

INSPECTION REPORT

PGL Travel Limited

30 June 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

INSPECTION REPORT

PGL Travel Limited

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for PGL Travel Limited	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
Key Findings	3
What learners like about PGL Travel Limited	7
What learners think PGL Travel Limited could improve	7

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	9
Quality improvement	10
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	12

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. PGL Travel Limited (PGL) is a privately owned company which provides residential activity holidays for young people at 26 centres in the UK, France and Spain. Its head office is in Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire, and its regional head office for its French and Spanish centres is in the Ardèche region of France. PGL has 130 full-time permanent staff and employs approximately 2,500 seasonal staff. The company provides training in hospitality, sports, leisure and travel, to employees from all over the UK who have worked for it for at least one season.

2. PGL has 51 learners on sports and hospitality programmes funded by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council. Of these, 24 are completing apprenticeships with a level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in sport, recreation and allied occupations (activity leadership) and 23 are completing advanced apprenticeships with a level 3 NVQ in outdoor education, development training and recreation. Two apprentices and two advanced apprentices are on hospitality programmes. Learners also gain personal and instructors' qualifications from national governing bodies during their training. Internal verification for the hospitality programmes is subcontracted to VT Plus Training. During the inspection, nearly half of PGL's learners were working in France and Spain for the summer months.

3. PGL's training manager is responsible for apprenticeship training and reports to the operations director on training matters and the head of centre-based human resources on staffing. A programme manager and four training officers carry out most of the training, assessment and progress reviews for the learners. A few centres have their own assessors. The activity centre managers are also responsible for the welfare of learners at the centres. They report to an area operations manager who also reports to the operations director.

4. PGL is now into its seventh year of running apprenticeship programmes. The company acquired another large education and adventure provider in 2004, but training for these learners is still carried out separately for the present. Ownership of PGL is also in the process of changing. The company was last inspected by the ALI in March 2002. All aspects of the provision were judged to be satisfactory except for PGL's approach to equality of opportunity, which was unsatisfactory.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provider is judged to be good.** PGL's leadership and management are good as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Work-based learning in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is good.

6. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Self-assessment is well established and PGL has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Involvement of training staff and head office managers is good,

PGL TRAVEL LIMITED

although activity centre staff do not have enough direct involvement. A wide range of evidence is used in the process, including learners' views. The development plans are detailed and effective.

7. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.

PGL has effectively carried out actions to improve the quality of provision. All inspection grades have improved by one grade since the previous inspection. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been resolved, although improvements in achievement rates for advanced apprentices have been slow. PGL now has good strategies in place. The management of training is very good and its quality improvement arrangements are good.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR PGL TRAVEL LIMITED:

- improve advanced apprenticeship achievement rates
- provide better support for learners with additional learning needs
- improve promotion of apprenticeships to minority ethnic groups
- maintain the good quality of training in a period of change for the company

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i>			2
Apprenticeships for young people	47		2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. PGL only provides training for its own staff in the hospitality, sport, leisure and travel area of learning. A contributory grade was awarded for leisure, sport and recreation. Evidence was examined for hospitality, which was not reported on or graded separately, to support judgements in the key findings of the report. In the week before the main inspection, two inspectors spent a total of 10 days reviewing provision in France and Spain.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	22
Number of learners interviewed	37
Number of staff interviewed	33
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	20

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **Retention and achievement rates for apprentices are good.** Eighty-one per cent of the apprentices starting between 2002 and 2004 were retained and 70 per cent successfully completed all elements of their programme.

10. **Learners develop very high levels of personal, occupational and leadership skills.** Many have developed increased confidence and self-esteem. They demonstrate a high level of skills and knowledge in teaching and managing activities, and their coaching techniques are very good.

11. Learners achieve a good range of additional qualifications from the national governing bodies of the activities they run. These include personal performance qualifications in areas such as sailing and windsurfing. Many learners also acquire a good range of instructor or coaching qualifications as well as very useful first aid, basic food hygiene, health and safety, and manual handling qualifications.

12. **Retention and achievement rates for advanced apprentices are low.** The achievement rate improved significantly for learners starting in 2003-04, but at 40 per cent it is still low. PGL has recognised this concern. Winter training is now more comprehensive and assessors now make more frequent visits to learners. Current advanced apprentices are making good progress.

13. Recruitment of advanced apprentices was low in 2003-04 following insufficient promotion of the qualification to PGL's seasonal staff, but the recruitment rate has improved in 2004-05.

