff.

### **What does Prostart need to do to improve further?**

- Implement an effective strategy for better integrated planning and delivery of key skills for learners to develop their practical application throughout their programmes.
- Ensure that staff reinforce learners' understanding about safeguarding, e-safety and equality and diversity throughout their learning, including during progress reviews and by making full use of all available resources.
- Further develop the skills of observers in making evaluative judgements when observing the different aspects of training and assessment to ensure that accurate grades are awarded and clear action points identified to drive improvement.
- Continue to ensure that all subcontracted provision provides learners with a high quality learning experience that is consistent with that of Prostart's directly delivered provision.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- that learning is always good fun
- gaining new skills in the workplace
- the good communications
- the friendly and helpful assessors who listen to them
- good one-to-one support
- the qualification, which really helps them understand their work
- training that suits my needs.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- information about qualifications and the jobs and levels they can lead to.

### **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What employers like:**

- the flexibility in learning arrangements
- the convenience of training delivered on site
- that the training is based on job role
- skilful assessors who use work examples to help learners gain evidence.

**What employers would like to see improved:**

- information when a tutor or assessor is off sick.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

8. Prostart's capacity to improve is good. Prostart has maintained its high overall success rates and the very high success rates for learners completing in expected timescales. The provider has maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and some aspects of the provision have improved further. Teaching, training and assessment and coaching in the workplace are good. Managers lead the provision well and set high standards. Staff are well qualified and knowledgeable and have a good awareness of how they contribute to improvement targets.
9. The self-assessment process is generally inclusive but is not always understood well enough by subcontracted staff. The current self-assessment report is a clear and an accurate representation of the provider. All staff have a very high commitment to learners, who are monitored effectively and supported very well. The quality assurance of Prostart's provision is highly effective but not yet comprehensively implemented for subcontractors.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

10. Outcomes for learners are very good. Overall success rates are high and have been well above national averages since the previous inspection in 2008. Success rates for learners who complete within expected timescales are also very high. Learners on the recently introduced health and social care apprenticeship programme and on the foundation learning programme are making at least satisfactory progress. The achievements of foundation learners and the proportion who progress into employment or training are improving.
11. Learners develop professional skills well and are making substantial improvements in their economic and social wellbeing. They enjoy their learning and are highly positive in their feedback about the provider. The majority of learners are making good progress and the standard of work their is high. Learners demonstrate high levels of motivation and confidence and are keen to succeed. Progress to a higher level of study or to other courses for the majority of learners is good.
12. Learners feel safe. They have a very good awareness and understanding of health and safety, particularly in health and social care. Most learners are knowledgeable about their health and well-being and are encouraged to make informed choices through a comprehensive range of posters; this is not available to learners in the sub-contracted provision. Health and social care learners and foundation learners make valuable links with local communities.



## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

13. Training and assessment and coaching in the workplace are good. Assessors visit learners regularly in the workplace to assess and plan learning and prepare their learners well for assessment. The action plans, which are agreed with learners, contain useful and specific short-term targets. Learners are knowledgeable of their targets and are motivated to complete them prior to the next assessor visit. Assessors are well qualified and most have current industry experience, particularly in business administration and management. Assessors provide very effective individual coaching in the workplace to build learners' confidence and skills. Assessment of learners' performance is accurate and consistent; learners benefit from clear and prompt feedback enabling them to improve and progress. However, key skills are not always fully embedded into learning programmes and recording and monitoring of the progress of health and social care learners is not effective.
14. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners complete a satisfactory numeracy and literacy test to identify additional learning needs; relevant results are recorded on individual learning plans along with any accredited prior learning. This is used satisfactorily to identify the correct level of learning programme. However, in health and social care this process is underdeveloped. Reviews of progress are thorough, regularly involving the employer and recording additional on-the-job training. Assessors reflect on the learner's progress and targets are set that motivate the learner to progress quickly. Whilst equality and diversity and personal safety are covered thoroughly during induction, opportunities are missed to further develop the learners' knowledge during formal reviews.
15. The provision is effective in meeting the needs and interests of learners and employers. Programmes are carefully designed to meet the needs of employers well. Prostart closely links the content of employers' in-house training and the workplace experiences of learners to the apprenticeship frameworks. Learners often progress from intermediate level to advanced apprenticeships or move onto another learning programme that is effective in meeting their employers' and own needs. Foundation learners particularly value their community enterprise involvement which reinforces their practical and social skills and helps them gain in confidence and self esteem.
16. Prostart has developed good employer partnerships. Business administration learners, in particular, are employed within a range of high quality organisations. Employers are keen for learners to successfully complete their qualifications and are knowledgeable of their learners' progress. Assessors communicate regularly with workplace managers and the flexibly arranged assessor visits meet both learners' and employers' needs well. Assessors use their industry experience effectively to identify and plan learning opportunities which help learners progress quickly.

