

Pilot IMS Limited

Independent learning provider

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|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Inspection dates | | 16 – 19 June 2014 |
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Requires improvement-3 |
| | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory-3 |
| 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 apprentices are leaving their programmes prior to completion or are not succeeding within the planned duration of their programme.
- Planning for the achievement of functional skills is not leading to enough apprentices developing quickly enough their skills in English, mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT).
- The delivery of higher-level management qualifications is not challenging enough for learners.
- Individual learning plans are not being used sufficiently well to monitor learners' progress.
- Managers have not adequately addressed issues which are preventing learners from having sufficient time to participate in off-the-job training and assessment.
- Self-assessment and improvement planning are not linked closely enough to ensure rapid quality improvement.
- Approaches to safeguarding arrangements require further development.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Excellent arrangements in the logistics skills academy are enabling learners to gain skills and, in particular, the long-term unemployed to secure sustainable employment.
- Managers have successfully improved some key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment since the last inspection.
- The development of skills and knowledge is good in individual and small group sessions.
- The particularly effective relationships between Pilot and employers are enabling non-traditional learners to participate in learning programmes.
- The ambitious vision and commitment from senior managers is meeting employer needs in developing employment opportunities in the local logistics sector.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Raise the success rates of apprentices within the planned duration of their programme by:
 - Increasing the proportion of learners who stay on to complete their programme
 - Facilitating the delivery and assessment of apprenticeship programmes by ensuring greater correlation with the apprentices' job roles
 - Ensuring that individual learning plans clearly identify the components of the apprenticeship framework with planned dates of achievement to enable managers to monitor more closely learners' timely achievement
 - Placing greater emphasis on the delivery and testing of functional skills. Ensuring that functional skills delivery and testing is planned early enough to ensure that framework planned duration of programmes is achieved.
 - Ensuring managers identify and remedy quickly any unplanned issues that are stopping learners attending their off-the-job training and assessment sessions.
- Place more focus on critical self-assessment and quality improvement planning so that further improvements are secured quickly.
- Ensure that the contexts used for training delivery are of appropriate complexity in higher-level qualifications by reviewing the skills and experience of training and assessment staff, the schemes of work and learning materials for their appropriateness.
- Ensure safeguarding arrangements are reviewed in the light of the nature of Pilot's changing, provision particularly in respect of young learners and vulnerable adults. Make sure all staff, particularly designated safeguarding officers, have up-to-date training.

Inspection judgements

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| Outcomes for learners | Requires improvement |
|------------------------------|----------------------|

- Apprenticeship overall success rates and completion of apprenticeships within the planned duration of the programme have declined since the last inspection and have only marginally improved in 2012/13. Overall rates across all of the apprenticeship provision are below national rates and are well below the high national rates in business apprenticeships. According to the provider's in-year data, overall success rates are likely to improve slightly this year but success rates within planned timescales remain far too low.
- Apprentices in business programmes are currently making slow progress. The provider is encountering difficulties with employers releasing apprentices for off-the-job knowledge and functional skills training. This is restricting the progress of these learners. Progress for learners in ICT is also slow due to their job roles not supporting framework requirements.
- Learners in the logistics and engineering skills academies achieve well and the vast majority achieve their qualifications. Progression to employment and further learning for learners from the skills academies is excellent in logistics and good in manufacturing technology programmes. However, the provider is experiencing difficulties gathering destination data for the manufacturing learners and is not currently succeeding in measuring their progression to employment and/or further learning.
- Since the last inspection overall work-based learning achievement rates declined in 2012/13 from previous good levels to below national rates. From data provided by the provider, early indicators are that rates are set to improve for the 2013/14 contract year and current learners are making good progress and acquiring valuable sector-specific skills.

