

Premier League Learning

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Contents

Background information	4
Inspection judgements	4
Scope of the inspection.....	4
Description of the provider.....	5
Summary of grades awarded	6
Overall judgement.....	7
Effectiveness of provision	7
Capacity to improve	7
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like	12
What learners think could improve.....	12

Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Sport, leisure and recreation

Description of the provider

1. The Premier League is a limited company with the 20 premier league clubs as its shareholders. The league operates Premier League Learning (PLL) which is managed by the education scholarship and children's services manager who, through her team, coordinates the work-based learning contract. The PLL team was established in June 2004 to manage the apprenticeship in sporting excellence (ASE) for learners within the premier league. The contract is funded through the LSC National Employer Service (NES). At the time of the inspection, 328 learners were on the programme.
2. The premier league is based in central London and the administrative headquarters for PLL is in Nottingham. Each football club operates a football academy or a centre of excellence licensed by the league which meets its standards and rules. Each club has a full-time head of education and welfare and a team of highly experienced coaches who deliver on-the-job training. Until recently, PLL subcontracted aspects of the management of the programme to another provider but now uses consultants particularly to manage observations of teaching and learning and data. The delivery of off-the-job training varies between clubs to meet the needs of the club and their learners; some subcontract the technical certificate and key skills to colleges or schools, others deliver direct. Each club offers a number of scholarships to talented young players who join the programme direct from school. Most learners enrol onto the advanced apprenticeship in sports excellence.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Sport, leisure and recreation	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of PLL is good. Achievement and standards overall are good. An increasing number of learners are achieving their full framework and NVQ achievements are high. The quality of provision is good and much coaching is outstanding. Resources are excellent and many coaches make very good use of technology to build learners' understanding and skills. The extent to which PLL uses the programme to meet the needs and interests of employers and learners is outstanding. Support for learners is good. Leadership and management are good as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

4. PLL demonstrates a good capacity to improve. The company has a range of good management procedures and staff are enthusiastic and very well qualified. The company has very recently taken over a number of management functions from its subcontractor and is quickly putting in place additional effective data and quality management systems to monitor activity and support improvement. PLL has a clear focus on meeting the learners' needs and on the continuous improvement of the provision. Learners' success rates are good and improving and they are very positive about their programme.
5. Quality management systems are comprehensive and satisfactory. PLL has just produced its first independent self-assessment report and the process is thorough and accurate. The report describes most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the inspection. However, some of the strengths identified are in areas which are still being developed and improved and one key weakness is not fully described. Inspectors agreed with the grades in the self-assessment report. Staff were appropriately involved in the self-assessment process and their feedback and feedback from learners contributed to the judgements in the report. The quality improvement plan identifies key weaknesses for action but it is not sufficiently detailed. The plan identifies what should be done but not always how it should be achieved and most operational plans do not include short-term targets, dates for achievements of objectives or records of progress. Managers, however, keep detailed records of their actions and the impact they have.

Key strengths

- High framework success rates
- Outstanding development of learners' skills
- Excellent resources
- Outstanding programme that meets learner and employer needs
- Good operational management

Key areas for improvement

- Effectiveness of the use of information at local level
- Slow management response to some issues

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

6. Achievement and standards are good. Learners at PLL achieve high framework success rates. The published data is inaccurate and inspectors used the provider's data approved by NES. In 2005/06, 68% of learners achieved the full framework and in 2006/07, 61% have achieved all elements of their framework. The provider's own data shows that this figure has now risen to 78% although no claims have yet been submitted to the sector skills council for confirmation. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are slightly lower. The timely success rate is recognised as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. The achievement rate for the NVQ is good at 87%. All learners at many academies achieve their qualifications, however, in 2006/07 single learners at two clubs did not achieve and achievement at four other clubs ranged from 17% to 57%.
7. Learners develop very good football skills. The standard of play is high and learners significantly improve their technical, tactical, physical and mental skills. Many play at reserve team level, attend training with first team squads and are already achieving international recognition at youth and under 21 levels.
8. Learners enjoy their programme and they develop good social and life skills. Most learners who join the programme with limited English language skills develop these effectively and some quickly become fluent. All learners are trained in media presentation. Academies encourage learners to become involved in community programmes and to contribute to worthwhile local activities where they can develop good individual and team working skills.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

9. Teaching and coaching is good. All learning sessions observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better and all coaching sessions were good or outstanding.
10. In the very good practical sessions, coaches work hard to involve all learners and they use a wide range of strategies to check learning very effectively. Teachers generally dominate the less good sessions where they use limited teaching and learning strategies. They ask few questions to ensure that learners understand and remember information.
11. Resources are excellent. The most advanced modern training facilities include very good quality equipment, for example, training pitches, AstroTurf areas, weight training and fitness rooms, hydrotherapy pools and physiotherapy and rehabilitation facilities. Teachers and coaches use technology well to support the programmes including inter-active whiteboards, video analysis software and audio recorders. All staff at the academies, physiotherapists, sports scientists, fitness specialist, coaches and education and welfare officers, are highly qualified.
12. Staff in some academies do not use information effectively. They do not always use initial assessment data to select the most appropriate level of programme. Some learners do succeed at higher-level courses, however a small number of learners had to re-start a course at Level two after struggling with Level three. Teachers do not always draw on

information about learners' prior achievements to set challenging targets and too many learners work to achieve only a pass level in the technical certificate. Staff collect information about learners' preferred learning styles but they do not always use it effectively. PLL has a central monitoring system but many clubs keep their own monitoring documents and the information does not always match. PLL has recognised the problem and is developing a new on-line monitoring system.