17. The individual support and guidance to learners is outstanding. Prostart staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their learners' needs and develop friendly and supportive relationships which the learners value. Learners speak of the ease at which they can discuss work and personal issues with staff openly and honestly. Assessors generate high levels of enthusiasm and a commitment to learning in their learners. Learners are contacted regularly by Prostart staff to ensure their wellbeing and progress and these staff respond immediately to learners' requests for help. Prostart has successfully supported learners at risk of redundancy in finding alternative employment and thereby enabling them to successfully complete their training. Learners say that their assessor's support and encouragement is largely responsible for their success on their programmes. Prostart offers learners requiring learning or additional support needs one to one coaching from specialist tutors in the workplace. It also provides learners with training to improve, for example, their skills in answering telephones confidently and writing letters, which have helped them gain promotion and develop their employability skills.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

18. Prostart's senior managers have taken the lead in developing the company's central ethos to place the best interests of learners at the heart of their work. Staff report that managers are accessible and listen to and value their views. A comprehensive meetings schedule promotes good staff understanding of the company's direction, priorities and challenges. Learners' outcomes and progress made towards achieving company and staff targets are monitored very closely; detailed data analysis enables managers and staff to risk assess areas of concern and implement appropriate action. Managers recognise the need to use new approaches to maintain company viability in a challenging environment and systematically review progress against the business plan each quarter. Staff training and development are good and actively promoted. Most staff are well qualified and encouraged to progress into more challenging roles to meet changing company need.
19. External support has helped clarify gaps in the marketing strategy. Managers recognise the urgent need to significantly improve the currently below-target apprenticeship recruitment levels. Staff have participated in a range of promotional events, but it is too soon to judge their impact. While communications are good, discussion during meetings is not well documented. For example, minutes of managers' meetings indicate much focus on operational matters, but little detail about strategy is recorded.
20. The company's safeguarding arrangements are highly effective. The safeguarding policy is clearly written, includes useful definitions and identifies staff responsibilities and boundaries. The two designated officers have achieved level 2 accredited safeguarding training and other staff have annual awareness training. All staff have current Criminal Record Bureau checks. Prostart's effective risk-assessment process shows a significant increase in recorded

concerns. For example, the need for qualified on-site counselling support doubled from 2009/10 to 2010/11. Interventions are sensitively managed and involve external agencies and parents as appropriate. Arrangements to promote safe and healthy working practice are good. Staff are well trained; some have formal health and safety qualifications. Safe internet use and personal safety are well covered during induction but these topics are not reinforced sufficiently afterwards.

21. Prostart has good arrangements to promote equality and diversity. Staff are trained effectively and are kept well informed through quarterly meeting of the equality and diversity group. Well-received and widely circulated newsletters include an interesting range of equalities related topics each month. A useful booklet provides information and scenarios to promote discussion with learners. Highly effective support reduces learners' barriers to learning. Well-established events help raise learners' aspirations and celebrate their success. The company has made good progress to fulfil the requirements of the 2010 equalities legislation. Close analysis of equalities data identifies any differences in achievements between particular groups and informs corrective actions. The company recognises the need to recruit more males and is active in a number of widening participation and recruitment initiatives. However, assessors miss opportunities to reinforce equality and diversity in work places and do not make full use of the impressive range of equality and diversity resources.
22. The collection and use of users' views is systematic and productive. Following very low response rates to the first employers' survey in 2009/10, methodology was changed. Views are now sampled effectively throughout the year using visits and phone contact to establish employers' and learners' views on for example, the quality of their experience and any concerns they have. Response rates have improved and a number of examples of improvement have followed feedback. However, Prostart staff have no regular meetings directly with subcontractors' learners.
23. Self-assessment and quality improvement are good. Prostart staff are actively involved in the self-assessment process and in implementing action plans. The recently updated quality framework is coherent and ensures that the quality of each aspect of training is checked thoroughly. The scheduling of the observation of teaching and learning process has improved from a previously too onerous frequency and includes subcontractors and appropriate standardisation. However, observation records are insufficiently evaluative and show some indications of over-grading.
24. Managers recognise that their arrangements to manage subcontractors are not rigorous enough. The current arrangements are compliance based and do not promote continuous improvement sufficiently. The self-assessment process for subcontractors is insufficiently inclusive of their staff. Managers have minimised risk by increasing the frequency with which they monitor the subcontractors' work and by placing further recruitment at one subcontractor on hold and terminating the contract with the other.