- The development of English, mathematics and ICT functional skills has much improved since the last inspection. However, the planning of associated training and arrangements for testing still require improvement. Overall pass rates are good in English and mathematics but are poor in ICT. Managers have identified this issue and are providing additional staff development to support improvement in ICT pass rates.
- Gaps exist in the achievement of different groups of learners depending upon the programme; males in particular in advanced apprenticeships do not achieve as well as females. The provider is making significant efforts to reduce the gap in achievement but the strategies implemented have yet to prove effective.
- Learners in the logistics and skills academies are developing good work-related skills, which are enabling them to secure employment, despite many of these learners having low starting points. Learners in management programmes are acquiring good team leading skills and for many of these learners it is their first introduction to management skills training.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement which is reflected in the low success rates in apprenticeship programmes and the slow progress that learners are making towards the achievement of full qualifications. Around half of the current learners are apprentices on full-time equivalent programmes and therefore represent the major part of the provision.
- Learners receive good support from staff that motivates them well. In manufacturing and warehousing, staff set high expectations as to what learners can achieve. The pre-employment programme is particularly effective in raising job and career aspirations. The many learners on the apprenticeship programmes are now receiving better support, with more frequent workplace visits. However, too many of these learners are still making slow progress and are not achieving their qualifications on time.
- Where learners attend group and individual learning sessions, they receive good quality teaching from knowledgeable staff who generally plan lessons well, with clear aims and objectives. In a small minority of sessions, objectives are too generic. Learning environments are good, and staff use facilities and resources well to support learning. Learners improve their knowledge well and most staff use questioning techniques very effectively to check learners' understanding of the different topics.
- Staff use reviews of progress well to monitor progress and set targets. Links with employers are good, and the workplaces provide good opportunities for learning. Communications with employers are improving, and managers are beginning to plan actions more effectively to address the issues of learners' low attendance at learning and assessment visits. However, employers do not receive sufficient formal reports on the progress of their learners to ensure improved attendance.
- The initial assessment of learners' vocational skills and personal circumstances is effective. Assessors ensure learners work towards optional units of their award that closely match their job roles. However, initial assessment is not sufficiently robust overall. Learners do not complete an accurate diagnostic of their English, mathematics, and ICT abilities, and therefore do not receive a timely plan to meet their individual skills development needs.
- Although most learners are on a qualification that clearly matches their job role and challenges them well, a few have job roles that are at a higher level than their qualification demands. Higher-level apprentices do not benefit from sufficiently challenging teaching which results in learning that is not sufficiently challenging or complex for them to meet the requirements of the award.
- Assessment is thorough and assessors use a good range of assessment methods. They provide clear feedback to learners and action plan effectively. This helps learners understand what they

need to do to improve. Assessors are very flexible in meeting the needs of learners on different shift patterns. Learners' portfolios are of a good standard, whether electronic or paper-based, though learners are not given sufficient choice as to which portfolio type would best suit them. In some instances, assessors do not drive progress sufficiently by adapting assessment methods, for example introducing assessment by observation early enough in the programme.

- The planning for functional skills support is ineffective in driving progress towards achievement, with staff introducing English, mathematics and ICT too late into the learners' programme. Learners do not have a sufficient understanding of the requirements of functional skills qualifications and what they need to do to achieve.
- A few learners benefit from support provided by specialist functional skills staff who provide one-to-one support from time to time for learners identified as requiring specific support needs. This is very effective in developing the skills of learners, who become better aware of the relevance and importance of these skills in their job roles. Staff plan these sessions well, engage learners very effectively, and take care to check learners understand their learning. In a very few instances, learners work towards functional skills at a higher level than that required by their apprenticeship.
- Staff provide information, advice and guidance well, particularly on the pre-employment programme where they work well with Jobcentre Plus to promote progression opportunities very effectively to unemployed learners. Induction is effective in giving learners an adequate understanding of their learning programme, as well as the benefits of achieving the qualification for their longer term employability prospects. At the end of their programme, learners receive a useful exit interview, which evaluates their learning and identifies possible progression opportunities effectively.
- The promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection, and is now good in business administration and pre-employment programmes. Staff promote well the importance of learners feeling fairly treated, understanding their rights and responsibilities and what to do if they have any concerns. However, although learners' induction and reviews of progress check understanding effectively on a fairly basic level, staff do not always sufficiently explore learners' understanding of the broader aspects of diversity, including their relevance to the workplace.

Manufacturing technologies

19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which reflects the good outcomes for the majority of learners. Progress for a few learners is slow.
- Learners benefit from motivated, supportive, well-qualified and experienced tutors who use their expertise well and set learners challenging tasks. Staff have high expectations of their learners and encourage and support them to achieve their qualifications to a high standard. Learners are motivated and enjoy their learning. They attend their training sessions regularly. Training at the academy promotes effectively health and safety, and safe working practices.
- In the well-planned theory sessions, teachers with good industrial experience promote good manufacturing practice. Learners remain engaged and focused on their class work. Trainers use practical exercises well which stimulates interest and promotes the correct use of concepts such as flow process analysis and standard operating procedures. However, in a minority of some formal learning sessions, teachers make insufficient checks on learning with their use of questioning techniques failing to engage all learners and adequately test their learning.

