

Positive Outcomes Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		28 January–01 February 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Apprenticeship success rates achieved within the planned duration of programme in the largest programme area are very high and in all other programme areas success rates are around or above national rates.
- Learners develop good personal and employability skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the workplace are good overall.
- The promotion and development of learners' understanding of equality and diversity is good.
- Positive Outcomes (PO) has successfully improved its performance and the quality of provision during a period of rapid business growth.
- The provider has successfully implemented a strategy to increase the numbers of 16-18 year old learners to meet local and national priorities.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The teaching, learning and assessment in warehousing and distribution require improvement.
- In the smaller programme areas, too many learners do not achieve their apprenticeship within planned timescales.
- It does not capture information on apprentices' progression into further learning or enhanced employability sufficiently well.
- The use of initial assessment results in planning learning is insufficient.
- The presentation of self-assessment findings is under-developed.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of learners who complete their apprenticeship within the planned timescales by:
 - identifying the development needs of the learners early in the programme
 - ensuring that all learners are able to undertake the self-directed study required to complete the apprenticeship framework
 - clearly signposting all learners to the learning resources
 - setting planned completion dates that realistically reflect individual learners' needs.
- Improve the initial assessment process by:
 - testing all learners' English and mathematics skills
 - better and more timely sharing of results between staff
 - assessing experienced learners' prior skills and job roles more thoroughly to ensure they are placed on the right level programme.
- Improve the provision in warehousing and distribution by ensuring:
 - that apprentices make the progress expected of them
 - that they are well supported particularly in learning activities
 - that the framework chosen meets individual needs
 - health and safety risks are minimised.
- Collect and use effectively accurate data on learners' progression into further learning and enhanced employability.
- Improve the impact of self-assessment by:
 - ensuring the self-assessment report accurately reflects the good management understanding of the provision
 - making clear judgements about strengths and areas for improvement that lead to the specification of actions for improvement in the quality improvement plan.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Success rates for the main group of learners in administration are high. Across all programme areas success rates are around or above national rates and have improved over a three year period. However, a minority of the apprentices do not achieve their frameworks within the planned duration of the programme.
- Learners make good progress relative to their starting points and are set ambitious targets for their development within demanding timescales. However, learners with low starting points or those who are working in difficult learning environments do not make as good progress as others.
- PO monitors the performance of different groups of learners closely and takes appropriate action to ensure that all groups achieve equally well. While there are some differences in performance they are minimal and all groups of learners achieve at around or better than national rates. Strong performance management is ensuring that regional differences are slight.
- Apprentices develop good personal and employability skills. They are significantly developing their confidence levels, knowledge of legislation affecting their workplace and improving their

information, communication and technology (ICT) skills. Apprentices develop a good understanding of their employment rights and responsibilities.

- Apprentices improve their English and mathematics well through good learning opportunities which are contextualised to their job roles and workplaces. PO has recently introduced training and assessment for functional skills in line with national requirements, and early indicators are that apprentices are making satisfactory progress in acquiring these skills.
- The large majority of learners are improving their independent learning skills well. Learning programmes are devised to encourage self-study through e-learning and research activities. Apprentices are clearly briefed at the start of their programme that this will be a requirement for successful completion of the apprenticeship framework.
- Progression routes for learners are well understood. The development of English and mathematics is enabling learners to develop in their job roles better. Apprentices are acquiring new skills that are useful in their employment, such as improved customer service, presentation, and thinking skills.
- PO is developing systems and procedures to identify the percentage of learners who progress to higher level qualifications and improve their job prospects and economic well-being accurately. However, progression rates are not currently measured accurately or understood sufficiently well.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and clearly contributes to the overall success rates, which are mostly high. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace which effectively meets the needs of learners and their employers. Learners value the opportunity to gain qualifications alongside their work and employers particularly appreciate the new skills and confidence learners gain.
- Employers are satisfied with the quality of the service they receive from PO staff. Visits to learners take place at times and locations to meet the needs of learners and employers. On some of the smaller programmes however, the level of study is not high enough to challenge those learners who have previous achievements and workplace experience.
- Learners are well motivated, receiving high quality support from the provider's specialist staff. Young learners receive particularly good levels of support, with careful recruitment matched to their aspirations and employers' needs. Frequent visits to the workplace allow for further guidance and support. Where appropriate, trainers involve parents in the recruitment and selection process and keep them well informed on learners' day-to-day progress.
- The process used to assess learners' starting points and to share recruitment information requires improvement. Learners who come with higher-level qualifications do not receive an initial assessment of their English and mathematics skills, and where assessments do take place the results are not always passed to training and assessment staff.
- Targets set during progress reviews are challenging and precise, making it clear to learners what they need to do to progress, although in a few subject areas targets are over-ambitious.
- Feedback to learners is good. Following assessment, results are given to learners promptly and clearly. Written work is carefully marked. Staff maintain close links with learners and employers through frequent communication. Employers are kept informed of their learners' progress and value the high level of communication and support from PO.
- The development of learners' mathematics skills is good. Trainers have recently achieved functional skills qualifications themselves and use their skills well to support learners. Mathematics skills are particularly well developed through close working with employers. Jointly-developed workbooks draw on learners' day-to-day activities including stocktaking, customer

