

Travis Perkins Plc

Reinspection monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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REINSPECTION MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Travis Perkins Plc (Travis Perkins) is a large company supplying the United Kingdom's building and construction industry and home improvements market. It supplies more than 120,000 product lines through retail outlets including Travis Perkins Builders Merchants and Wickes DIY Retail. Staff are known as colleagues. In March 2010, an intermediate retailing apprenticeship, known as the 'master programme' started in Wickes stores. In July 2011, Travis Perkins started an apprenticeship in merchandising and specialist businesses known as 'Building People'. New Wickes' colleagues on permanent contracts work through the master programme after completing their induction. Designated 'buddies' coach and support colleagues during their programme. At the time of this inspection, 567 Wickes' colleagues were working towards their master programme of which 229 were funded by the Skills Funding Agency. A further 69 colleagues are enrolled onto the Building People apprenticeship.

At the previous inspection in November 2011, the overall effectiveness of provision, capacity to improve, outcomes for learners, and leadership and management were inadequate. The quality of provision was satisfactory. This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has the provider made in improving the self-assessment process?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, self-assessment was insufficiently self-critical, lacked input from those involved in the programme, and did not focus sufficiently on the experience of colleagues. Managers now use self-assessment more effectively to understand the quality of the apprenticeship programmes and plan improvements. It is now a central part of the company's quality improvement system. The most recent self-assessment report makes improved use of the views of stakeholders and grades all aspects of the provision. It includes a range of data to support these judgements but still overemphasises processes and actions taken, rather than their impact on colleagues' experiences. Some judgements lack sufficient supporting evidence. Through self-assessment, managers have identified most of the key areas for improvement and produced an action plan to improve the provision. The plan includes the actions required, who is responsible and target dates but does not adequately identify any impact measures or improvement targets. For example, it identifies a range of actions to improve success rates but does not set a target success rate for the organisation to achieve.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has the provider made in improving the overall success rate and the rate at which learners progress towards realistic completion targets?

Reasonable progress

At the previous inspection all colleagues had six months to complete their programme regardless of their prior experience or working hours. Success rates were low and very few colleagues completed their programme in the allocated time. Success rates varied significantly across age groups.

The company has made reasonable progress in improving success rates. Target completion dates are more realistic and take appropriate account of colleagues' work patterns. Although overall success rates remain the same, the proportion of colleagues who complete on time has increased significantly. The variation in success rates has reduced and there is now little difference in the success rate of different age groups. Although the headline success rate for men and women on all apprenticeship programmes is similar, on funded programmes women are more successful than men.

Quality of provision

What progress has the provider made in planning individual learners' development and in regularly reviewing and updating these plans?

Reasonable progress

The planning and monitoring of individual learning has improved. Individual learning plans now include target dates for each component of the programme including planned reviews of colleagues' progress. Staff use a computerised tracking system which automatically highlights any part of a colleague's programme that is overdue and this helps managers to ensure that they complete progress reviews when required. Managers take appropriate account of colleagues' work patterns and working hours when planning their programme and targets dates for completion are realistic. However, they do not take full account of colleagues' prior experience and individual needs in planning their learning and strategies to support individual colleagues are not sufficiently explicit in their learning plans.

Store managers carry out frequent reviews of colleagues' progress and agree short term targets with them. Colleagues' achievements and targets are recorded on their individual learning plan along with a clear statement of their progress to date. Where colleagues are not making the progress expected of them targets and actions agreed with managers usually enable them to catch up by their next planned review.

What progress has the provider made in improving the assessment process?**Reasonable progress**

The previous inspection identified the need for Travis Perkins to improve assessment procedures. Assessors and verifiers have implemented a number of new procedures and these are having a positive impact on the quality of assessment. Supported by the internal verifiers, store managers are improving their assessment skills and are beginning to use a wider range of assessment methodologies. To ensure the standard of assessments is consistent and meets the requirements of the awarding organisation, internal verifiers regularly sample the work of all candidates. However, they do not routinely observe all assessors. They keep detailed records of their own activity and learners' progress but have not yet collated or analysed this data to identify trends or to help prioritise their work.

What progress has the provider made in improving the coaching and support for learners?**Reasonable progress**

Since the previous inspection Travis Perkins has improved the coaching and support colleagues receive from their managers and buddies. Training and support for store managers and buddies has been strengthened, concentrating more on the development of their coaching role and the skills needed to support learners and meet their individual needs. As a result, colleagues' progress is improving; they are more motivated to complete their programmes and speak positively about their learning. The company provides buddies with a useful handbook and is now developing further support through on-line training resources. However the company has not set out a selection criteria for buddies. Many stores allow colleagues and buddies time to work together and colleagues speak highly of the support they are given. The training team recognise that some buddies find the support role more difficult and target their time accordingly, spending time working with managers and buddies in individual stores and rapidly responding to requests for help and information.

Leadership and management**What progress has the provider made in improving the use of data to monitor performance and inform improvements?****Reasonable progress**

Travis Perkins has made reasonable progress in improving the availability and use of management information. The company has developed its knowledge and use of management information well and now has more confidence in its ability to analyse and interpret data. Managers now have reliable data on the success rate and timely completion of colleagues and use this to inform self-assessment and decisions. Managers and staff also make good use of computerised systems to monitor each colleague's progress against their targets, manage progress reviews and to record individual targets. However, managers do not routinely use the available data to identify any differences in the performance of men and women, colleagues from

different ethnic groups, and those with disabilities or learning needs, and have not therefore taken action to close the gaps that exist.

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