

Priory Central Services Limited

Employer

Inspection dates		15–18 October 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Too many learners are making slow progress towards their qualification and too few achieve on time.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good with too much variation.
- Trainers and assessors do not adequately plan and monitor learning to ensure that all learners progress as quickly as they could and that they understand what they need to do to complete their programme.
- Learners do not all have adequate access to the virtual learning environment essential for them to undertake their learning and some accommodation used for training is inappropriate.
- Learners' English language and mathematics skills are not developed sufficiently well.
- Operational management is weak.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Overall success rates are well above the national rate for the sector.
- Learners progress into relevant jobs within the company and those who are able, progress to more responsible jobs and higher-level qualifications.
- The bespoke 'Foundation for Growth' programme prepares learners well for their apprenticeship or diploma and gives them a wide range of sector and vocational knowledge.
- The apprenticeship programme is a coherent and central part of the development of staff for the business and provides apprentices with the qualifications and skills they need to work and progress within the industry.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all learners make good progress by better planning of their learning and close monitoring of their progress. Respond quickly and effectively to support those that fall behind.
- Improve long term planning of learning through the introduction of learning plans with challenging targets and clear milestones and by sharing these with local managers and supervisors.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all tutors deliver effective, well-planned and interesting sessions.
- Improve learners' written language and mathematics skills by improving the identification of individual needs and introducing effective teaching for functional skills. Ensure that all assessors and trainers correct grammar and spelling errors in learners' work and help them to improve.
- Increase the pace of sustained improvement, by implementing effective operational management, setting more demanding targets at all levels and making effective use of data on the performance and progress of learners and staff.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- In 2011/12, in the first year of operation, 80% of apprentices and 96% of other learners successfully completed their programme, well above the national rate for the sector. However, the number of learners who completed on time was significantly below the national rate. The company has taken action to improve the rate at which learners complete. However, around 70% of current learners are still not making the progress they should.
- The retention rate for learners is high with around 90% of those who started remaining on the programme. The large majority of learners remain with the company on completion of their programme and a satisfactory number progress to a higher-level qualification and more senior roles. For example, one learner has achieved a level 5 qualification and works as a care home manager.
- There is a difference in success rates between men and women and between white British and black and minority ethnic learners in 2011/12 but the programme is too new to identify trends over time.
- Learners develop appropriate social, personal and employability skills. They also develop a good range of technical knowledge and become useful and confident employees. All learners are encouraged to undertake an assessor award to support their progression following their apprenticeship.
- The standard of learners' English and mathematics is satisfactory. The company has not carried out an initial assessment of a significant proportion of the current cohort of learners and has not therefore developed appropriately challenging targets or strategies to support them. However, new learners starting this year have all had a comprehensive assessment of their existing skill levels and recently appointed functional skills tutors are developing programmes to meet their needs.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and this reflects the need to improve outcomes for learners. Although overall success rates are high, teaching, learning and assessment do not result in all learners making the progress they should. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much across the regions.
- In the best sessions, well-planned activity helps learners extend their understanding and builds their confidence to follow up learning independently. For example, a learner who works with adults on the autistic spectrum is using his independent research skills to find out more about the condition and approaches to provide the best level of care. Managers recognise the impact of learners' increased understanding in their workplace practice. For example, in the appropriate approaches taken by one learner towards service users through a better understanding of different types of dementia and why people lose the power of speech.
- In the less effective sessions, staff do not use their experience and knowledge of the care sector to plan effective learning and do not sufficiently relate theoretical knowledge and skills to learners' professional practice. Learners are not encouraged to extend their knowledge beyond the minimum required to pass their qualification. Accommodation used for training and assessment is not always appropriate. Poor access to computers and the internet is inhibiting some learners' progress.
- Learners develop a sound underpinning knowledge for work in care settings, as well as developing confidence and skills in the use of e-learning, through the bespoke 'Foundation for Growth' programme. Learners value the flexibility provided through e-learning as it helps them to effectively combine their work, home responsibilities and learning.
- Assessment practice requires improvement. In the more effective regions, assessment is frequent and includes a range of assessment activities such as direct observation, oral and written questioning, written assignments and witness testimonies. However, for too many learners' assessment visits are infrequent, do not result in sufficiently clear targets and rely too much on written assignments.
- Learner's English and mathematics ability is assessed at the beginning of the programme but staff do not use the results of these assessments effectively to identify and plan individual learning and support. Although the company has recently introduced dedicated functional skills tutors this has yet to have an impact on the development of learners' skills in English and mathematics. Not all assessors adequately help learners to develop their language skills, including their specialist technical vocabulary, during training sessions or visits to the workplace.
- Staff do not adequately plan individual learning beyond the initial bespoke 'Foundation for Growth' programme. Not all learners have an individual learning plan with challenging targets that build on prior learning, and this inhibits managers, staff and learners in evaluating their progress.
- The quality and effectiveness of learners' progress reviews varies significantly. In the best reviews, learners' progress is clearly recorded, challenging targets set and opportunities to explore learners' experiences and their knowledge of equality and diversity are taken. Typically, the learners receiving effective reviews are progressing well. However, not all assessors check learners' progress thoroughly or frequently enough to promote good progress.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well through the assignments they set, and learners demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of recognising and respecting individual preferences in personal centred care, and how to meet the different requirements of service users. However, not all assessors ensure that this is reinforced and extended through their teaching and assessment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management**Requires improvement**