profiles and measurement to help improve numeracy skills. The development of learners' English skills is satisfactory.

- The provider gives good information advice and guidance to learners. They have a clear understanding of the details of their programmes. Course details are clear and optional units are carefully selected to match learners' job role and aspirations. Many learners significantly improve their confidence and aspirations to secure promotion or progress to higher levels of study. Feedback from learners through provider forums and the survey conducted prior to the inspection indicate overall levels of satisfaction with the provision and the support provided is high.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The provider has undertaken considerable development work with its staff in the last year. Learners' understanding of diversity is explored through questions which focus on recent events in politics, sports and the news. Additional questioning focuses on everyday occurrences in the workplace and the way they might affect learners and their colleagues.

Warehousing and distribution

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. While, learner progress and success rates in 2011/12 were broadly in line with those of other learners nationally, the majority of current learners are making slow progress.
- The majority of learners are enthusiastic, have a positive attitude to learning and value the opportunity to achieve qualifications. A few learners do not enjoy their learning and are unable to study independently. Due to staff changes, a minority of learners have not received adequate support from training advisors, and poor handover arrangements where changes have taken place have contributed to poor learner progress.
- Training advisors provide mostly good one-to-one coaching and support to learners in off-the-job training sessions. However, some time constraints for learning and insufficient independent study have an adverse impact on progress. Learning is well structured and planned at programme level, but is insufficiently individualised to meet learners' needs leading to a need to reschedule learning activities.
- Training is planned initially to meet employers' needs for workforce development and qualifications. This does not always align with the skills needs or aspirations of learners to complete their apprenticeship framework. Initial assessment of learners is satisfactory and well recorded although there is some delay in providing learning opportunities early enough in training.
- Training is provided on employers' premises, where levels of health and safety risks vary. Learners develop a satisfactory level of understanding of workplace health and safety. However, there is an over-emphasis on checking routine health and safety issues, while other higher risk issues are not sufficiently addressed.
- Learners work with well-devised learning resources that meet qualification and apprenticeship framework requirements. Learning materials are currently being improved to relate more specifically to warehousing contexts. Job-related learning is highly relevant to the learners' role, but for experienced adult learners this does not add significant value to their performance in their current job roles.
- The arrangements for the tracking of learners' progress and the recording of progress reviews are good. Visit action planning, feedback to learners and other indicators of learners progress

are satisfactory. Formal progress reviews provide challenge to individual learners but are too ambitious for a minority of learners.

- Assessment of learners' work is good and makes effective use of a range of assessment methods. However, opportunities to recognise prior learning or to link assessment with employers' own training arrangements are missed. Internal quality assurance is effective in sampling the accuracy of assessment decisions but assessor standardisation meetings have not taken place.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory overall and aspects of individual coaching for learners are good. However, the provider does not promote the importance of these skills sufficiently well.
- Young learners benefit well from their learning and have a clear understanding of how their programme may support their future career and development. However, a minority of apprentices are confused about how their learning programme fits with their development and career progression in employment.
- Learners demonstrate a sound understanding of equality and diversity and there is effective checking of their understanding during the review process. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Administration

