

Platinum Employment Advice and Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

17–20 January 2017

Overall effectiveness			Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate	16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate		
Outcomes for learners	Inadequate		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- The actions of governors, leaders and managers have been too slow and have been ineffective in arresting the significant decline in outcomes for learners since the previous inspection.
- The high aspirations held for learners by leaders and managers are not being realised because they do not accurately monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision delivered, or set challenging targets for improvement.
- Leaders and managers have failed to design and implement an effective study programme. The principles of the programme are not met, curriculum design is unresponsive and the programme is insufficiently tailored to meet the future career needs and interests of learners.
- Safeguarding arrangements to protect learners are weak and ineffective. Leaders do not place sufficient urgency on identifying the whereabouts of learners who are missing lessons. Similarly, leaders do not pay enough attention to managing health and safety and e-safety risks.
- Learners' attendance is poor. They make slow progress and do not acquire the necessary personal, social and employability skills to enable them to move to the next step. Learners do not develop essential skills, such as English and mathematics.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are weak. Tutors do not use the available information to plan learning and support interventions. Staff demonstrate low expectations of what learners can achieve.

The provider has the following strengths

- The inspection team found no key strengths.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Platinum Employment Advice and Training Limited (Platinum) operates from two sites in Birmingham, Handsworth and Winson Green, in the north of the city. These are areas of high economic deprivation. Some 160 learners aged 16 to 18 are currently attending 12-month long vocational study programmes in motor vehicle maintenance, electrical installation, plumbing or sports. Learners attend classroom-based and vocational learning across both sites.
- The communities from which Platinum recruits its learners are diverse in terms of ethnic heritage and cultures. Most learners are of White British, British Pakistani, African and Black Caribbean origin. Almost 40% of the learners have a learning difficulty and/or disability. In addition, a significant number of learners are classed as children looked after. There were three female learners on programme at the time of the inspection.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Governors, leaders and managers must develop greater focus and vigilance on ensuring that all parts and aspects of their safeguarding arrangements function effectively to protect all learners, in particular with relation to learners missing from class, health and safety and internet safety.
- Undertake a critical review of the key components, design and vocational subject areas of the study programmes to address the existing poor retention. Ensure that the programme utilises work experience placements and enrichment activities to meet the needs of learners, enabling them to progress well into further education, training or employment.
- Governors must obtain the necessary information to scrutinise the provision regularly and become aware of all its strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to pose the necessary level of challenge and hold leaders and managers to account for the quality of the provision and the performance of learners.
- Raise the standards in teaching, learning and assessment by tackling identified areas of weak practice. Staff observations should take full account of attendance, learners' behaviour and achievement and should result in specific action plans to support individual teachers to improve.
- Leaders and managers should develop rigorous data-reporting systems to enable them to analyse the progress and achievement learners make on every component part of the programme. They should further develop their own understanding of performance data and take swift action when information indicates a decline in standards.
- Leaders and managers must apply robust quality assurance processes to allow them to evaluate the provision accurately. They must put in place challenging but realistic action plans, ensuring that they lead to rapid improvement.
- Drastically improve the quality of the outcomes that learners attain at Platinum, focusing on realising every learner's potential and paying particular attention to identified learning needs and how these will be supported throughout the programme.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders and managers have failed to introduce an effective study programme to replace the previously good foundation learning programme, and to arrest the subsequent significant decline in the performance of the programme.
- The design of the study programme does not meet the individual needs of learners and does not meet the requirements of study programmes. It is not sufficiently well aligned to the future economic growth needs identified for this community. Learners' opportunities for work experience placements take place too late in the year to be of any real benefit to their development during the programme. Until this academic year, the programme did not have enrichment activities. Some vocational subject areas offered, such as sports, have only very few learners and do not respond to the future economic priorities of the local enterprise partnership.
- Leaders' determined aspirations for what learners can achieve are too low. Leaders and managers acknowledge that their understanding and use of data to evaluate and improve the provision is weak. They do not use data routinely and systematically to identify and address poor performance quickly. Leaders have not set challenging improvement targets to raise outcomes for learners, and these have continued to deteriorate. Information management systems record learners' achievement but do not provide managers with a clear picture of the progress learners are making.
- Senior leaders have not implemented an effective English and mathematics skills development plan to support learners to achieve well in these subjects. Classes are poorly attended and learners do not make the expected progress. As a consequence, outcomes for learners are particularly low in these subjects.
- Managers have not addressed and reduced the achievement gap for different groups of learners identified at the previous inspection. Managers do not understand the reasons for this underachievement. Leaders have not agreed or communicated with staff sufficient or appropriate actions to eradicate this.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has deteriorated since the previous inspection. Many staff and tutors have left the provider, and leaders have not been successful in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff. Managers do not have an adequate succession plan for the replacement of key staff when they leave. As a result of key staff changes and shortages, learners in the motor vehicle area had to be transferred to another provider and, similarly, the achievement of English and mathematics qualifications was seriously affected.
- The performance management of staff and tutors has improved recently with the introduction of more frequent observations of teaching practice, but this has not yet raised teaching standards. These interventions fail to recognise the link between learning and attendance. Managers do not set tutors sufficiently specific targets for improving their practice. Managers have identified that almost all current teaching and learning require improvement or are inadequate.
- Leaders' and managers' monitoring and evaluation of the provision are not accurately informed by quality assurance processes. Last year, managers failed to identify that the