25. Value for money is good. Overall outcomes for learners have been consistently high over a number of years. Staff resources are used well. Prostart's staff are working hard to improve the currently low apprenticeship recruitment rates and to assure the quality of their subcontracted provision.

## Subject areas

### Health and social care

### Grade 3

#### Context

26. Health and social care provision is subcontracted to Mercia College. All of the provision takes place in workplaces in the East Midlands region, predominantly focusing on care for the elderly. Currently 15 apprenticeships and 33 advanced apprenticeships are registered. The first cohort of learners is not due to complete until January 2013.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. In-year data demonstrate that the majority of learners are making at least satisfactory progress; some learners are ahead of schedule. Attendance is satisfactory. All learners are enjoying their work and are gaining a thorough understanding of the needs of vulnerable adults and developing relevant caring skills. Assessors are very effectively raising learners' aspirations to progress to higher levels.
- Learners feel extremely safe. They are able to apply health, safety and safeguarding knowledge effectively in the workplace and are confident in whom to approach to seek support. Risk assessment is excellent. Learners are developing their confidence and communication skills well. They are also developing a good understanding of the links between theory and practice.
- Learners make well-informed choices about health and wellbeing in the workplace and when supporting individuals. Good links are established with the local community; family involvement in additional care-home recreational activities is promoted well. Learners apply their knowledge effectively in order to provide good levels of individual care and promote opportunities for independent living.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory; some excellent practice was seen for the apprenticeship provision. Assessors use learners' employment activity and responsibilities to form the basis for portfolio development well. Learners receive clear verbal feedback from assessors following observations. However, employers are not always sufficiently involved in training and assessment processes to provide learners with suitable tasks to complete units.
- Learners apply theory to practice in their work setting well. The majority of assessors use skilful questioning to elicit independent and reflective learning. In a small amount of assessor practice this is less effective; learners' progress is slower and the quality of evidence is less substantial.
- Tracking, recording and monitoring of learners' progress are ineffective. Although learners are clear about their progress against target end dates, unit targets with challenging timescales are not set. Assessment planning, review and feedback records are mostly completed by the assessor with too little learner involvement. Key skills are insufficiently integrated into the programme

and required learning support is not always provided for individuals' key skills development.

- Staff are considerate and flexible when planning visits to care homes; accommodating rota commitments and learners' needs and providing a good level of care, advice and guidance. For example, learners are visited during evening shifts to carry out assessments. Training schedules are well planned. Learners and employers appreciate the caring, empathetic and supportive work of the assessors.
- Staff are well qualified and have good levels of sector competence and experience which is appreciated by learners and employers. Mercia College provides a good range of mandatory training through its continuing professional development programme. Assessors make good use of their occupational knowledge to support learners. However, the application of their occupational knowledge to key skills development is not well established and, as a result, key skills work is not grounded sufficiently into the occupational area.
- The promotion of safeguarding is excellent and managed effectively within the work environment. All learners demonstrate a particularly high level of understanding of safe working practice and legal requirements. Risk-assessment processes are very robust. They are applied effectively to all work settings and include a lone worker policy to ensure assessors' safety during evening visits. Suitable personal alarms and mobile phones are provided. Equality and diversity are integrated well into workplace practice.
- The observation of assessors' work when supporting learners in the workplace is insufficiently frequent to promote consistent practice. The process is too variable and overly dependant on the individual observer's experience and expertise. The action plans completed following observation do not provide sufficient detail about the areas for development needed to improve performance. New assessors shadow more experienced colleagues, but insufficient use is made of opportunities to share good practice.
- Prostart's management of Mercia College's performance and workplace assessment is under developed. Assessors do not contribute to the self-assessment process. However, the provider has recognised the areas for improvement identified during the inspection and is taking appropriate action to rectify them.