The quality of provision

14. **Assessments are well planned, and frequent and good use is made of assessors' observations as evidence.** Assessors meet with learners before an observation to ensure they have a clear understanding of the assessment process. Clear and appropriate targets are set on the action plans following assessments and reviews. Tutors keep learners well informed of their progress by giving them a score at the end of each assessment which shows that the percentage of the qualification that they have completed.

15. **Evidence collection is well structured.** The elements and performance criteria likely to be covered by a particular activity are combined into manageable chunks which learners

recognise as relating to an activity. Most portfolios are laid out well with good clear evidence, but a few make insufficient use of photographs.

16. The comprehensive off-the-job training in the winter months at the start of the apprenticeship programme is good. This concentrates on the technical certificates, key skills qualifications, industry skills and additional external and national governing body qualifications which many learners complete before transferring to their workplaces. Accreditation of prior learning for key skills qualifications is good and well managed.

17. All new centre staff, including learners, complete an externally accredited introductory programme which acts as a comprehensive induction and promotes health and safety. The completed programme is used as evidence for the background knowledge of the NVQ.

18. Learners are very well supported by the training officers, managers and their peers. All learners live on site, and food and accommodation is fit for purpose.

19. A small number of learners receive insufficient additional support. Seven learners with additional literacy and numeracy skills learning needs and a few learners, who did not complete their key skills assignments during the winter training period, are not given sufficient support in the centres. These learners are not visited frequently enough to develop their skills and staff are not sufficiently well trained to provide the level of support required. Most centres have no mentors on site to support these learners.

20. Learners who have already achieved key skills qualifications before starting their apprenticeship are not given the opportunity to complete key skills at levels above the framework requirements. Learners are not all allocated time to complete assessment work, but all are given time to attend meetings with assessors.

Leadership and management

21. Leadership is strong and sets a clear direction for apprenticeship training across a large number of centres. Many staff work closely with the Sector Skills Council and other occupational bodies to develop improvements in training for the outdoor industry.

22. PGL manages training very well. Communication is very good, good practice is shared and a high degree of consistency exists between the centres. Winter training for new learners on apprenticeship programmes is effective and managed well. Training officers hold purposeful meetings every month to review the progress of individual learners and discuss any other concerns affecting learners in the centres. Actions are followed up well in subsequent meetings.

23. The small training team carry out learners' monthly assessment visits and progress reviews. They also usefully audit the general performance of the centres and send regular reports to managers in PGL, including the training manager. The training manager uses these reports to monitor how effectively the centres with learners are being run.

24. The training officers are well qualified with appropriate experience and a wide range of higher-level coaching, assessing and national governing body qualifications. Half of the trainers have completed a level 2 qualification to enable them to support learners with additional literacy or numeracy skills needs, but no trainer has a level 3 qualification.

25. **Appraisals and reviews for permanent staff are effective, supportive and detailed.**

Learners have constructive and regular reviews with their training officer and also have reviews with their line manager as part of PGL's capability process.

26. **PGL uses management information well to analyse and improve its performance.** It now has an effective and regularly maintained management information system, in contrast to the situation at the previous inspection.

27. **Opportunities for learners with few previous qualifications are good.** Many learners join PGL with low-level qualifications and are supported through the seasons to acquire increasing levels of responsibility and a good range of skills.

28. Learners have a good introduction to equality of opportunity during their winter training which is reinforced through induction at the centres. Learners have a good awareness of child protection matters and are resourceful in finding methods to ensure that disabled guests can participate in activities within safety guidelines.

29. Very few learners are from a minority ethnic background. **PGL carries out little external activity to promote working at the company as a career for those from minority ethnic backgrounds or with a disability.**

30. **PGL's quality improvement strategies have been particularly successful in raising the quality of its provision.** It has taken effective action to rectify most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. All inspection grades are one grade higher than at the previous inspection. Quality improvement is a regular item for discussion at all team meetings and any concerns identified are promptly and effectively dealt with.

31. PGL successfully uses a wide range of feedback from staff, learners and guests to make improvements. Feedback is carefully analysed and the information is then used well to identify and share good practice and to set key performance indicators.

32. Internal verification is good. Roles and responsibilities are clear. Useful standardisation meetings are held. Assessors are supported well through visits from internal verifiers which are made more frequently than at the time of the previous inspection.

33. **Some policies and procedures are ambiguous or not detailed enough.** The format used for the different policies is not consistent. The internal verification process is thorough, but it is poorly described in the relevant procedure and guidelines.