- Leaders and managers set a clear direction for apprenticeship provision, have appropriate strategic oversight and place strong emphasis on improving outcomes for learners. Since the apprenticeship programme became the responsibility of the Priory group through acquisition, the learning and development department has introduced a wide range of initiatives that aim to improve the quality of provision and success rates for learners. These include increased monitoring of the programme, detailed training plans and a quality improvement strategy. However, due to very recent implementation, it is too soon to measure impact.
- Senior managers have recently invested in strengthening strategic and operational management. Restructure and strong performance management has led to a reduction in underperforming staff and ensured high overall success rates for learners. However, operational management is weak. Senior leaders spend much of their time engaged in operational management duties but the quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment at an operational level lacks thoroughness.
- Although Priory Central Services (PCS) has an established process for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment it requires further improvement. Observations of staff delivering teaching and learning sessions and undertaking assessment activities are too infrequent and do not conform to the organisation's twice yearly requirement. Feedback to assessors following observation is too brief and action points insufficiently detailed and specific to improve teaching, learning and assessment.
- Arrangements for monitoring and improving assessors' performance against clear and specific targets lack thoroughness. Insufficient use is made of weekly reporting to review staff caseloads, set clear and specific targets for assessors and learners and to track learner progress. Informal meetings and supervision sessions are used to discuss and record areas for improvement but these lack clear actions to improve assessor performance. Annual appraisals help staff review achievements and plan personal and professional development. However, the quality of appraisals is variable and many performance targets, particularly those for assessors, are not sufficiently challenging or specific.
- The recent introduction of a new management information system is beginning to record learners' progress, identify learners at risk of leaving the programme and produce a range of data to enable managers to monitor the programme appropriately. However, the use of data is currently at a very basic level and does not include collection and analysis of key data such as gender and ethnicity.
- Self-assessment processes, although improving, are insufficiently evaluative. The current self-assessment report is overly descriptive and does not accurately identify many areas for improvement found by inspectors. Although the quality improvement plan is clear and accurately identifies areas for development, targets are not sufficiently detailed to promote rapid improvement. PCS now makes appropriate use of learners' views to promote improvement with a newly implemented learner satisfaction questionnaire; however, this does not extend to the collection of employer views.
- Effective and well-planned continuous professional development through the bespoke 'Foundations for Growth' programme is successfully supporting staff to increase their skills and knowledge. Well-qualified staff generally use their experience and skills to effectively benefit learners during teaching and learning sessions and assessment activities.
- PCS has a detailed and specific policy for equality and diversity that includes a formal action plan and specific monitoring measures for the continuous improvement of equality. An effective range of staff training on aspects of equality and diversity takes place during the first six months of employment with further regular updating through e-learning activities. PCS staff have good

knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues. Comprehensive anti-bullying, harassment and whistle-blowing policies and procedures are in place and are clearly understood by learners.

- Safeguarding of learners and staff is effective. PCS meets and exceeds all legislative requirements regarding the safeguarding of its learners. Senior managers keep a detailed central record for all staff checks. Staff training in safeguarding is thorough and is regularly updated. Induction for staff and learners effectively covers a range of topics such as, e-safety, complaints and safe working practices. Health and safety arrangements within the organisation are robust.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Priory Central Services Limited			
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Health and social care	3

Type of provider	Employer
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 115
	Part-time: N/A
Principal/CEO	Janet Cowie
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Website address	www.priorygroup.com

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	9	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	63	N/A	25	N/A	N/A		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	N/A							

Contextual information

The Priory Group of Companies is dedicated to helping people to improve their health and wellbeing. The Group currently treats more than 70 different conditions through a nationwide network of over 275 facilities that support service user's health, care, education and specialised needs. Apprentice training and adult learning are managed centrally in Leicester but the company recruits and employs learners nationally. Learners are directly employed by the Priory Group.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Phil Romain HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of People Development as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements 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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