### **What does Prostart need to do to improve further?**

- Improve learners' progress by ensuring that employers are involved more closely in the review and monitoring processes.
- Improve teaching learning and assessment by enabling experienced assessors to work alongside their peers more frequently and by improving the frequency with which assessors' work is observed and achieving a greater consistency of practice between observers.

## Preparation for work

## Grade 3

### Context

27. Foundation learning operates from Prostart's main centre and at sub-contracted provision in Derby at Mercia College. Twenty-nine learners are on the programme with 10 at the main centre and 19 off site. All learners are aged 16 to 18. About three-quarters of the learners are female and one in ten are from minority ethnic groups. About a third have a declared disability but very few have additional learning needs. Learners undertake a range of qualifications aimed at improving levels of confidence and employability skills.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners achieve outcomes in a timely way that supports their progression and short courses provide them with valuable early success. Achievements at Mercia College are high, but progression rates into employment or training are low. Achievement and progression rates have been inconsistent overall but current in-year data shows positive improvements in outcomes for all learners.
- Learners develop a good range of personal and social skills which improve their employability. They take pride in their work and develop a good work ethos. Recent actions are helping to improve retention and attendance and have a clearer focus on learners achieving a wider range of positive outcomes; these are having a positive impact on achievements and progression rates. Short courses support learners' preparation for work-experience and increase their knowledge of what is expected of them in the workplace.
- Learners feel safe. Health and safety are promoted well in training, building effectively on prior knowledge and learning. Learners are provided with some good examples of safe-working practices during their induction sessions and this work is reinforced and developed well during progress reviews. The promotion of safeguarding is good at the Prostart centre and a wide range of posters is displayed prominently. However safeguarding is not promoted as well at Mercia College.
- Foundation learners make a positive contribution to their community by raising money for charity through events and enterprise activities. They enjoy planning and participating in these events which develop wider skills of team working and problem solving.
- Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. In the best sessions trainers use activity based learning, including role play and scenario planning and make frequent changes in activity which succeed in engaging and motivating the learners. Session aims and objectives are clear, but session plans do not identify individual learners' needs sufficiently. The standard of written and practical work is satisfactory. The level of detail in feedback to inform learning development varies in quality and depth.

- Improvements in the identification of soft skills such as time-keeping are now in place. However, these could be further expanded to include analytical and organisational skills. Reviews of learners' progress are good and cover a wide range of objectives, and include opportunities for self-assessment by learners. Learners at Prostart do not receive a copy of their reviews.
- The provision meets the needs of learners well. Subject areas are delivered in blocks of learning with clearly planned and monitored end dates. However, unit target completion dates are set at an overall level and not broken down into smaller dated elements of learning. A personal tutor spends the first eight weeks of the programme working closely with learners to get to know them and understand their individual needs well.
- Care guidance and support are very good. Learners additional support needs are identified effectively through initial diagnostic assessments of functional skills. However, a small number of learners are placed on programmes that are at too high a level. Individual support opportunities in English and mathematics are particularly good. Learners value highly the support they receive.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Actions to improve achievement and progression outcomes have started to have a positive impact. Data are used well to inform progress against plans and to monitor key aspects of the provision. New strategies for improvement have been well thought out and focus on key areas of development. Management of subcontracted provision is satisfactory and this provision is monitored regularly.
- Equality and diversity are managed well. The learner review process tests the understanding of learners effectively. Session plans provide clear links to themes relating to equality and diversity. Learners at Mercia College complete a useful unit of learning related to equality and diversity. However, males are under represented within the provision.
- All staff are involved closely in writing the self-assessment report. Data are used appropriately to help evaluate the provision and the judgements made accurately describe the provision. Self-assessments are completed separately by the two providers and the sharing of good practice is under developed between the foundation learning teams.

