

Parenta

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58193

Name of lead inspector: Diane Stacey HMI

Last day of inspection: 26 July 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Parenta is based in Maidstone, Kent, and offers a broad range of services to the childcare industry. These services include government-funded and private training. Parenta, acting as a subcontractor for five further education and training organisations, provides apprenticeship training in childcare at levels 2 and 3. The subcontracted provision was not in scope for this inspection.
2. Parenta provides Foundation Learning programmes over two main sites, at their headquarters in Maidstone and in Sittingbourne. A Foundation Learning administration manager oversees two tutors who are employed to work with foundation learners. In 2011/12, 63 learners enrolled on the Foundation Learning programme. All learners work towards vocational qualifications in childcare at level 1. Currently there are 22 learners on programme, funded by the Education Funding Agency. All learners are White British females.
3. The number of young people achieving five GCSEs at grade A* to C, including English and mathematics is 56.8%. In the Maidstone area, 6.1% of 18 to 24 year olds are unemployed compared with the United Kingdom rate of 7.6%.
4. Parenta provides childcare training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Central Sussex College
 - Learndirect
 - M2 Training Limited
 - Riverside College
 - South London Business School.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners:	
Foundation Learning	53 learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 4
Capacity to improve		Grade 4
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		4
Quality of provision		4
Leadership and management		4
Safeguarding		3
Equality and diversity		3
Subject areas		
Foundation Learning		4

Overall effectiveness

- The provision for young people who enrol on Parenta's Foundation Learning programme is inadequate. Learners enjoy their training but overall achievement rates of all learners' key objectives are inadequate. Vocational childcare qualifications success rates and functional skills in mathematics are satisfactory, but functional skills achievements in English are very low. Achievements of awards for personal and social development are also low. Learners do not have the opportunity to take information technology (IT) qualifications. The numbers of learners progressing into further education, training or employment are low but have risen from a very low rate last year.
- Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory with some good examples where tutors motivate and engage learners in training particularly well. However, initial assessment is not well developed. Learners' individual development plans and targets set are not of a satisfactory standard. Programmes do not meet the needs of all foundation learners adequately. Learners do not have access to work experience to allow them to practise and develop their childcare skills. The provider has not developed sufficient partnerships for the Foundation Learning programme. Care, guidance and support for learners are inadequate, although some tutors support individual learners well.

7. The company's overall vision is clear and supported by its employees, but the operational management of the Foundation Learning provision is inadequate. Safeguarding arrangements and the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory. Parenta's arrangements for self-assessment and improvement planning are insufficiently detailed. Parenta does not have sufficient arrangements to monitor all aspects of the programme and provides poor value for money.

Main findings

- Retention of learners and achievement of all learners' key objectives are low. Thirty per cent of learners leave without completing their programme. In the current year, achievements of childcare qualifications and functional skills in mathematics are satisfactory. However, so far this year, very close to the end of the contract year, functional skills in English and in personal and social development are very low. Learners do not have the opportunity to achieve IT qualifications.
- The progression rate of learners into employment, education or training for this contract year is low, at 46%, although it has improved on the previous year's very poor rate of 29%. Attendance at lessons was low during the inspection period, with only 52% of learners attending.
- Health and safety form an integral part of the learners' programme and learners demonstrate that they have a satisfactory understanding of how it relates to their own safety as well as to childcare settings.
- In the well-planned lessons, learners respond with interest and enthusiasm to tutors good questioning techniques. Tutors provide clear verbal and written feedback on learners' work, which results in learners knowing what they need to do to improve.
- Assessment planning in childcare is thorough. However, the results of initial assessment do not inform learners' individual development plans well enough. Targets are not specific and reviews fail to record progress made or indicate what the learner needs to achieve next. The recording of the support needs of learners is poor.
- The training programme does not meet the needs and interests of all learners. Parenta provides insufficient opportunities for visits to childcare settings to help learners develop an overall appreciation of the world of work. Staff and learners do not make adequate use of information technology resources and learners have limited opportunities to gain relevant IT qualifications.
- The provider has not developed enough partnerships with local organisations to enrich the foundation learners' vocational experience or to provide specific additional support.
- Learners receive poor care, guidance and support. Individual attention during lessons is good; tutors know their learners well and respond promptly to specific individual support needs. However, the information, advice and guidance available are inadequate to ensure that learners are offered and placed on an

appropriate programme to match their academic level. In addition, too few exit interviews occur to help with learners' next steps.