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall which is leading to high success rates and the very large majority of apprentices achieving their frameworks in the time planned. Learners work confidently and have a clear understanding of the programme and its demands. Highly effective monitoring enables staff and learners to understand what progress has been made and what remains to be done.
- Teaching and learning are good with effective progress made during learning sessions. Sessions are well planned with clear outcomes to ensure productive use of the learners' time. In the better training sessions learners are able to link the subject content to work tasks particularly effectively. However, a few opportunities are missed to develop more independent learning by asking the apprentice to prepare better before training sessions.
- Assessment is good. Regular assessment visits are supported with effective action plans which record progress and set and monitor the learners' targets on each assessment visit. This process also reviews any difficulties they may have on their apprenticeship. For example more training was needed in information technology for an apprentice as there was more use of spread sheets in his job role.
- A wide range of assessment strategies are used by staff including good use of naturally occurring evidence within the learners' job roles and by the particularly effective use of probing questions.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. Staff accurately identify the literacy and numeracy levels of learners who have not achieved exemptions for key or functional skills. This information is used well by staff. However learners with exemptions are not provided with initial assessment of their numeracy and literacy which is restricting study at higher levels.
- Progress reviews are particularly effective and generally completed on time. In a few cases they do not involve employers sufficiently. The good reviews demonstrate strong partnership working with employers and result in clear plans and actions. A wide range of training strategies is used to consider the individual needs and abilities of learners in order to help them progress.

- Staff assess learners' progress regularly and accurately. Spelling and grammatical errors in written work are identified and corrected. Learners are given effective verbal feedback on their strengths and areas for development. However, learners' assessment workbooks used for equal opportunities and equality and diversity are signed off without any detailed feedback from staff.
- Good quality resources and materials to support English, mathematics and other subjects are made available to all apprentices through e-learning but these resources are not fully utilised by the learner to their best effect. The overall use of information, communication and technology to support learning is not promoted sufficiently well.
- Advice, guidance and support are appropriate. Staff provide good information on the demands and expectations of the programme. Personalised units are selected with staff and employers to develop learners. Learners are advised well about the next steps in training through the progress review process.
- Learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. These are promoted through workbooks on health and safety and equality and diversity. They are discussed regularly in progress reviews by the staff. Equality and diversity are built into training sessions where appropriate. For example, research on racism in football is undertaken as part of a communication assignment.

Customer service

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and apprentice success is broadly in line with the national success rates. While current learners are making the progress expected of them and they are meeting demanding targets, framework achievements within the planned programme duration are below the national average although there are indicators these have recently significantly improved.
- Good teaching helps learners develop useful and relevant employability skills, which they apply in their job roles. Carefully structured discussions help improve learners' confidence and self-esteem and help them to apply knowledge in the workplace. Not all learners are sufficiently challenged to develop and apply broader knowledge and understanding, particularly at advanced level.
- Care and support for learners are good. Regular visits are provided and learners are able to obtain guidance and support by telephone and email. Visits are increased in order to provide additional support where required. However, as the programme progresses, short-term targets are not always sufficiently clear or specific.
- Assessment methods used to assess learner performance and understanding are particularly effective. Good use is made of both digital recording and IT to record assessment. Insufficient use is made to use recognition of prior learning, or to link with employers own training arrangements, although, learners use their improvement plan well to identify internal training opportunities.
- Resources to support teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners have access to a good range of resources and workbooks to support development of underpinning knowledge in their apprenticeship programme, although not all learners use the resources provided to their best effect.
- Initial assessment is adequate. Learners complete English and mathematics assessments and learning styles questionnaires, however, these are not consistently used to inform programme level, duration or the choice of optional units.