34. The self-assessment process is well established. PGL has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses but does not focus sufficiently on the effect of some of these strengths and weaknesses on learners. Centre-based assessors and managers are not directly involved in the self-assessment process.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very good management of training
- good development and appraisal of staff
- good collection and analysis of management information
- good development for learners with few previous qualifications
- effective quality improvement arrangements

Weaknesses

- insufficient promotion of apprenticeships to minority ethnic groups
- insufficiently detailed policies and procedures

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Leisure, sport and recreation

Grade 2

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates for apprentices
- very good development of personal, occupational and leadership skills
- particularly well-planned assessment and evidence collection
- well-structured off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates for advanced apprentices
- insufficient support for a small number of learners with additional learning needs

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT PGL TRAVEL LIMITED:

- the opportunity to gain national governing body qualifications with quality trainers
- gaining a qualification while doing a job
- the opportunity to work abroad
- progression within the company
- PGL's friendly atmosphere
- developing confidence and training skills
- working closely with colleagues on the winter training

WHAT LEARNERS THINK PGL TRAVEL LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the wages – senior staff deserve more pay
- the staff accommodation – better and newer tents for staff
- the long hours instructors and group leaders work
- the old computers in most centres
- the support on site to complete the NVQ

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- very good management of training
- good development and appraisal of staff
- good collection and analysis of management information
- good development for learners with few previous qualifications
- effective quality improvement arrangements

Weaknesses

- insufficient promotion of apprenticeships to minority ethnic groups
- insufficiently detailed policies and procedures

35. PGL manages training very well. Communication is very good between the activity centres and with head office. Productive senior staff training is held each winter to promote consistency between the centres and to share knowledge and experience. This is beneficial to learners, many of whom move between centres during the season. Winter training for new learners on apprenticeship programmes is also effective and well managed.

36. A small, cohesive training team carries out learners' monthly assessment visits and progress reviews. They also usefully audit general performance of the centres and send regular reports to managers in PGL, including the training manager, who monitors how well the centres with learners are being run. Training officers also effectively support the centre managers on confidential matters, such as staffing. In some cases, this has led to learners being moved between centres to improve operational and personal capability. Area managers also visit the centres regularly. Training officers meet every month to review the progress of individual learners and more general matters such as resources, risk assessments and incident reports from activity centres. Actions are followed up well in subsequent meetings.

37. Permanent staff, including training officers, have an annual appraisal and many have a six-monthly review. The appraisals and reviews are supportive and detailed. They identify development needs and the contribution made to PGL's objectives, including learners' retention and achievement rates where appropriate. Learners have regular reviews with a training officer from the start of their winter training, which greatly helps their development and progress. All new staff, including learners, take part in PGL's intensive induction and capability programme to ensure they are doing the job well. This process also includes regular reviews which are carried out by their line managers. The outcomes of these reviews are used as evidence in learners' portfolios.

38. The training staff are well qualified. All have appropriate experience and a wide range of higher-level coaching, assessing and national governing body qualifications. Most have worked with PGL as instructors for many years. Half of the trainers have completed a level 2 qualification to enable them to support learners with additional literacy or numeracy skills needs. No trainer has a level 3 qualification, due to difficulties accessing the qualification

locally. No member of the training team has a formal teaching qualification, although most do have a level 3 NVQ in training and development. Learners are treated like all other staff members and have access to a wide range of qualifications. In their free time, they can attend courses run in the evenings at the centres by experienced coaches. Learners are encouraged to work at a higher level under supervision to gain experience, preparing them for promotion the next season if available.

39. PGL uses management information well to analyse and improve its performance. It now has an effective and regularly maintained management information system, in contrast to the situation at the previous inspection. Managers analyse retention and achievement data for trends, and to identify learners who are at risk of not completing their apprenticeship. PGL's system for recording and summarising health and safety incidents is particularly good. Learners complete risk assessments of the activities they lead and are responsible for reporting any accidents or incidents. PGL's health and safety adviser monitors these reports to identify common themes or trends, and changes to procedures often follow.

40. In March 2005, PGL was re-accredited with the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

41. Opportunities for learners with few previous qualifications are good. Many learners join PGL with low-level qualifications and are supported through the seasons to acquire increasing levels of responsibility and a good range of personal, occupational and leadership skills. Several staff have progressed from seasonal jobs to apprenticeships and instructor posts, and some have subsequently moved into management roles. One advanced apprentice joined PGL as a kitchen assistant and is now a river leader, responsible for seven peers who are instructors and 50 schoolchildren when they are canoeing on the river.

