

Prospect Training Services (Gloucester) Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		9–13 December 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
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:**

- A high proportion of learners go on to employment or further training. Many learners do not think, when they start the programme, that it will lead anywhere. But, by the time they leave, they have matured and are motivated to take responsibility for themselves and their learning.
- Learners develop very good vocational skills in the workplace. Study programme learners and trainees feel more confident in moving towards employment or their next training programme. Apprentices are well placed for taking on extra responsibility in their jobs, and for promotion.
- Prospect Training Services (Prospect) works very well with employers and external partners to provide carefully designed learning programmes to meet individual learners' needs. It makes sure that the employers it works with share its commitment to supporting these learners.
- Staff offer particularly good care and support for learners, to give them the best possible chance of succeeding in their programmes.
- Managers have designed the new study programmes carefully and thoroughly, to make sure they offer what learners need and want, and meet local employment needs. The programmes build particularly well on the provider's experience in running other programmes to engage young people who have dropped out of learning.
- Prospect has a well-designed system to make sure that teaching and learning continue to get better. Good teachers are starting to share what they do well, and tutors who are not yet good are helped to improve.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The system to improve teaching and learning does not yet cover all of the provision. It does not include the apprenticeship programme, or the subcontracted provision.
- Too many teaching and learning sessions are not yet good. Many trainers are new, and not yet used to the new programme requirements.
- Learners do not get enough help to improve their English and mathematics, as these subjects are not taught in relevant contexts.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Plan more effective ways for learners to develop their functional skills, including English and mathematics, ensuring that these skills are placed into relevant contexts so that learners see the point of them. Ensure that lessons focus more on developing the skills and understanding which were missed earlier in the learners' education, rather than on assessment.
- Improve the setting and monitoring of learners' targets, particularly for study programme learners. Use these improved targets to celebrate the small steps towards achievement, encourage learners to focus on improvement tasks, and elicit precise support from employers.
- Extend the arrangements for observing teaching and learning to all of the provision, including the apprenticeship programme and the subcontracted provision. Use the findings from these observations to share good practice. In particular, develop the skills of coaching for assessors, and support the new team at the subcontracted provision in developing their practice and resources in teaching and learning, especially for functional skills and the personal and social development programme.
- Improve the efficient use of assessors' time in the apprenticeship programme, by reducing the amount of time spent completing hand-written notes to record observations of learners' activities and match them to the assessment criteria.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Nearly three quarters of study programme learners leaving in 2013/14 have gone into further education, employment and training. This is a significant increase on the two thirds of leavers for the 2012/13 foundation learning programme. A high proportion of apprentices completed their full qualification in 2012/13 and all within their agreed timescale.
- Incentives encourage punctuality and regular attendance. The subcontractor provides a free breakfast to make sure all learners are in the centre for the start of the session.
- There are few differences in the achievement of different groups of learners. Prospect has minimised differences between the performance of male and female learners; however, the young female learners who are mothers-to-be could not be transferred onto the new study programme, owing to its length, and so were unable to complete the programme. The small number of learners with additional learning needs receive very good support and their achievement levels are similar to those of other learners.
- Apprentices develop skills which are highly appreciated by their employers, for example in business systems, communication and customer relations. In a notable example, one organisation had received good feedback from customers since the receptionist had started her programme, in contrast to frequent adverse comments on her performance before starting her training. Most learners demonstrate a high standard of work in their portfolios, which reflects their growing competence in their jobs, and many learners are promoted or take on additional responsibility during their programme.
- Learners on employability programmes develop good workplace skills through well-planned work experience arrangements. Prospect contacts employers in a wide range of placement providers, including a museum, construction companies, garages, care homes and nurseries, to discuss the learning opportunities on offer and agree the learners' job roles in detail. Learners develop generic skills and knowledge in areas such as customer service and team working, as well as more job specific skills, for example changing and repairing car tyres. They develop a very good awareness of health and safety and its impact on working practice. Learners, particularly in the

construction industry, are environmentally aware and can explain the benefits of recycling and the costs of not doing so.