assessment practice in the largest subject area did not meet, until recently, the awarding body standards. The current self-assessment report understates the significant weaknesses that exist in the provision. The resulting quality improvement plan does not have sufficiently challenging improvement actions. Timelines to improve urgent deficiencies are too distant; the plan is vague with regard to the persons in the organisation accountable and responsible for implementing these actions.

- Managerial actions to address the recommendations made at the previous inspection have been ineffective and, as a consequence, these areas remain in need of substantial and urgent improvement; a few have deteriorated further. The provider has demonstrated poor capacity to improve.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is ineffective. Current arrangements do not provide sufficient impartial scrutiny and challenge. Performance information shared with the sole governor is insufficient, inaccurate, and does not allow the governance function to hold leaders to account. For instance, the governor is not aware of the learners' poor retention, attendance, progress, achievement and progression.
- The governor has provided ample teaching support and expertise to managers to help them overcome the significant challenges that the provision has faced, particularly, in establishing GCSE English and mathematics provision.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements to safeguard learners are ineffective.
- Leaders and managers have placed a strong focus and worked hard to implement their 'Prevent' duty strategy by, for example, establishing good links with the local police. However, they have failed to develop a culture of rigorous vigilance to ensure that their wider safeguarding arrangements are effective in protecting all their learners.
- Risk assessment for highly vulnerable learners is insufficient and the monitoring of their attendance is weak. In too many instances, the provider is not able to contact missing learners or their parents/guardians. In these cases, staff do not invoke quickly enough the appropriate escalation protocols.
- Tutors do not use health and safety risk assessments effectively to reduce hazards and minimise risk in the vocational workshops. Leaders and managers are slow in addressing identified areas for improvement in risk assessments.
- The management of e-safety is not sufficiently comprehensive. As a result, learners have unrestricted access to inappropriate and unsafe websites while using the information technology (IT) equipment provided by Platinum.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- At present, some 160 learners aged 16 to 18 are following a range of vocational study programmes from entry level to level 2. Around 75% of the learners are on motor vehicle courses, with the remainder on electrical, plumbing and sports programmes.