42. PGL's equal opportunities policy clearly states the company's commitment to ensuring all employees, including learners, are treated fairly and equally. However, it does not outline the company's policy in relation to respect for diversity. The objectives of the policy are implemented through departmental action plans, which are in place for the training department but relate mainly to recruitment and access to training programmes. The policy states that monitoring of the policy is carried out through the steering group, but this group has not met in the last year.

43. Despite shortfalls in the policy, learners have a good introduction to equality of opportunity on their winter training programme. A comprehensive session covers equality and diversity with scenarios relating to stereotyping, cultural awareness and discrimination. This is reinforced through the induction at the centres where learners are working. The induction programme clearly and helpfully outlines learners' responsibilities in relation to dealing with guests but is not overt about learners' own rights and responsibilities. Learners have access to the telephone numbers of support groups through their centre manager and have had training on 'whistle blowing' should they wish to report malpractice. Learners also have a good awareness of child protection matters as a result of their training. They have a satisfactory overall knowledge of equality of opportunity.

44. A disability audit has been carried out at centres to examine access to buildings and

services for disabled users. The audit also includes a detailed review of activities at the centres and how these could be adapted, within safety guidelines, for use by disabled guests. Learners are resourceful in finding methods to ensure disabled guests have a good holiday. They adapt procedures, within the safety guidelines, to facilitate disabled guests. For example, a ground launching method was used to send a wheelchair user up to the platform so that they could complete the zip wire activity.

45. Promotion of apprenticeships to minority ethnic groups is insufficient. Very few learners are from a minority ethnic background despite the fact that many pupils from the schools which visit PGL are members of these groups. Learners are drawn from staff already employed, but PGL carries out little external activity to promote working at the company as career for those from minority ethnic backgrounds or with a disability. Specific media have not been used this year to promote apprenticeships to minority ethnic groups and PGL has few links with appropriate external agencies to increase the response rate.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

46. PGL's quality improvement strategies have been particularly effective in raising the quality of its provision. It has taken effective action to rectify most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. All inspection grades are one grade higher than at the previous inspection. This achievement is significant, but even more so given that PGL's learners are widely dispersed throughout the UK, France and Spain and most are employed on a seasonal basis. Quality improvement is a regular item for discussion at all team meetings and any concerns identified are promptly and effectively dealt with.

47. PGL effectively uses a wide range of feedback methods to monitor the experiences of its staff, learners and guests and to make improvements. These include records of regular centre visits and audits, observations of trainers and learners, evaluations of training by learners and guests' feedback. PGL carefully analyses this useful information and identifies useful trends. It then uses the information well to identify and share good practice and to set key performance indicators such as improving learners' achievement rates and guests' satisfaction.

48. Centre managers collect feedback from guests just before they leave and then collect more detailed feedback from group organisers shortly after they have returned home. This feedback is used well to improve centres' performance and the contribution of learners. For example, one learner's feedback showed their performance as satisfactory and immediately the centre manager started to work with the learner on how this could be improved to be at least good. Staff at PGL's headquarters summarise all the guests' feedback received and publish it so that centres can compare their performance.

49. Internal verification is good. Useful standardisation meetings are held and assessors are well supported by more frequent visits than at the time of the previous inspection. Several assessors have improved the quality of their written comments and feedback to learners following guidance from their internal verifier and the outcomes of standardisation activities. Good use is made of external verifiers' reports as a quality improvement tool.

50. Some policies and procedures are ambiguous or insufficiently detailed. The format used for the different policies is not consistent. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated annually. The health and safety policy and procedures are well established, routinely reviewed in line with legislation and codes of practice, clearly

documented and robustly monitored by managers. The equal opportunities policy and procedures are also clear. However, although internal verification is thorough, it is poorly described in the relevant procedure and guidelines. The policy and operating procedures for key skills arrangements are not clearly separated, and there is no named person responsible for applying or overseeing the policy. Operating procedures do not identify who is responsible for monitoring their effectiveness or how consistently they are being applied.