- Operational management systems are not well established. Performance management is inadequate. Arrangements for identifying and setting demanding targets for staff to improve the Foundation Learning programme are inadequate.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Parenta meets its statutory safeguarding duties with effective procedures and practices to ensure the safety of learners. Learners feel safe at both centres.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners develop a satisfactory appreciation of equality and diversity during induction, through discussions in lessons and the learning materials used. However, Parenta does not adequately analyse or use the data it collects to bring about improvements. Staff working on the Foundation Learning programme have not had recent equality and diversity training.
- Self-assessment procedures and quality improvement planning are inadequate. Systems to identify the strengths and areas that need developing for the Foundation Learning programme are not rigorous or used effectively to drive improvement. Quality assurance procedures are incomplete and the formal monitoring of all aspects of learners' programmes is poorly coordinated.

What does Parenta need to do to improve further?

- Increase achievement and progression rates by analysing the reasons why learners leave the programme early and pass rates are low in order to take prompt and effective actions to ensure improvements are made.
- Improve current recruitment procedures to ensure learners are on the correct programme. Set challenging and specific targets for each learner in order to improve success rates.
- Ensure that the company provides sufficient resources for learners to develop practical skills in childcare settings and increase the access to, and the use of, IT so that learners have better opportunities to progress, achieve functional skills qualifications and develop independent learning.
- Ensure that the company meets personal and social support needs of learners by providing effective information, advice and guidance and by developing productive links with external support agencies.
- Improve the company's systems for managing all aspects of the Foundation Learning provision and set demanding targets for staff to drive improvements. Ensure that data are used more effectively to identify gaps in the performance of different groups.
- Develop arrangements for self-assessment and improvement planning by ensuring thorough quality monitoring checks, including improved procedures for observing teaching and learning, to identify and make rapid improvements to the provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the interesting lessons
- the new information gained about working with children
- the friendly environment
- the small class sizes
- the helpful tutors
- the peer support between learners.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the number of visits out to interesting places
- the practical activities during the afternoon timetable.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

8. Parenta has not made all the improvements identified during the last inspection and monitoring visit that relate to the current directly funded Foundation Learning programme. Progression rates and achievement of all key objectives for foundation learners are inadequate.
9. Parenta's management team does not have a good enough understanding of the challenges it faces to improve the programme, although the two new staff appointments do have a clearer understanding of what the company needs to do to improve the Foundation Learning programme. The self-assessment process includes views from staff, but it is not clear how it makes use of learner feedback. The self-assessment report fails to recognise the significance of some aspects of poor performance such as the achievement rates of its foundation learners.
10. Quality assurance processes are not established and limited focus is placed on the use of data to set challenging targets to ensure continuous improvement. Trends in performance are not sufficiently recognised or analysed. Observations of teaching and learning are under developed.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

11. Overall success rates for the key learning objectives are low at 41% for the current year, a decline from last year. Currently and very close to the end of the contract year, learners' achievements of functional skills in English are very low, with 13% of learners achieving entry level 2 and no achievements at any higher level despite the high level of literacy evidenced by learners' qualifications on entry. During the current year, learners' achievement rate of 32% for the award in personal and social development is low. However, achievement rates in functional skills mathematics have improved this year and are satisfactory. The number of learners achieving their level 1 childcare qualification is satisfactory. Learners' progression to further training, education or employment is low. Only 29% of learners progressed into further education, training or employment last year and currently, at the end of this contract year, the rate is 46%. The company does not analyse adequately any achievement gaps between different groups of learners.
12. Learners develop useful independent living skills, such as money management. The majority of learners make good progress in their verbal confidence and improve their social skills, enabling them to work more supportively and cooperatively with each other. Learners understand that these skills are essential and will help them when they start work in environments that require communication with young children and their parents.

13. Learners are involved in personal risk assessments and develop a good awareness of ensuring a safe learning environment for themselves and others. The content of the childcare programme further develops learners' understanding of their responsibilities when working with children.