- Learning resources in the manufacturing academy are good, particularly in the well-equipped manufacturing workshops which are very good.
- Assessment of learners' competence is detailed and thorough. Observations are well planned and carried out efficiently. Assessors use questioning techniques very effectively to draw out underpinning knowledge. Assessors record their observations in detail and provide effective feedback to learners. However, on the performing manufacturing operations foundation programme, the assessment record has limited space to record assessment decisions accurately and to give effective written feedback, which leads to learners receiving written feedback which is too brief.
- Learners receive useful progress reviews that provide a clear summary of the short-term targets set at the previous review and receive relevant targets to complete by the next review. Trainers provide good advice and guidance on how learners can improve their performance and their progress. Trainers give clear information to learners on how to link their theoretical knowledge with their practical activities in the workshop so that they fully understand the relevance of their practical training.
- Teachers support learners to develop the mathematical skills they need to achieve their qualifications. Theoretical lessons are well planned to include mathematics. Learners value the opportunity to develop and understand such aspects as the conversion of fractions into decimals and percentages. English language support is given to a lesser degree and helps learners appropriately to understand technical concepts and language.
- Learners receive valuable advice and guidance at the start of their qualification, which prepares them well for the programme. Learners benefit from the very good support and advice they receive during recruitment, application, interview and selection. New learners receive good preparatory information. Advice, guidance and support are a high priority during training.
- The promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity during the regular progress reviews are inconsistent. During theory sessions, equality and diversity are not always planned into the learning activities sufficiently.

Warehousing and distribution

19+ Learning programmes Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and outcomes in classroom-based provision are high; success rates in apprenticeship provision are improving and in 2012/13 are around national rates. No significant performance differences exist between different groups of learners.
- Pilot has developed productive employer partnerships. One partnership is an outstanding model of best practice in employer engagement; learning links strongly to the employers' training strategy, there is regular review of training and the training portfolio has expanded in scope and importance.
- Most learners enjoy their learning. Learners develop qualification portfolios to a good standard. These accurately reflect learners' acquisition of skills and knowledge. However, some observation reports lack clarity in assessment judgements and are not sufficiently standardised. Learners receive clear targets and most complete their programme within the planned period.
- Apprentices develop highly relevant skills and added-value knowledge that enhances their application of skills at work and, for some, contributes to improving workplace practice. Apprentices gain appropriate skills in English and mathematics to support their learning and development, however there are few opportunities to achieve higher-level skills. Most apprentices progress on to further learning programmes or gain additional responsibility or promotion at work.

- Learners are safe in learning and at work. Workplaces consistently maintain high standards of safety based upon risk-assessed principles. Staff ensure good practice in health and safety in learning and assessment. Learners have a good understanding of safeguarding and their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Learners in a few businesses are involved in community activities, charitable events and open day activities for local communities.
- Initial assessment and induction practices are particularly effective and lead to flexible and well-planned learning to meet learners' needs and employers' shift patterns. Objectives for learning are clear and communicated to learners effectively. Assessment is good and learners receive appropriate feedback to help them improve and achieve.
- Teaching is generally motivating, well-organised and often utilises high-quality resources. Some sessions have an over-reliance on trainer-led discussion and poor use of the white board, which does not optimise individual learning and progress. Most trainers set high expectations for learners and provide challenge in learning.
- Progress reviews are effectively and regularly completed; recent improvements in recording practice have a positive impact on learners' progress. Verbal feedback to learners is particularly supportive. Overall learners understand their progress in qualifications, achievement and plans for assessment. Some employers are not sufficiently involved with reviews. Plans to implement an electronic portfolio system to improve employer engagement have been delayed.
- The provision meets the needs of learners well in both pre-employment training and within employment; it is well planned to provide progression routes and opportunities for career improvement. The choice of qualifications and units for learners matches job roles or development needs well. Assessors have a flexible approach to carrying out assessment and work collaboratively with employers to accommodate the availability of learners.
- Support for learners is very good with a focus on meeting individual needs. Most support allows learners to enjoy and maximise the benefits of learning. Where relevant, learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance on career development, further learning and progression at work. Apprentices are referred to employers' support services where this is in the learner's interest. The promotion of equality and diversity is integrated well in learning and assessment practice, especially in the academy programme, and is supported by high standards of practice in the workplace. Recent improvements have been implemented to reinforce and record apprentices' understanding of these aspects. Effective procedures for managing learners' complaints and incidents are in place.