- Assessors are quick to recognise those learners who are diffident and need particular support to develop their competence in working with the public and with other employees. Employers comment favourably on the increase in social confidence in these learners.
- Too many employability learners do not understand the importance of a good standard of written English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing their long-term employability.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Well-qualified and highly experienced tutors and assessors inspire most learners to make good progress. High levels of care and support allow all learners to focus well on their learning. Learners find staff very approachable and are able to talk to them about personal issues through which they gain advice and receive practical help, such as assistance with buying appropriate clothes to wear in the workplace.
- Apprentices benefit from good coaching skills which encourage the development of their reflective and independent thinking skills. For example, a business management apprentice generated a highly reflective piece of work in which she accurately analysed and reflected on her own learning, enabling her to identify clearly for herself what she needed to do to improve further.
- Initial assessment ensures learners enrol on the most appropriate training programme. For learners who are ready for work, Prospect carefully matches learners' aspirations and abilities to the most appropriate employment or work placement opportunity.
- Vocational training on all programmes results in most learners making good progress and developing a clear understanding of the demands of work. For example, a learner in a care home was unaware that shift work is an integral part of this kind of employment until she started in her work placement. Employers provide learners on study programmes and traineeships with good opportunities to gain additional qualifications such as first aid and manual handling. However, in some classroom sessions for learners on study programmes and traineeships, learning is not always effective and learners become bored. Apprentices do not yet benefit from group sessions.
- Work places for all learners provide particularly good learning opportunities. Prospect agrees specific duties for learners with their employers, each of which is designed to develop a range of employability and vocational skills. Employers are very committed to collaborating with Prospect to develop the local workforce further.
- All learners benefit from very frequent progress monitoring. On apprenticeships, assessors agree precise targets with learners and employers during reviews, as well as recording achievements. For learners on study programmes and traineeships, a weekly progress report identifies what learners have achieved. However, the monthly reviews on these programmes are less helpful in monitoring progress and achievement as much of the information is insufficiently specific.
- Assessors give effective written feedback celebrating achievement and identifying what learners need to do to improve. Verifiers' close knowledge of individual learners allows them to agree challenging assessment opportunities with tutors. For example, a study programme learner in construction was attempting a level 2 task which reflected his high level of practical ability.
- Apprentices understand the importance of functional skills and specialist staff provide effective coaching for individual learners. However, English and mathematics are not yet fully integrated into all learning activities, and some opportunities are missed to place learning in these subjects into relevant contexts so that it makes sense to individual learners. For example, a learner in a medical practice was struggling to spell commonly used medical terminology, but the spelling lists she was given to learn did not include any of these words. Vocational tutors do not always

correct grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes effectively in learners' work. Tutors in functional English and mathematics lessons spend too much time getting learners to take tests, resulting in learners not always developing the skills they need in their work placement or on their vocational course.

- Initial advice and guidance fully explain the range of programmes available based on learners' work readiness, abilities and skills. Learners make informed choices about possible employment and training options with the help of appropriately trained staff. Learners understand their options for progression throughout the programme. They benefit from excellent and highly personalised advice and guidance, and use particularly good on-line learning materials developed in-house to develop curriculum vitae, with support from staff if required. Where advice and guidance is ongoing, staff set clear action points in discussion with learners.
- An ethos of equality and diversity pervades the organisation, resulting in all learners being treated as individuals and with dignity. Mutual respect amongst learners reduces the potential for harassment so that, for example, young women in motor vehicle sessions are comfortable working alongside male learners who are in the majority.

Employability

16-19 study programmes

Good

- Good teaching, learning and assessment are reflected in the increasing number of learners progressing into further education, training and employment, and developing high levels of employability skills.
- Staff use effective incentives such as weekly tokens for good attendance and positive attitudes to work. Tutors use praise frequently, encouraging initially disaffected learners.
- Prospect uses support tutors and volunteers during taught lessons, so learners can benefit from individual help and support. One support tutor worked skilfully to persuade a reluctant learner to raise her head from the table, not only to complete the set task but also ask questions in front of the whole group.
- Vocational tutors use their expertise particularly well to plan and deliver demanding and interesting sessions. Tutors prepare colourful and stimulating learning materials. Practical resources in vocational areas are of industry standard. Learners respond well to their tutors; although, in the less effective sessions, the pace of learning is too slow for the more able learners. Questioning techniques fail to engage all learners and tutors miss opportunities to use learners' experience and knowledge to draw out teaching points. Tutors do not always move beyond initial activities, which capture learners' interest, to achieve planned learning objectives. In some lessons, tutors rely too much on worksheets.
- Supportive employers provide a range of rich learning opportunities. Prospect agrees relevant learner duties with the employer, each of which is designed to develop either generic employability skills, such as improving attendance, or more specific skills, such as ensuring young children's sleep patterns are maintained (in a nursery setting) or researching and assimilating the history of a local museum (to develop effective customer service).
- Wide-ranging initial assessment and a well-planned induction encourage learners to reflect on and identify their personal strengths and areas for development. Staff discuss with learners their prior work experience and qualifications, any existing involvement with, or support from, external agencies, living arrangements relevant to the learners' development, school attendance patterns and learners' ambitions. The results of these discussions are carefully documented and are used well by most staff to plan suitably individualised programmes of work.
- Frequent progress monitoring through a weekly progress report records activities and attendance, and celebrates participation and achievement. However, formal monthly reviews of