13. PLL makes outstanding use of the sporting excellence framework to meet the needs of both learners and employers. The NVQ provides very good support for learners to improve their performance as aspiring professional footballers. Most learners study relevant technical certificates which effectively support their programme. The framework provides a very good progression route both to higher education and to other career opportunities in both football and the wider sports industry. Increasing numbers of scholars now achieve professional status. Clubs make very good use of additional funding to support activities such as overseas trips, community coaching schemes, visiting speakers and the purchase of specialist equipment to support learners.
14. The programme at many clubs includes a good range of additional coaching and officiating qualifications. Many learners achieve the Level 2 coaching certificate and the laws of the game unit, which qualifies them to referee at grade seven. Learners regularly participate in community coaching schemes and use the evidence towards the achievement of their coaching qualifications.
15. Support for learners on the scholarship programme is particularly good. PLL involves learners and their parents fully in the recruitment process and gives them clear information, advice and guidance about the programme. All learners undertake initial assessment and basic skills diagnostic testing. Most learners who have identified learning needs are effectively supported within their small group but some have individual support from club staff or from subcontractors. Individual learner reviews focus well both on the learners' technical, tactical, physical and mental progress and on their pastoral needs. PLL supports learners who live away from home particularly well, maintaining regular communication and monitoring their well-being through a 'house mother'. Learners from overseas receive good support for their language needs. The clubs and PLL arrange English for speakers of other languages provision and, if needed, the services of an interpreter.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are good. PLL has a range of very effective partnerships that enhance learning opportunities. Staff have good relationships with schools and develop a full understanding of the abilities and needs of those who become scholarship learners. PLL works closely with parents.
17. The provider has developed with Loughborough College innovative on-line materials to support the delivery of the technical certificate. PLL works effectively with the players'

professional association to help learners access further vocational education and training at the end of their programme or later in their career. Information, advice and guidance are good.

18. Operational management is good. PLL field officers work closely with club staff and communicate effectively. Staff from PLL and the clubs meet regularly and the minutes produced from the meetings clearly identify progress and development. Learners' programmes are well managed in the clubs. All education and welfare officers are qualified teachers, many with considerable experience of teaching and working with young footballers. Good systems are in place at the academies to effectively monitor learners' attendance, performance and welfare. Many learners progress while at school and an increasing proportion of scholars at the academies are from the local area. Communication with subcontractors is good and arrangements to deliver the technical certificate both directly and through subcontractors are effective. PLL provides good quality resources to support the work in the academies.
19. Quality improvement systems are comprehensive and satisfactory. PLL has a well planned quality management cycle and an appropriate range of policies and procedures. Observations of teaching and learning are detailed and comprehensive and PLL is developing the system to include the observation of induction and learner reviews. Internal verification is well-structured and managed and staff are appropriately trained and supported. Arrangements for standardisation meet awarding body requirements.
20. Equality and diversity are well promoted in most clubs. Learners receive good information on induction and this is effectively reinforced throughout their learning programme. In some clubs, senior players share facilities and work with learners in a mutually respectful way. Learners feel safe and valued and, although they have not used the systems, they know how to deal with harassment and bullying. PLL makes satisfactory arrangements to support the development of learners' skills for life.
21. Staff development and support is satisfactory. All staff are appraised annually and are given targets and managers discuss and record their development needs. PLL runs effective conferences which bring together staff from all levels within the organisation to consider and discuss relevant national developments and changes in the programme.
22. PLL has a range of sound data, much of it presented in useful pictorial form. This data is available to managers and it is used effectively in meetings and reports. PLL analyses the performance of learners appropriately, including their predicted progress and achievement. The company understands the performance of learners from minority ethnic groups but does not use this information sufficiently to plan improvements. PLL does not analyse the effectiveness of additional learning support.
23. PLL does not have sufficiently detailed operational plans to ensure quality improvement in some areas. The quality improvement plan identifies some actions to rectify areas for improvement in the self-assessment report but does not have short-term targets or describe clearly how to reach outcomes. PLL uses a variety of action-planning documents to rectify weaknesses in individual clubs but these do not all include information on timing, progress or responsibility for actions and some of the documentation is retrospective.

24. PLL does not have effective strategies to ensure all learners achieve their framework in a timely way. A few learners are working towards an unrecognised technical certificate and can achieve their framework only through retrospective negotiation with the sector skills council, however, the learners remain on a framework programme. PLL is making a late application for framework accreditation. Most learners complete their qualifications early in the summer but PLL do not apply for framework achievements until November. This weakness was only partially recognised in the self-assessment report.

What learners like:

- The status of being a footballer at a premier league club
- The good coaching
- ‘I always know what progress I’m making because the coaches tell us’
- The good accommodation
- ‘I like being able to analyse my performance on video’
- The good kit
- ‘When I get injured I get well looked after by the physios’
- Mixing with first team players
- Being treated like a grown up

What learners think could improve:

- The number of computers in some clubs
- The amount of activity in some classroom sessions