

# Platinum Employment Advice and Training Ltd

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 56776

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

**Last day of inspection:** 10 May 2012

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## **FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Context and focus of visit**

Platinum Employment Advice and Training Ltd (Platinum) employs 19 staff across three main sites in Birmingham City centre, Handsworth and Winson Green. Platinum contracts with the Education Funding Agency to provide Foundation Learning programmes to young people aged 16-24. Learners work predominantly within the engineering and manufacturing sector.

Seventy learners between the ages of 16 and 24 are on the Foundation Learning programme; 10% are female. The proportion of people with a minority ethnic heritage is 60%.

At the last inspection the provider's overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, quality of provision, leadership and management, and equality and diversity were graded satisfactory. Safeguarding was good. The Entry to Employment programme, since replaced by Foundation Learning, was judged to be satisfactory.

### **Themes**

#### **Outcomes for learners**

**What progress has been made to improve further the outcomes for learners and the progress they make?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection outcomes for learners were satisfactory. Progression rates were low but improving. Progression rates continue to improve and are currently on track to reach or exceed Platinum's target of 65%. Qualification achievement rates are satisfactory overall and good for those who remain on the programme. Learners' portfolios are of a good standard. Learners develop good personal and social skills and improve their employment prospects, particularly within the motor vehicle industry. Job search skills are focused well on learners' interests in motor vehicle occupations. Learners have a good understanding of health and safety in the work place and are prepared well for practical tasks in the workshop. A good range of health and safety posters are highly visible in training rooms. Security arrangements are good in the training centre and learners feel very safe. Learners have a good awareness and understanding of the benefits of learning for their economic and social well-being and of issues that affect community cohesion. Retention is satisfactory. Attendance is poor for some groups of learners but this is monitored appropriately.

## **Self-assessment and improvement planning**

**What progress has been made in using the self-assessment process and quality improvement planning to address areas of improvement identified at the last inspection?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection the self-assessment process was not inclusive of employers' views. Quality improvement arrangements were insufficiently embedded and improvement plans lacked sufficient detail and targets were not clear. Employers' views are now obtained systematically and used to make more comprehensive self-assessment judgements. Quality improvement arrangements are embedded well. Staff are clear about individual responsibilities and their role in quality improvement. A detailed quality calendar is used effectively to manage individual members of staff through each key learning process. Staff have a better awareness of the 'at risk' learners. This information is used effectively at regular team meetings to monitor progress. Improved use of management information provides learners with a better awareness of their progress and managers with effective tools to manage staff targets. Action planning is much improved. Target setting is clear, time bound and with a better focus on actions and responsibilities. However, some action points do not focus on improvements and it is not always clear how they are to be achieved.

## **Quality of provision**

**What progress has been made to ensure learners have access to appropriate facilities for practical motor vehicle skills development and to establish more effective relationships with the wider motor industry?**

**Significant progress**

At the last inspection learners did not have access to facilities for practical motor vehicle skills development. Links with the wider motor industry were underdeveloped. Significant progress has been made in providing learners with an impressive, purpose built automotive training centre, opened in March 2011. Platinum consulted effectively with local employers, the wider motor industry and its learners throughout the centre's construction and development. Learners develop a good range of practical skills using up-to-date equipment in a modern workshop setting. Much of the new equipment was supplied and installed with support and advice from automotive suppliers and manufacturers through improved industry links. Learners train on a good range of makes and models of vehicles that are changed regularly through a productive partnership with the local police. Improvements include well-equipped classrooms, separate female changing facilities and the ability to practice on up to four cars at any one time. Prospects for securing a motor vehicle apprenticeship are much improved by using modern equipment, a more relevant curriculum and a better awareness of working in the industry.

**What progress has been made in ensuring information systems provide more rigorous tracking and monitoring learners' progress and in setting challenging targets that are monitored effectively at staff appraisals?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, Platinum's management information system was judged to be inadequate for the organisation's growing needs and management's use of data was judged to be insufficiently systematic. Platinum's new management information system provides a comprehensive range of reports that are used systematically to manage and improve the provision. Data are used well by managers and tutors to monitor learners' progress and to agree timely actions to support learners. Tutor's performance is analysed effectively against the company's key performance targets and used well at regular quality and appraisal meetings to drive improvements. Senior managers receive informative monthly reports on each department's performance. Platinum recognises that it has to complete further development work to maximise the potential of the management information system. For example, reports are based on individual staff and learner performance and not on performance and progress towards annual targets.

## **Leadership and management**

**What progress has been made in implementing and monitoring the single equality plan, evaluating its impact and in reinforcing equality and diversity in the curriculum and workplace?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, Platinum did not systematically evaluate the impact of equality and diversity in the curriculum and in the workplace. Action plans were not systematically evaluated and tutors missed the opportunity to reinforce equality and diversity at reviews. Platinum's equality and diversity annual report sets out clearly its strategic priorities that are used productively to form the basis of an annual action plan. The plan is detailed and progress is tracked effectively by using a green, amber and red alert system. Platinum is making satisfactory progress in increasing the proportion of ethnic minority staff and improving learner engagement. It is developing strong links with local communities and partner organisations to support learners and improve recruitment from underrepresented groups. Equality and diversity themes have been embedded successfully into the curriculum. For example, learners have completed useful sessions on racism and prejudice, drug awareness and gang culture. Tutors' promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity at learner progress reviews has improved and is satisfactory. However, Platinum has identified that some aspects of equality and diversity are insufficiently reinforced throughout learners' programmes.

**What progress has been made in refining the observation system to monitor quality, introduce grading and improve follow up actions?**

**Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection observations of teaching and learning did not monitor quality. Grades for observed sessions were not provided and follow up actions were not produced to help staff improve. All staff undertaking observations of teaching and learning have received relevant training to make effective teaching and learning judgements and to provide tutors with appropriate grades. Observations of teaching and learning are clearly focused on quality and a greater emphasis is placed on use and standardisation of grades. Outcomes from tutor observations are discussed at staff appraisals and relevant actions and suitable professional development are agreed. Tutors have a better awareness of expectations through the development of clear grade descriptors to facilitate improvement. Tutor's performance is assessed against learner retention and progression data to identify useful trends and additional improvement strategies. However, lesson plans are not always fully completed and do not always identify equality and diversity and safeguarding themes. The documentation used to record teaching and learning sessions is repetitive.

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