

Platinum Employment Advice & Training Limited

Independent learning provider

| Inspection dates | | 30 April–3 May 2013 |
|--|----------------------|---------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Good-2 |
| | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory-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:

- The large majority of learners pass their qualifications.
- All learners gain valuable real work experience, and over half progress to education, employment or training.
- Very good coaching ensures that learners make good progress and gain confidence.
- Learners are very well supported to overcome the obstacles that hinder their learning.
- Managers have high expectations of each other, their staff and learners, and this encourages learners to aspire to succeed.
- The open and self-critical culture results in effective self-assessment and quality improvement processes.
- A wide range of community partners benefit learners by increasing their understanding of communities in different parts of the city, providing work experience placements and enriching and extending the curriculum.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Achievement gaps between the outcomes of different groups of learners are narrowing but have not yet closed.
- Not enough teaching and learning are outstanding.
- Although managers analyse data well, they do not use the findings consistently to monitor the impact of actions that are taken to improve identified issues.
- Too few tutors have higher level teaching qualifications, especially with regard to the development of learners' English and mathematics.
- Equality and diversity are not fully embedded in teaching, learning and reviews.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Continue to identify reasons for achievement gaps between different groups of learners by using learner feedback and data so that action can be focused on continuing to close the gaps.
- Improve teaching and learning by refining the observation of teaching, learning and assessment so that observers focus more on the progress that individual learners make from their starting points.
- Use data well to inform management decisions and monitor the impact of these decisions on learners' progress and progression.
- Continue to offer relevant staff training so that all staff are qualified to teach.
- Further integrate equality and diversity in teaching, learning and reviews so that tutors promote a wider understanding of equalities issues to learners.

Inspection judgements

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| Outcomes for learners | Good |
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- Learners make good progress in lessons and on their programmes. Around a third have no previous qualifications, and many others have multiple barriers to learning. In 2011-12, three quarters of learners achieved their key objectives, functional skills success rates are rising and are now high. In the current year pass rates are high on the foundation level work skills course.
- Overall success rates for 2011/12 are improving and are above the rate for similar providers. For a substantial minority of foundation learners success rates for qualifications are higher than the high national average.
- Retention rates in 2011/12 were low, but have improved significantly this year and are now high. This follows the implementation of a new curriculum that meets learners needs better, and incentives such as allowing learners to play in the football team only if they attend regularly. Pass rates are high.
- Managers have identified gaps in outcomes between different ethnic groups. These are narrowing, and the lowest performing group, White British learners, have higher success rates than learners in similar providers nationally.
- Tutors develop learners' personal, social and employability skills well. Enrichment activities, including playing in a local football league, for which they are very well coached by their tutors, build learners' confidence and ability to work as a team. These activities benefit the community by promoting friendly links with learners in other parts of the city.
- Managers develop and maintain good work placement opportunities with a large number of employers, including those in garages, a day care centre, a community project, a nursery and business administration so that all learners have real experience of work in areas relevant to their aspirations. In several instances these placements lead to permanent employment.
- Learners fulfil the high expectations of their tutors by producing work of a good standard. This helps them to understand what employers will expect of them, and develops further their readiness for work. They enjoy learning and often recommend Platinum Employment, Advice and Training (Platinum) to their friends.
- Rates of progression into employment, education and training are improving. They rose slightly between 2010/11 and 2011/12, when just over half the learners progressed, and so far this year a similar rate has been maintained. In lessons, learners behave courteously to each other and to staff, showing good employability skills. Learners' attendance has improved and is now high.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected by the good outcomes for learners. Current learners make good progress. Tutors are well qualified in their vocational areas and are keen to help their learners achieve and provide high levels of support both in and outside the classroom.
- Tutors have high expectations of learners and coach them very well to develop their knowledge and skills. Motor vehicle tutors use their vocational experience and expertise very effectively to enhance learners' knowledge and understanding beyond that required to achieve the qualification. This prepares them well for employment or more advanced motor vehicle programmes.
- Many learners develop positive attitudes to learning and demonstrate good attendance and punctuality. They are well motivated, display good behaviour and demonstrate a high level of respect for staff and other learners. Learners seek guidance confidently from staff on both learning and personal issues.
- In most sessions tutors use a variety of teaching methods and learning resources well to interest and engage learners. They use information and learning technology particularly well in the work skills programme to introduce discussions that develop learners' communication, interpersonal and employability skills. Tutors ask questions skilfully to challenge learners and to help them extend their learning.
- Tutors know their learners very well and understand their backgrounds and personal circumstances. They use this information very effectively to provide appropriate challenge and support. Learners value the inclusive and safe learning environment tutors create. They benefit significantly from the specialist motor vehicle resources that replicate current industrial standards and prepare them well for future studies or work.
- The less successful features of sessions include learners being not fully engaged in activities. In some instances tutors do not make full use of the available technology such as smart boards and digital projectors to enhance the learning experience. In a few instances sessions are not well planned, and the individual needs of all learners of varying abilities are not met.
- Initial assessment is comprehensive and provides an accurate diagnosis of learners' starting points. Results of initial assessment and other relevant information are used to plan learning, and are recorded accurately in highly individualised learning plans. Reviews of progress are good, and focus on short term achievable targets so that learners make good progress towards their qualifications. Records of individual planning and progress reviews are detailed and accurate.
- Assessment practices are good. Tutors use a range of effective assessment methods in lessons to monitor learners' progress on practical and theoretical aspects of the programme. Question and answer techniques are used very effectively. However in a minority of instances tutors ask questions to the whole group resulting in the more vocal learners dominating the group. Tutors give prompt and constructive feedback on learners' practical tasks. They mark assignments regularly and correct inaccuracies in technical content.
- Learners' portfolios are clear, well-organised and comprehensive. Work is of a high quality and demonstrates a good level of knowledge. Tutors track learners' progress well. Tutors display an accurate visual record of the progress of each learner in the motor vehicle workshop that motivates learners and is helpful to staff.
- Staff promote health and safety well. Motor vehicle learners wear the correct personal protective equipment for their activities. Learners generally demonstrate safe working practices in the workshop. However, records of risk assessments are not on display in the workshop, and are not shared with the learners, resulting in missed opportunities to further reinforce safe practices.