progress across all aspects of the learners' programme do not help learners understand how to improve, as targets are too general and learners' achievements are not detailed enough to be useful.

- Vocational training staff give frequent and clear verbal feedback. Staff initiate a dialogue through their written comments, which learners respond to and take the necessary remedial action.
- Learners develop their mathematical skills well in vocational lessons. However, tutors do not always mark grammar and spelling effectively in learners' work. In English and mathematics lessons, learners do not develop skills well enough for their vocational course or work placement.
- A wide range of pre-recruitment activities enables learners to find out more about what Prospect offers. Continuous and timely advice and guidance, with suitably qualified staff, help learners consider future training and employment options and make informed choices.
- Learners feel safe in the centre and whilst on work placements. They discuss equality and diversity topics such as mental health during induction and the personal and social development programme, although some sessions are more effective than others. Learners following health and social care programmes explore ideas about disability and discrimination well. Tutors are prompted to reinforce learners' awareness of equality and diversity matters during reviews of learner progress, although this is not always done meaningfully.

Administration and customer service

Apprenticeships

Good

- The good teaching, learning and assessment are reflected in the high success rates of business apprentices. Assessors have high expectations of the learners, which motivate and encourage them to achieve.
- Staff are enthusiastic and competent, with relevant experience and qualifications. Good individual coaching inspires and develops learners' knowledge, skills and understanding well in a wide range of practical tasks, for example in the delivery of presentations and dealing with difficult customers. Assessors successfully encourage learners to develop their independent learning skills. For example, many learners research a variety of topics, such as management of meetings or payroll systems, on their own initiative. Prospect is aware of the benefits that group sessions give to learners and plans are in place to offer these in the near future.
- Assessors have a range of strengths, but these are shared insufficiently. Assessors do not have sufficient opportunity to evaluate their performance and share their knowledge, experience and good practice.
- Learners make good use of a wide range of learning materials, both in workbooks and online. For example, one tutor offered effective bespoke IT training on a particularly complex spreadsheet. Employers are very supportive and most engage well with the programme. The varied workplaces generally offer very good learning environments.
- Initial assessment identifies learners' starting points and assessors carefully monitor their progress. Work is assessed regularly through frequent visits to the learners' workplaces. Learners receive detailed and informative feedback on completed work and are clear about what is required of them leading to most learners making good progress.
- Staff work closely with learners and employers to develop individual and relevant learning plans that meet learners' workplace requirements and individual needs. Assessment activities are well planned. Assessors agree clear and precise targets with the learners during reviews and assessment visits to ensure the programme is completed within the planned time. These

challenging short- and longer-term learning goals are reviewed and updated regularly to encourage learners.