- In the better learning sessions feedback to learners is constructive, sufficiently challenging and supportive of the promotion of skills development. The range of knowledge and skills being taught is adequate to meet the requirements of the framework.
- The tracking and recording of learners' progress are good. Progress reviews are good, as are visit action planning and feedback to learners, which provide clear feedback of learner progress within their programme of learning. They provide sufficient challenge to individual learners but lack sufficient guidance for a small minority of learners to make satisfactory progress in independent learning.
- The development of key skills is integrated effectively into learners' programmes. The development of mathematics is good, with learners readily applying what they learn in the learning sessions to practical activities. However, not enough attention is given to correcting mistakes in written English in assignment work.
- Information, advice and guidance require improvement in order to meet learner aspirations for further study or career progression. Programme planning requires more effective use of prior attainment, qualifications and skills scans.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good and learners' understanding is effectively promoted and developed throughout the programme. Apprentices have a clear understanding of equality and diversity and can explain the relevance to their individual workplaces. Learners develop an understanding of diversity and the impact of disability on individuals, such as accessibility for wheel chair users in retail environments.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Business development planning is very effective in enabling the company to meet its growth targets and over the last three years apprentice numbers have significantly increased. The company has ambitious plans for further growth and engages effectively with leading national companies to promote and provide apprenticeship programmes that meet their needs.
- The company has been particularly effective in improving success rates over the past two years, during which time the company has expanded and restructured. Leaders and managers have been successful in establishing an organisation with the capability and capacity to support a national programme for apprenticeships. The company has ambitious targets to raise success rates further by the end of the 2012/13 contract year.
- Improvements to the provision have resulted in high success rates in administration, the biggest programme area. Leaders and managers recognise the need to continue to reduce the number of learners across all programme areas that do not achieve within planned timescales and have put plans in place which are beginning to show results.
- Leaders and managers have responded well to national priorities. The company implements a successful strategy to attract, recruit and retain 16-18 year olds using a variety of promotional and marketing media including social networking. Specialist learning advisors, are used effectively in addition to training advisors to support young learners, to plan their training initially and to engage with employers.
- The company sets high standards and these are translated in to targets which staff at all levels have built into their personal objectives. The use of management information and data for planning and decision making is good. Performance management systems are robust and staff have a clear understanding of how their performance and targets contribute to those of the company overall.
- Staff benefit and value good professional development which is a key part of the company's overall strategy for raising standards in teaching and learning. Support for staff through

induction and training is good. Staff work well together to develop learning resources and share good practice.

- Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and include effective arrangements for improving teaching and learning. The self-assessment process includes the views of staff, learners and employers and leads to improvement actions.
- The self-assessment report requires improvement. The report does not provide sufficient analysis or judgements in relation to the subject areas. The report is generally too descriptive and does not adequately present the key strengths and areas for improvement. Consequently the quality improvement plan has some omissions although leaders and managers are very aware of the key areas for improvement.
- PO works particularly effectively with employers including major national companies. Learning programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Programmes are flexible and are adapted effectively to accommodate individual learners' needs and are often tailored to meet a range of business needs.
- PO has invested in good resources and learning materials to support its training programmes. Learning materials are developed in conjunction with employers and used effectively to support learning.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Learners have a good understanding and are well aware of how to deal with bullying, harassment and discrimination. Staff training arrangements for equality and diversity and safeguarding are particularly effective. A company-wide strategy for the promotion of equality and diversity supports progress in PO's overall approach to the promotion of equality and diversity and widening participation.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Learners have a good awareness of what to do if they have any concerns and safeguarding is given an appropriate high level of prominence in all PO does. Improvements in ensuring full compliance with health and safety policies and procedures are required in the warehousing and distribution programme area.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Positive Outcomes Ltd

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
	Overall effectiveness	2				2			
	Outcomes for learners	2				2			
	The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2				2			
	The effectiveness of leadership and management	2				2			

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Warehousing and distribution	3
Administration	2
Customer service	2

At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:

- none

Additional socio-economic information

Positive Outcomes is a national provider of apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced levels. Apprenticeship training is managed through the company's head office based in South Normanton. All teaching, learning and assessment are delivered in the work-place. Since the last inspection the provider has significantly increased the numbers of apprentices that are on programme at any one time and has targeted its offer to increase the number of 16-18 year olds that undertake apprenticeship training. At the time of this inspection the provider offers apprenticeships in six subject areas, approximately half of the total number of learners are Administration apprentices. In September 2012 the provider, in line with apprenticeship national framework requirements, changed its offer for the delivery of English and mathematics training from key skills to functional skills certification.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Maxine Mayer HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the senior operations manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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[Piccadilly Gate](#)
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[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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