- Tutors develop learners' functional skills of English and mathematics effectively, making them relevant by including and reinforcing them in the work skills and motor vehicle qualifications. However, lesson plans do not identify specific functional skills. When required, tutors provide individual coaching to develop learners' skills further. However not all tutors mark spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors consistently to further reinforce the skill of writing accurately.
- Staff provide very good guidance and support. Initial advice and guidance is comprehensive, clear and impartial. Strong emphasis is placed on ensuring that learners are on the right programme to match their abilities and aspirations. Potential learners are made fully aware of the content and structure of the programme, and take ample opportunities to see the training facilities and ask staff questions relevant to their personal needs and circumstances.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity satisfactorily. Learners adhere closely to a set of class rules that set out the behaviour expected of them, based upon respect for one another and equality. In some lessons the promotion of equality and diversity is good, with stereotypes challenged well and cultural and religious differences discussed openly and sensitively. In other lessons, tutors do not promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity. No visual displays promote equality and diversity in the workshop.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers promote high aspirations throughout Platinum. They identify clearly its role in supporting learners from areas of significant deprivation who have a range of barriers to learning. This purpose is expressed well in the company's strategic plan and managers reinforce it effectively through setting clear expectations and creating an open and inclusive culture. Managers have high expectations both of staff and learners.
- Managers carry out regular and rigorous performance management. All staff have monthly performance management meetings that ensure the regular review of the clear targets that managers set for them. Useful and comprehensive annual appraisals are informed by the outcomes of these meetings, information from quarterly observations of teaching and learning, and learners' assessments and reviews.
- Managers promote training and development strongly. From the information they gain from performance management they plan individual development programmes for staff. All staff have relevant qualifications in information, advice and guidance. However, many staff are new and do not have teaching qualifications. Managers are aware of the need to improve this and have arranged the imminent delivery of a basic preparation for teaching and learning course for unqualified staff. Staff delivering functional skills do not have sufficiently high level qualifications in this subject area.
- A detailed quality assurance and improvement policy identifies clearly the responsibilities of individual managers and all staff. Quality assurance and improvement arrangements are clearly structured and generally well managed. The self-assessment report is well written, appropriately self-critical and largely accurate. A wide range of data is collected and analysed thoroughly.
- Managers have developed a range of action plans to support progress and improve provision. Most identify clearly key actions but do not include sufficiently clear targets or checks on progress to enable managers to monitor them accurately. The use of data by all staff to monitor and manage the provision is improving, but its formal use to ensure consistency needs further development.
- The observation of teaching and learning requires improvement. Curriculum managers observe tutors frequently and regularly. Senior managers monitor the grades regularly. However, the feedback observers give focuses too much on describing tutor activity, and does not evaluate learning sufficiently well. Not all observers are trained teachers.

- Managers have a range of very good and effective partnerships that develop the curriculum and enrich learners' experience. They bring to these partnerships their deep understanding of the needs of their learners and their communities. A good range of work placements lead to jobs for some learners. Managers' involvement in local networks creates good progression routes and opportunities for curriculum development. One director is part of the city's network that is planning the response to the raising of the age of participation in education.
- The arrangements for equality and diversity are generally satisfactory. Learners are welcomed in the highly inclusive and supportive environment. Enthusiastic and innovative outreach workers support the involvement and enrolment of potential learners who are reluctant to take part in formal learning and difficult to reach. Managers monitor an equal opportunities plan regularly. The equal opportunities champion is enthusiastic and instigates regular equality and diversity discussions in staff meetings. However, the promotion of equality and diversity in classes and reviews is not strongly developed.
- Some groups of learners perform less well than others largely as a result of differences in retention. However, the data show that the gaps are reducing. Managers are aware of the differences and are taking a number of actions to help resolve them, including using skilful and enthusiastic outreach workers to engage and retain learners from groups at risk of leaving early and managing the composition of groups to ensure that learners are not isolated.
- Safeguarding is satisfactory and Platinum meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The staff responsible foster good relationships with parents and a range of appropriate external organisations. Policies and procedures provide a good framework that staff use effectively. However, staff training is not regularly reinforced and updated although plans to do this are well advanced.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Platinum Employment Advice & Training Limited

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| Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate | Overall | Foundation 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 |
|---|-------|
| Foundation learning | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of learners aged 14-16 | N/A |
| Number of community learners | N/A |
| Number of employability learners | N/A |
| Funding received from | Education Funding Agency (EFA) |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ N/A |

Additional socio-economic information

Platinum has three sites in Birmingham, one in the city centre used purely for administrative purposes, and two in the north of the city, in Handsworth and Winson Green where the number of those without a qualification at level 1 is high, at 35%, compared with a Birmingham average of 15%, and a national average of 9.4%. Unemployment rates are high. The two areas from which most learners come have unemployment rates of 22% and 10.7% against a national rate of 4.8%. The communities from which Platinum draws its learners are diverse in terms of ethnic heritage and cultures. Most learners are of White British, British Pakistani, African and Black Caribbean origin. The numbers of females on the programmes are low, at just under a fifth of the total group, but are increasing.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Pauline Hawkesford

Four additional inspectors, assisted by the quality 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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