51. The self-assessment process is well established and involves the training manager and training officers. Strengths and weaknesses are determined and supported by evidence such as learners' evaluations of training, direct observation reports, guest feedback and other data analyses. The report is sent to a senior manager to ensure it correlates with the business plan. Development plans are sufficiently detailed. PGL has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, but the effect on learners of some strengths and weaknesses is not sufficiently focused upon. Centre-based assessors and managers are not directly involved in the self-assessment process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	47	2

52. In the hospitality, sport, leisure and travel area of learning, a contributory grade was awarded for leisure, sport and recreation. PGL has 24 apprentices working towards their level 2 NVQ in sport, recreation and allied occupations (activity leadership) and 23 advanced apprentices working towards their level 3 NVQ in outdoor education, development training and recreation. Learners also gain personal and instructor-level national governing body qualifications during their training.

53. All the leisure, sports and recreation learners are employed by PGL, mostly on a seasonal basis, as outdoor activity instructors or as group leaders looking after the welfare of guests. Group leaders do different NVQ options to the instructors. They take a qualification in child welfare and protection accredited by a national children's charity and do a first aid course to prepare them for their job role. Two apprentices and two advanced apprentices on hospitality programmes are also employed by PGL.

54. All learners have worked for PGL for at least one season before starting their apprenticeship. Seasonal staff are interviewed near the end of their contract to discuss opportunities for employment in the following season. This is also their opportunity to indicate an interest in applying for an apprenticeship. The apprenticeship programme is advertised through roadshows in August to seasonal staff, with suitable applicants starting the advanced apprenticeship the following November and the apprenticeship programme in January. It is expected that apprentices will complete their qualification in one season and that advanced apprentices will complete it in a maximum of two seasons.

55. At the start of their apprenticeship, learners attend comprehensive off-the-job training in the winter months. This concentrates on the technical certificates, key skills qualifications, industry skills and additional external and national governing body qualifications which many learners complete before transferring to their workplaces. After this initial training, learners are allocated to one of 26 centres, of which 17 are in the UK and nine are in France or Spain. Twenty-two learners are in France or Spain and 29 are in the UK.

56. Training and assessment are mainly carried out by training officers who visit centres over the summer season. A few centres have their own assessors. When required, end-of-season workshops are provided in the autumn to help learners complete their portfolios and gain additional evidence to complete their framework. Learners must be 18 years old, and at the time of inspection all were aged over 19 years. Sixty-six per cent of learners are men.

Leisure, sport and recreation***Grade 2****Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates for apprentices
- very good development of personal, occupational and leadership skills
- particularly well-planned assessment and evidence collection
- well-structured off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates for advanced apprentices
- insufficient support for a small number of learners with additional learning needs

Achievement and standards

57. Retention and achievement rates for apprentices are good. Eighty-one per cent of the apprentices starting in 2002-03 and 2003-04 were retained until the end of their programme and 70 per cent have successfully completed all elements of their programme.

58. Learners develop very high levels of confidence, self-esteem, leadership ability and occupational skills through their training and work with PGL. They demonstrate a high level of skills and knowledge in teaching and managing activities and their coaching techniques are very good. Learners achieve a good range of additional national governing body qualifications beyond the expectations of the apprenticeship framework. Many of these are personal performance qualifications such as power boating at level 2 and personal sailing and windsurfing qualifications. Many learners also acquire a good range of instructor or coaching qualifications from bodies including national yachting and canoeing associations. All learners also complete very useful first aid, basic food hygiene, control of substances harmful to health and manual handling courses before starting work. Advanced apprentices are particularly well qualified. They complete senior instructor coaching qualifications, enabling them to manage and supervise other instructors and guests in activities. Learners in their role as instructors and group leaders care for and entertain the guests very well.

59. Retention and achievement rates for advanced apprentices are low. Retention and achievement rates for learners starting in 2002-03 have shown a significant improvement but the achievement rate is still low at 40 per cent. PGL has recognised this and has diagnosed the reasons for the low achievement rates which include key skills qualifications being set a higher level in the older framework. It also identified that the training team had insufficient knowledge of working at level 3, and didn't keep learners' interest or encourage them to return to complete the qualification the following year. The more comprehensive winter training now ensures that learners cover more of the programme before they start working at the centres and assessor visits are now more frequent. Current advanced apprentices are making good progress. Recruitment was low in 2003-04 following insufficient promotion of the advanced apprenticeship to PGL's seasonal staff, but recruitment has improved in 2004-05.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	23		6		25		15	100	26	100						
Retained*	0		1		15		5	33	6	23						
Successfully completed	0		1		10		1	7	4	15						
Still in learning	19		3		1		0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24		15		33	100	27	100								
Retained*	0		11		28	85	20	74								
Successfully completed	0		9		23	70	18	67								
Still in learning	22		2		0	0	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