- Assessors offer timely and helpful feedback. However, completing paperwork often takes too much valuable time, which can hinder further learning. Plans are in place to introduce a sophisticated electronic assessment system.
- Prospect staff support learners well to develop the English, mathematical and functional skills they need to achieve their main learning goals and career aims. Where learners require additional support, specialist staff offer effective individual training. One learner has grown particularly enthusiastic about mathematics after good individual coaching by a functional skills tutor.
- Assessors give timely information, advice and guidance to learners on training and employment opportunities. They coach learners well to succeed in employer interviews. Prospect matches learners carefully to employment opportunities.
- Assessors promote equality and diversity well throughout the programme, particularly through the employee rights and responsibilities workbook, but also as opportunities arise, for example through a very good professional discussion on the benefits of a diverse workforce in a service provider. The learners are respected, treated as individuals and their differing needs are recognised and met.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Prospect has a clear strategy behind its recent growth, and an equally clear vision for future developments. It has planned carefully for the transition from foundation learning to the new study programme. Similarly, its strategy for the apprenticeship programme is well thought out to manage sustainable growth. Managers and staff demonstrate a passionate, but not sentimental, commitment to meeting the needs of hard-to-reach learners; although, so far, it has not been possible to include the original target group of parents-to-be in the new study programme because of its duration. Arrangements for the management of the subcontractor are well considered and thorough, building on common values, but the subcontractor's new team for the programme have not yet had Prospect support at curriculum level.
- The arrangements for managing the performance of staff are well developed and well accepted by the team of trainers. A quarterly award for 'exceptional employees' recognises and rewards staff achievement. A day to share good practice has been planned. There are detailed and well understood arrangements for observing teaching and learning sessions, and the record of observations this year shows a significant improvement over the previous year. A coach/mentor works with any tutors whose practice requires improvement, against a detailed action plan. Some tutors ask for the tutor coach/mentor to observe their practice independently of the required programme of observations, because they value the advice they receive.
- The formal observation process is designed to focus on the learning which is taking place, rather than the activities of the trainer. However, it does not cover the whole of the provision. The assessors on the apprentice programme are observed by internal verifiers rather than trainers, and the focus on their role in supporting learning is not so explicit. The arrangements do not cover the subcontracted provision, which has not yet implemented its own programme of observations. There is not yet enough sharing of good practice at curriculum level across the whole of the provision.
- The self-assessment process is well established, but there has been some recent slippage in the cycle of quality assurance activities. However, Prospect is rigorous in its risk assessment of the new study programme. It uses the views of its learners and employers well to modify its provision. Managers have not yet required the subcontractor to self-assess its provision, but have carried out a thorough audit to ensure that its systems comply with Prospect's quality assurance requirements.

- Prospect has researched the rationale for developing the new study programme particularly well. Its vocational options within the programme are calculated to respond to local and national labour requirements, in discussion with the Local Economic Partnership and key local employers. It maximises its links with other providers and programmes, particularly those run through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), to make sure the provision meets the needs of those learners who are hardest to find and engage in learning.
- The company's ethos is focused entirely on engaging and supporting hard-to-help, and in many cases, hard-to-reach learners. The study programme learners develop their understanding of equality and diversity through their personal and social development programme, but the effectiveness of these sessions varies. Prospect collects detailed data from learners when they first start, and analyses them to try and identify any gaps in achievement between different groups. However the way in which the data are collected is too intrusive, and the numbers are too small for quantitative analysis to be much use. The provider plans to analyse the data about all learners who leave the programme without a positive destination, to see if there is any pattern of reasons why learners do not succeed, which can be used to improve the provision.
- Prospect carries out careful and appropriate risk assessment of each of its learners, as well as of the workplaces and training centres where learning takes place. It meets its statutory duties for safeguarding learners, and also carries out rigorous health and safety checks as part of its quality assurance activities.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Prospect Training Services (Gloucester) Ltd

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	2
Administration	2
Customer service	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 503							
	Part-time: 0							
CEO	Louise Pinnell							
Date of previous inspection	September 2007							
Website address	www.prospect-training.org.uk							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
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	133	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	9		7		16			
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	5	17	4	19	0	3		
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	■ Green Inc (EU) Ltd							

Contextual information

Prospect Training Services was established in March 1997 to offer training programmes to disadvantaged young people in Gloucestershire, particularly young parents-to-be. Government-funded training now represents about one third of its activity. Gloucestershire's proportion of young people recorded as not engaged in employment, education or training is 5.2%, but there are another 10.5% in the cohort whose employment or education status is not known. The unemployment rate in the City of Gloucester is 7.9%, which is higher than the rate for the region but similar to the national average. In Gloucestershire, 61.6% of pupils achieved five or more grades A* to C including English and mathematics at GCSE in 2013, (a decrease from 62.3% in 2012). Gloucestershire's performance is above the national average (60.4%). The county has a number of areas of deprivation in Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Jane Shaw HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the managing director 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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