The quality of provision

Grade 4

14. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Learners receive good training in the classroom. Well-planned lessons engage learners well and they work productively to produce good portfolios of work. Tutors provide good and detailed feedback on written assignments with clear guidance for improving their work. However, insufficient resources are available to develop learners' skills in designing and making activities for children. Parenta makes little use of vocationally experienced external speakers.
15. Initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and information technology skills, to plan and prioritise the most appropriate learning route, is inadequate. Parenta identification and recording of personal and social barriers are weak, and impede learners' progress. Individual development plans do not record initial assessment results in sufficient detail. The plans also do not routinely contain clear targets for timely achievement of specific elements of each learner's programme. Records of progress reviews lack adequate detail to inform learning.
16. Parenta does not meet all the needs of foundation learners. Tutors and learners make little use of IT in lessons and the company offers learners very limited opportunity to take relevant IT qualifications. Parenta has not developed appropriate partnerships within the vocational sector to enhance the learning programme. Parenta does not plan well to provide opportunities to develop learners' subject knowledge and understanding through practical applications. Opportunities are very limited for learners to develop practical childcare skills through some type of work experience.
17. Care, guidance and support for learners are inadequate. A small number of learners enter the level 1 programme having already achieved level 2 qualifications or high grade GCSEs. Tutors work cooperatively with their learners and respond sensitively as problems arise. However, the company has few links with external organisations to provide support for specific learning and pastoral support needs.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

18. Leaders and managers have a clear strategic vision for the company as a whole. However, Parenta fails to focus enough attention on the operational management of the Foundation Learning programme. Performance management is inadequate. Managers do not routinely carry out appraisals of Foundation Learning staff. Parenta provides support to tutors to gain teaching qualifications, but it has not ensured that all mandatory training is up to date.

Leaders and managers do not set or use demanding targets to good effect in helping to monitor learners' and staff performance. Teaching resources for learners at the Sittingbourne centre are not satisfactory or of the same level as those in the Maidstone centre.

19. Parenta meets government requirements for safeguarding. Posters are clearly displayed in training centres to indicate who the designated staff contact is if learners have any safeguarding issues or concerns. Effective links exist with local safeguarding boards. Training staff involved in Foundation Learning have had recent training, although one manager requires updated training. Learners' induction includes an adequate introduction to safeguarding topics and satisfactory checks of their understanding take place during their training programme.
20. Equality and diversity policies cover harassment, bullying and discrimination satisfactorily. Parenta markets its foundation programme proactively to young people in areas of Kent to encourage wider participation of minority ethnic groups and those not in education, employment or training. Parenta has not been very successful in recruiting many learners from minority ethnic groups. Learners know with whom to talk if they are unhappy about any part of their programme. The promotion of equality and diversity during learners' induction, and in teaching activities, is satisfactory. However, the provider does not analyse performance data systematically to identify any achievement gaps between the various groups of learners, or between the two centres, and set actions to close them. Staff have not received any recent equality and diversity training.
21. Parenta regularly gathers staff views about the organisation through surveys and during meetings. Learners give their feedback through a range of questionnaires. They develop good rapport with their tutors and regularly communicate their views, although they receive limited responses from management about any suggestions for developing their experiences. Parenta does not systematically communicate with parents or carers to inform them of learners' progress.
22. The company produces a quality improvement plan that identifies areas requiring improvement across the company. However, the plan does not specifically identify those areas required for the development of the Foundation Learning programme. The plan does not link adequately with the self-assessment process or report. Newly appointed managers are making diligent efforts to review and identify improvements for the Foundation Learning provision. However, there has not yet been sufficient time to complete the process and produce an appropriately focused development plan. Parenta has no overall plan for monitoring the quality of all learners' activities. Observations of teaching and learning are insufficiently detailed.

23. Parenta does not manage its resources adequately to meet the needs of all learners, particularly those based at their Sittingbourne centre. Outcomes are inadequate and they provide inadequate value for money.

Information about the inspection

24. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's quality 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 body, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. 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 staff had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions and inductions. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Parenta**

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	23	23
Overall effectiveness	4	4
Capacity to improve	4	
Outcomes for learners	4	4
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4	
How well do learners progress?	4	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	4	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	-	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	-	
Quality of provision	4	4
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	4	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	4	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	4	
Leadership and management	4	4
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	-	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	4	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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