The quality of provision

60. Assessments are well planned and frequent with good use of assessor observations as evidence. Assessors meet with learners before an observation to ensure they have a clear understanding of what is being assessed and how evidence and the performance criteria correlate. Detailed verbal and written feedback is given promptly following the assessment. Most learners have a good understanding of the framework and are able to cross-reference evidence to key skills qualifications and the NVQ. Clear and appropriate targets are set through action plans following assessments and reviews. Copies of all action plans are sent to head office so they can monitor learners' progress centrally. Learners know how they are progressing following each action-planning session or assessment through use of the highly motivational and practical percentage completion score they receive at the end of each session.

61. Evidence is based on the day-to-day activities of instructors completing whole-activity sessions in a variety of contexts including sailing, canoeing, archery, quad-biking, mountain biking, climbing and archery. Evidence collection is well structured. The elements and performance criteria likely to be covered by a particular activity are combined into manageable chunks which learners recognise as relating to the activity. This is helping them to collect evidence more quickly. Portfolios are laid out well with good clear evidence, most of which is direct observation by assessors with some witness statements and other relevant documents. Insufficient use is made of photographs in some portfolios.

62. The comprehensive off-the-job training in the winter months at the start of the apprenticeship programme is good. Key skills qualifications and technical certificates are

integrated and contextualised well. Well-written projects are used to help learners understand the industry. These are used as evidence for both key skills and the technical certificates. Learners receive good training in child protection. Group leaders and advanced apprentices complete an award in child protection awareness. Apprentices complete the workbook but not the whole award. Accreditation of prior learning for key skills qualifications is good and managed well.

63. All new centre staff, including learners, complete an externally accredited introductory programme for activity centre staff which acts as a comprehensive induction and promotes health and safety. It includes assessments in the workplace which are similar in format to the NVQ, but are separate as they are carried out by line managers and not assessors. The completed programme is used as evidence for the NVQ's background knowledge.

64. Learners are supported very well by the training officers, managers and their peers. All learners live on site. Food is adequate in quantity and type and learners' accommodation, in either houses, chalets or tents depending on the centre, is fit for purpose and improves according to seniority. In addition to the thorough 12-weekly progress reviews carried out by the training officers, centre managers conduct comprehensive monthly reviews with learners in which they comment on learners' progress on the apprenticeship programme.

65. Resources to support learners' training are satisfactory. PGL makes good use of two activity centres in the UK during the winter months to provide a base for individual and team training. Equipment to extend the personal skills of instructors is available and used well to help canoeists and sailors gain higher-level qualifications. Training staff are occupationally well qualified but none have teaching qualifications, although they do have level 3 NVQ in training and development as well as a range of national governing body qualifications.

66. Learners undergo an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills as part of the winter training. Seven learners have been formally identified with additional literacy and numeracy skills learning needs, but they are not given sufficient support in the centres. Support is also insufficient for learners who did not complete their key skills assignments during the winter training period and who are struggling with application of number or information technology. These learners are not visited frequently enough to ensure their skills are developing and staff do not have all the expertise necessary to provide the level of support required. Most centres have no mentors on site to support learners. Learners with dyslexia receive individual support to complete technical certificates on the winter training programme but are not helped to devise strategies to enable them to manage their disability when working in the centres.

67. Learners who have already achieved key skills qualifications before starting their apprenticeship are not given the opportunity to complete key skills at levels above the framework requirements. Not all learners are allocated time to complete assessment work, but all are given time to attend meetings with assessors.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership is strong and sets a clear direction for apprenticeship training across a large number of centres. Many staff work closely with the Sector Skills Council and other occupational bodies to develop improvements in training for the outdoor industry. Management is good. The curriculum, training and assessment are planned well with good

use of specialist expertise.

69. Quality improvement strategies have had a significant positive effect on training and assessment. For example, when learners' feedback identified problems with an external tutor during the winter training, the tutor was replaced. Observation, both within the apprenticeship programme and outside as part of PGL's wider quality and health and safety procedures, is regular with constructive feedback. Internal verification, a weakness at the previous inspection, has improved significantly and is now effective. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. The report accurately identifies the main weakness relating to low achievement rates for the advanced apprentices and recognises the strength in skills development.

70. Understanding of equal opportunities and diversity among learners is satisfactory. In the winter training, learners receive good basic knowledge on equality and diversity and are very aware of the how to treat others with respect.