Administration and

Business management Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, which is consistent with the poor progress that learners are making both in this current year and in previous contract years. Too many learners are not passing their functional skills early enough in their programme and too many current learners will either not achieve their qualification or not achieve on time.
- The planning and delivery for support for English, mathematics and ICT are poor. Learners do not understand how and when they will receive training before taking their external assessments. Good examples of functional skills embedded within the vocational content exist, but too often learners are not aware of when in their programme they will achieve their functional skills qualifications.
- An initial assessment of learners' vocational skills is satisfactory but not effectively used to plan the programme to meet the learners' needs. Recent staff changes have resulted in improved

planning for learning to ensure that learners remember key information. Learners and their line managers are very clear on what progression routes are available to them through Pilot.

- Access to assessment has been historically poor for learners who are part of large programmes within a few employers. This has resulted in learners leaving their programmes early or not achieving within the planned duration of the programme. Managers have in part rectified this during 2013/14 but there remain too many learners where access to assessment issues have not been satisfactorily resolved.
- Assessors provide good motivation and effective support for learners. Learners are confident to undertake learning in their own time and take great pride in being able to apply newly learned theory to their workplace settings. Many learners undertake projects in the workplace resulting in new policies and processes for their employers. One manager applied a motivational theory in the company as part of a restructure. This has helped with staff retention.
- Staff use their skills and knowledge very well to provide stimulating and challenging theory sessions in team-leading qualifications. Feedback on assignments and assessments is good and enables learners to improve their work.
- In higher-level management programmes group sessions are poorly planned, limited in content and lack in-depth analysis and evaluation of management theories in the context of higher-level qualifications. Most staff use questioning techniques particularly well to get learners to demonstrate their understanding of concepts but this is not consistent across all of the team of teachers.
- Assessment is thorough with a wide range of workplace evidence utilised effectively across all components of the apprenticeship frameworks. Staff visit learners frequently and regularly and are extremely adaptable to meet the changing needs of shift patterns and employers' workplace constraints. However, too many learners have suffered from delays in observational assessment that is hindering their progress.
- Coaching sessions are effective and provide learners with very clear targets and action plans. Feedback ensures that learners know exactly what they have left to do, how they are going to achieve this and what support they will receive to help them be successful. Staff ensure that learners' use of English and professional terminology is commensurate with the level of qualification, which in turn has helped them in the way they communicate with their colleagues.
- Communication with employer line managers and senior managers is improving; employers are keen to assist where issues arise, such as poor attendance or issues over time management.
- Staff routinely reinforce equality, diversity, safeguarding, and health and safety with learners through the progress review. The content of theory reflects these topics well and learners respond particularly well to scenarios that require them to apply knowledge of legislation and workplace practices.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative. This was an area for improvement identified in the last inspection. Self-assessment places insufficient emphasis on identifying key strengths and areas for improvement. The links between self-assessment and quality improvement planning are insufficiently clear or precise to improve the provision effectively. Inspectors considered the grades in the report were overly generous. Although Pilot's managers regularly review learners' feedback, this and other stakeholder views inform self-assessment insufficiently.
- Staff review self-assessment at key staff meetings, but outcomes of these reviews do not effectively inform the quality improvement plan. Managers' skills in using appropriately detailed

and time-bound targets and actions for improvement require improvement. Staff turnover has too often slowed progress in improving the quality of provision.

