

Twin Group

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Twin Group was established in 1993 and is based in Lewisham. Its government-funded training arm is known as Twin Training. A director, five managers, five assessors and three verifiers manage the Train to Gain element of Twin Group's business. Government funded learning represents 25% of Twin Group's business. Twin Group was awarded a Train to Gain contract in October 2008. It directly delivers National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in supporting teaching and learning in schools, customer service, and team leading and management. In August 2011 it will transfer its Train to Gain contract to another provider.

At the last inspection in February 2009, the provider's overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory, with satisfactory capacity to improve. All aspect judgements and the judgements for health, public services and care, and education and training were satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of the self-assessment process to bring about improvements?	Significant Progress
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The self-assessment report is detailed and evaluative, and clearly identifies Twin Group's strengths and areas for development. Due to a recent major management restructuring and the forthcoming transfer of its Train to Gain contract to another provider, Twin Group has not prepared a quality improvement plan for the current year. However, the plan for the previous year contained detailed targets, when they were to be achieved and by whom. Managers used this plan well to monitor progress towards targets and to improve performance. It has improved its management information systems considerably and now monitors learners' progress effectively. Consequently, this year nearly all learners who have completed their programme have done so within the agreed timescale.

Twin Group uses learners' feedback well to inform planning and improvements to its provision. Learners' comments to inspectors during the visit and on the Ofsted website were very positive regarding the support they receive from the provider. In 2009/10, Twin Group developed an effective electronic survey for employers, which facilitates the collation of the returns; it shares the outcomes in regular reports to employers. The provider is fully aware of its areas for improvement and already has good plans to rectify them.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made since the last inspection in improving outcomes for learners?

Significant Progress

At the last inspection, learners had not been in training long enough to judge their achievement. Since then, overall success rates have been very high. In 2009/10, rates were 98.9% compared with a national average of 86.6%, and 100% in three of the four subject areas. The rates at which courses were completed within their planned time declined to below national averages in 2009/10. This was due partly to a drop in the rates for health and social care learners, but mainly to the low rates for learners on the new team-leadership and management programmes.

In the current year, Twin Group's data for the first five months show that overall success rates are high and that almost all learners who have completed have done so in the agreed time. The remaining learners on programmes are all studying for team-leadership or management qualifications. Progress tracking of a few of the learners working in restaurants shows a delay in their progress due to pressures of the recent festive period. However, managers and assessors are confident that they will catch up and that most remaining learners will complete their qualifications within their agreed timescales.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in improving assessment practice for learners?

Reasonable Progress

Since the last inspection, assessors have started to agree a schedule of visits before each programme starts to ensure the employer's commitment. When assessments cannot occur as planned, assessors are very flexible in rearranging times to suit learners' shift patterns. However, due to commercial pressures, a few learners are not yet at the planned stage of progress. The assessor has arranged more frequent visits and is liaising closely with the internal verifier to prioritise work with these learners to enable them to complete on time. Digital recording is used well to capture performance evidence in a very busy environment, and learners become more reflective in responding to useful feedback, which they value. However, over reliance on a narrow range of assessment methods slows progress.

Learners' progress reviews are constructive and set clear expectations for the next visit, which are carefully negotiated with employers to ensure that learners can demonstrate their skills effectively. However, records of reviews contain insufficient detail of learners' progress or the tasks and targets agreed.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in strengthening the monitoring of training and assessment and the actions to bring about improvement?

Significant Progress

Since the last inspection, Twin Group has improved significantly its processes to observe and monitor the quality of training and assessment. A quality assurance coordinator has been appointed and quality assurance policies and procedures improved. Observations of training sessions are now focused on the learners' experiences, particularly their learning and understanding and their engagement in the sessions. Reports from internal verifications of assessments are clear and informative. Strengths and areas for improvement are identified and actions for development are clearly stated with appropriate support offered where necessary. Staff now take good advantage of sharing effective teaching and assessment practices through joint standardisation meetings with partners, for example in using video technologies to record evidence.

What progress has been made in improving the management of the team-leadership and management programmes?

Reasonable Progress

In 2009/10 too few learners on team-leadership and management programmes achieved their qualifications within the planned time. Managers identified that this was because, in many cases, the units learners studied were not sufficiently well matched to their roles. Twin Group commissioned effective training from an external assessor to enable staff to ensure that learners followed appropriate units. It has also improved the initial guidance for employers and learners to make sure that they are both sufficiently clear about what is expected on the programmes. In the first five months of the current year, nearly all leavers on these programmes completed on time.

Internal verification is rigorous and well planned to support assessors. New assessors are monitored frequently. Verification is effective in identifying areas to improve. The provider has improved its systems to monitor and track learners' progress, and results are shared effectively with employers and learners, but they are not always up to date or used consistently to give a clear overall picture.

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