### **What does Prostart need to do to improve further?**

- Continue to improve progression to positive outcomes and achievement rates to more consistently prepare learners for employment and working life.
- Improve teaching and learning outcomes by more effective planning to meet learners' individual needs.



## Business administration and law

## Grade 2

### Context

28. The provider offers business administration and management apprenticeship programmes at levels 2, 3 and 4. Of the 270 learners currently following apprenticeship programmes: 150 are apprentices, 118 are advanced apprentices and two are higher level apprentices following an accountancy programme. All of the learners are over 19 years of age. Learners are supported by 10 full-time trainer/assessors. All off-the-job training takes place in the learners' workplaces.

### Key findings

- Overall success rates are very high. Success rates within planned timescales are also very high, and markedly above the national average. Learners complete work to a high standard. Portfolios are well organised and professionally presented. Learners make good progress. They are highly motivated, keen to succeed and work enthusiastically to develop a wide range of practical skills. Many learners progress to a higher level qualification and some have gained management responsibilities at work.
- Learners feel safe. All learners have a good understanding of health and safety and adopt safe practices at work. Internet safety and personal safety are covered well at induction. Employers operate effective health, safety and equality practices. However, not all assessors reinforce personal safety issues and equality and diversity with learners sufficiently during their learning programmes.
- Assessors coach learners well. This helps to engage learners with their programme, encourages self-reflection and helps build learners' confidence and motivation. Assessors help learners well to identify what they have learnt, the progress they are making and how they can improve. Assessors do not always integrate key skills sufficiently into the learning process. Most assessors do not make sufficient use of information and learning technology during learning and assessment activities.
- Assessment practices are good. Assessment is carried out frequently and is well planned. Assessors provide learners with very detailed feedback about completed work, which helps them to improve. However, some feedback by assessors, following their observations of learners' working practice, is too descriptive. Targets set for learners are specific and very effective in helping them to progress. However, a few targets set for level 2 learners do not provide sufficient challenge.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners receive an interview from a recruitment officer and complete a satisfactory numeracy and literacy test to identify additional learning needs. The results are recorded on the individual learning plan along with any accredited prior learning and used effectively to

identify the correct level of learning programme and additional learning support needs that may be required by the learner.

- Employer partnerships are very good. Learners benefit from good quality workplaces. Assessors establish productive relationships with employers and have a good knowledge of sector working practices. Many employers are involved in planning learning and regularly participate in learner progress reviews. Employers actively support learners' progress and are keen to provide a wide range of experiences to help them complete their programme.
- Support for learners is outstanding. Assessors build very positive relationships with their learners and know them well. Learners can contact assessors easily and receive good ongoing programme and pastoral support. Learners' progress is very closely monitored and assessors respond very quickly to learners requiring help. They provide additional coaching, personal care and support to meet individual learners' needs. Most learners say that the continuity and wide range of support provided is responsible for their good progress.
- Operational management is good. Managers promote the importance of learning and have high expectations of their learners and staff. Success rates are high and improving. Managers work hard to raise standards and improve outcomes for all learners. Regular meetings ensure standardisation and progress of learners is closely monitored and reviewed. Assessors are highly motivated and encouraged to work with autonomy. They feel very well supported by managers.
- Safeguarding is good. Staff are well trained and benefit from regular continuous professional development to update their practice. Most staff are knowledgeable about health and safety practices and equality and diversity. However, not all assessors sufficiently reinforce these with learners either in naturally occurring practices or within progress reviews.
- Quality assurance is thorough. Systems to monitor learner progress and identify at risk learners are very effective. Action plans clearly identify how improvements can be made to the provision and are regularly reviewed and updated. Feedback is sought from employers and learners. Internal verification is robust. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and judgements in the self-assessment reports are largely accurate. Managers know their provision well and have a clear understanding of what they have to do to make improvements.

### **What does Prostart need to do to improve further?**

- Increase the use of technology to support learning and assessment.

## Information about the inspection

29. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality and contractual manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in three subject areas.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Prostart Training**

**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>			
Full-time learners	29	29	0
Part-time learners	363	0	363
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	n/a		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a		
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1		
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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