- Pilot has good arrangements for promoting equality and diversity. Staff work well with Jobcentre Plus. This collaboration supports disadvantaged learners to develop good employability and vocational skills that improve their prospects for employment. The flexible training arrangements that Pilot offers provide employees with learning opportunities regardless of their production line shift-work patterns. Enrolment staff provide good support for those learners who do not meet the entry requirements to attend a course at Pilot so that they may gain access to relevant training offered by other providers.
- Staff treat learners fairly and the majority of learners comment that their understanding of equality and diversity has improved while on programme. Pilot works effectively to close achievement gaps where these occur. Teachers have received insufficient guidance and support to help them build their confidence to promote effectively equality and support diversity in learning activities and progress reviews.
- Pilot meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. However, the arrangements for safeguarding learners require further development. Learners say that they feel safe. A designated member of staff is the company's point of reference for safeguarding concerns, but needs refresher training. Links with organisations that can provide Pilot with support and guidance are underdeveloped.
- Most teachers and assessors have had recent training in safeguarding. Staff give health and safety and safe working practices a high priority and these are carefully considered. Most learners comment that their understanding of health and safety has improved during their time with Pilot. However, learners' safety and well-being are less well considered. This was an area for improvement identified in the last inspection. Arrangements for identifying and supporting learners at risk are insufficiently thorough.
- Staff manage working relationships with employers very well and ensure learning programmes meet their specific training needs. Staff communications are very good and they provide employers with very good support. Learning activities and assessment schedules are particularly flexible and responsive to learners' working arrangements and to employers' production demands. However, too many learners taking team-leading qualifications have enrolled onto a programme that they find difficult to complete within work constraints.
- Senior managers are very committed to meeting the needs of employers in the manufacturing industry. Many employers are very satisfied with the training offered by Pilot which is their preferred supplier. Since the last inspection, the provision has continued to evolve and reflect the changing demands of the manufacturing sectors in which Pilot specialises. Pilot's development of the two skills academies is particularly effective in meeting this need.
- Managers make good use of performance management to improve standards in teaching and learning. Teachers and assessors have a good range of skills and experience which they use well. All teachers and assessors are working towards, or have, a teaching qualification. Pilot provides staff with good and very regular training opportunities. However, managers insufficiently assess how effectively training improves teachers' professional practice or its impact on the learners' experience.
- Staff are strongly committed to supporting and challenging their learners to succeed. Pilot has recently updated a number of key administrative systems. These updates have improved the availability of accurate data to support decision making and checks on learners' progress. However, it is too soon for inspectors to judge how effective these changes will be in improving the provision.
- Pilot supports internal communications and decision making through a programme of frequent and supportive team and individual meetings. However, not all meetings work to a suitable agenda or are accompanied by suitable records of what took place to ensure that key business is effectively considered and is undertaken in a timely manner. In a majority of cases, agreed actions are insufficiently time-bound and reviews of progress at subsequent meetings are insufficiently effective.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Pilot IMS Limited

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|--|----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 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 | 2 | 3 |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management | 3 | 2 | 3 |

| Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|---|----------|
| Manufacturing Technologies | 2 |
| Warehousing and Distribution | 2 |
| Administration | 3 |
| Business Management | 3 |

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|--|-------------------------------|-----|----------|-----|---------|-----|-------------------|-----|
| Type of provider | Independent learning provider | | | | | | | |
| Age range of learners | 16+ | | | | | | | |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 575 | | | | | | | |
| Director | Mr Andrew Moscardo-Parker | | | | | | | |
| Date of previous inspection | August 2012 | | | | | | | |
| Website address | www.pilotims.co.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+ |
| | 0 | 6 | 0 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age | Intermediate | | Advanced | | Higher | | | |
| | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | 16-18 | 19+ | | |
| | 0 | 171 | 0 | 44 | 0 | 11 | | |
| Number of traineeships | 16-19 | | 19+ | | Total | | | |
| | N/A | | N/A | | N/A | | | |
| Number of learners aged 14-16 | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Full-time | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Part-time | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Number of community learners | N/A | | | | | | | |
| Number of employability learners | 16 | | | | | | | |
| Funding received from | Skills Funding Agency (SFA) | | | | | | | |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with no subcontractors: | ■ N/A. | | | | | | | |

Contextual information

Since the previous inspection, Pilot has considerably changed the programmes that it offers. Previously, the majority of apprentices were undertaking frameworks in engineering subject areas but the majority in 2013/14 are in business-related subjects. Pilot has also established manufacturing technology and logistics academies that are designed to prepare and up-skill learners for employment in these industry sectors. Learners undertake a range of foundation and intermediate courses during their time at the academy. Pilot no longer offers discrete provision in English and mathematics.

Pilot operates predominantly within the West Midlands area. The percentage of unemployed, those without any qualification and from minority ethnic groups in the region is much higher than that nationally.

Information about this inspection

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| Lead inspector | Maxine Mayer HMI |
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three 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 since the last inspection 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 relevant 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
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234

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