- Tutors do not have high enough expectations of their learners and most tutors accept learners' poor attitudes to study in lessons. Therefore, learners often produce mediocre standards of work and uninspiring, perfunctory responses to questions and assessments.
- Most tutors fail to plan their lessons sufficiently well as they do not make enough use of information they have about the prior learning, needs and backgrounds of their learners. For example, information about learners' disabilities and support needs is not always sufficiently detailed to help plan sessions effectively. Learners with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not receive additional support to help them to progress well.
- Tutors are often ineffective at assessing learners' knowledge and do not make sure that learners have understood new topics. Learners receive insufficient challenge to motivate them to make good progress in acquiring new skills. Too often, learners make slow progress in completing work and do not advance their understanding of the subject matter sufficiently.
- In almost all lessons, learners are expected to follow the same activity for the same length of time, irrespective of their abilities and prior attainment. Consequently, too many learners are not able to complete tasks successfully and they are unable to keep up or make further progress in the lesson. The most able learners also see their learning curtailed as they complete the learning tasks early and become unproductive, failing to reach their potential. As a result, learners' progress is poor and they are not prepared sufficiently well for their next steps in learning.
- Too much variance in the quality and effectiveness of the feedback given to learners by tutors exists. In the less effective sessions, tutors ignore many of the errors and as a result learners remain unaware of the improvements they need to make. Written comments are often too brief and imprecise to help learners to develop their skills further.
- Most tutors do not do enough to promote learners' understanding of fundamental British values within lessons and many learners have only a superficial understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Tutors do not ensure that learners develop good English and mathematics skills during lessons in all vocational areas. Learners do not develop fully the ability to apply these important skills to their vocational work. Learners often continue to make the same basic mistakes within their written work and do not receive the support they need to develop and advance. Teachers fail to ensure that the topics of English and mathematics lessons relate to learners' vocational areas, and learners often lose their concentration and disengage from learning.
- Tutors do not use learning activities well enough to promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity through discussions or information sharing. Learners say that they feel safe and have a reasonable understanding of the risks associated with bullying and gang membership.
- The majority of vocational tutors have good subject knowledge and experience, particularly in the motor industry. They make good links between theory and practice and use good, practical examples to illustrate key learning aims, such as examining a bottle-jack to understand the principles of hydraulics. In a few lessons, learners develop good practical skills; for example, in some motor vehicle lessons, they develop good awareness of how to identify and remove an exhaust manifold.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- Attendance and punctuality are poor, limiting the progress that learners can make. Attendance at lessons and workshop activities is very low; frequently, less than half of the expected learners were present in lessons during the inspection. Most learners do not learn the self-discipline of punctuality. The great majority of classes started at least 10 minutes late; a minority of teachers place insufficient urgency on starting on time. Learners are not ready to learn. For example, learners wear coats in lessons and this is not challenged by staff. Learners do not exhibit, or work to develop, these most basic employability skills.
- Learners do not develop their English and mathematics skills sufficiently to maximise their chances of progression to higher levels of study or employment. Very few learners achieve the English and mathematics qualifications for which they study. Learners have very few opportunities to develop their IT skills, despite the necessity of such skills within their chosen careers.
- Standards of work are not appropriate to the level of study in too many lessons. For example, in a level 2 motor vehicle lesson, learners were undertaking the same work as the level 1 learners in a separate lesson. Standards of work in English and mathematics are often poor, though in mathematics a minority of students' folders contained good work. Standards in plumbing and electrical installation were appropriate.
- Learners have insufficient opportunities to develop their employability skills through external work experience. Although the great majority of learners who complete their study programme undertake work experience, for most this is restricted to just one week towards the end of their programme. This prevents a year-long, planned approach to the development of learners' employability skills and self-confidence built around work-based learning. In lessons, tutors do not ensure that learners develop good employability skills.
- Learners are not developing the appropriate behaviours that would support them well in the world of work. Their behaviour is too frequently disrespectful to members of staff, leading to disruptions in learning. A minority of staff deal with inappropriate behaviour adequately; however, on two further occasions, tutors were not able to manage the poor behaviour and senior staff had to intervene in order to enable the teacher to achieve sufficient order so that other learners were not disadvantaged in their learning.
- Learners do not have sufficient opportunities through enrichment activities to explore personal, social and ethical issues and take part in life in wider society. During the previous year, only one enrichment activity took place. Recently introduced activities are mainly restricted to a small number of sporting options and sessions on drug awareness. Learners are not always aware of such activities taking place.
- Learners are aware of how to raise any safeguarding concerns. They state that the provider is free from bullying. However, insufficient personal protective equipment is provided in the motor vehicle workshops for learners to follow standard industrial practice. Few learners have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and the action they should take if they become worried. Learners are aware of the types of bullying and abuse that can be encountered when using the internet. However, they are able to access unsafe websites through the IT equipment provided at Platinum.
- Information, advice and guidance prior to the course starting and to enable learners to understand progression opportunities are effective. A dedicated team of staff use good

partnership arrangements with local schools and other community agencies to identify and work with those young people in danger of becoming, or already, not in education, employment or training. Consequently, young people in the community are well informed about learning opportunities at Platinum. The great majority of learners receive an individual information and advice session during their programme which enables them to be aware of progression opportunities.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, the number of learners that successfully remain on programme for the expected length of time has fallen gravely and last year less than half of all the learners that started in Platinum completed their study programme. So far, in the first four months of the new academic year, approximately 20% of the learners have already left the programme or are at risk of doing so, due to their persistently poor attendance.
- Against this backdrop, achievement rates for the considerably reduced number of learners who stay for the duration of the programme have experienced a significant decline since the previous inspection, with only a few learners achieving the qualifications they undertake as part of their study programme. During this period of time, very few learners have achieved their qualifications by the planned end date.
- The achievement rate of vocational qualifications has fallen since the previous inspection across all subjects, with the exception of plumbing studies where the very few learners taking this qualification achieved well last year, according to the provider's own data. Learners did not make the expected progress last year and only approximately half of them achieved their vocational qualifications on time.
- The rates of achievement in functional skills English and mathematics qualifications were particularly low for the very large majority of learners in 2015 and declined from the previous year. Almost no learners improved their grades in English and mathematics in the first cohort of those taking GCSE qualifications. Many learners achieved a lower grade in these qualifications than the one they came with when they joined their study programme at the provider.
- The number of learners progressing to relevant further learning, training and employment has substantially declined over the last three years and is now too low. Last year, only a minority of learners progressed to a positive destination.
- Too many learners are not making good progress in the current year. In GCSE mathematics, learners have not completed enough work of the required standard, given the length of time they have been on programme. The great majority of learners in motor vehicle, the largest vocational area, are making slow or very slow progress.
- The achievement gap between learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those without widened greatly last year. At Platinum, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a very slim chance of achieving their qualifications when compared to other learners.

Provider details

Unique reference number	56776
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16 to 18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	200
Principal/CEO	Ms Elizabeth Caldicott
Telephone number	0121 245 7200
Website	www.platpeople.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	80	-	81	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	-							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	-							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	-							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Maria Navarro, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine Mayer	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Grant	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector

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