

Parenta Training Ltd

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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' monitoring 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:

- Early years and playwork

Description of the provider

1. Parenta Training Ltd (Parenta) specialises in providing training for the childcare sector. It is part of the Parenta Group and was established in 2007. The company contracts with Kent and Medway LSC for the provision of apprenticeship training and Train to Gain programmes. The company has not previously been inspected.
2. The general manager is responsible for all aspects of the provision. He is supported by managers with responsibility for compliance, quality control and data. Assessment is carried out in the workplace by seven assessors, four of whom are also internal verifiers.
3. A total of 17 apprentices and seven advanced apprentices are following programmes in childcare, learning and development. They attend theory sessions at the centre before finding work placements. Of the 72 Train to Gain learners, 33 are studying at NVQ level 2, 38 at level 3 and one at level 4. Most learners produce evidence of their knowledge online. All advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners are employed in the early years and childcare sector. Train to Gain learners are based in locations throughout the country, and the advanced apprentices work in locally based childcare settings. Most study for the NVQ through distance learning.
4. At the time of the inspection, the company was also providing training funded by local authorities and the European Social fund. In addition, one learner was following a programme in customer care and customer service. This provision was not within the scope of the current inspection.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity		Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Early years and playwork	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Achievements and standards and the quality of provision are satisfactory as are Leadership and management and equality of opportunity. Provision in early years and playwork for work-based learners and for Train to Gain learners is also satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Parenta has demonstrated that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Following a management reorganisation six months ago, considerable improvements have been made to the company's systems and operational management. Positive action has been taken in those areas identified for improvement and, although some learners still take too long to achieve the qualification, a noticeable level of improvement has been made in learners' progress.
7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is inclusive and takes account of the views of learners, employers and staff. The report provides a realistic and generally accurate assessment of the company's current position, although little use is made of data to reach judgements. Self-assessment is effectively linked to the company's quality improvement plan and is beginning to be used to drive continuous improvement. Inspection grades matched those in the self-assessment report. Many of the identified strengths and areas for improvement were accurate. However, a few strengths were no more than normal practice and others were not sufficiently supported by sound evidence.

Key strengths

- Good development of personal and vocational skills
- Good teaching and learning for apprentices
- Clear strategic direction
- Good management of change

Key areas for improvement

- Low proportion of learners on apprenticeship programmes complete within the planned period of study
- Insufficiently established arrangements for quality improvement
- Insufficient analysis and use of management information
- Weak promotion of equality and diversity

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Learners develop good personal and vocational skills. They have a good understanding of health and safety in their work settings and learn to work well in teams. Learners develop new skills for caring for babies and they understand how to support activities with children that develop language and learning. As they gain experience, learners show improved confidence and engage fully in a range of workplace activities. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory overall and some of it is good. Learners show an appropriate depth of understanding for the level of their programme and produce well researched and neatly presented assignment work. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.
9. The proportion of learners on apprenticeship programmes who complete within the planned study period is low, in 2007/08 only 13% of apprentices and 33% of advanced apprentices completed their framework within the planned time. This is identified in the self-assessment report. However, apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory overall and Parenta has implemented measures to improve timely success rates. Current learners on apprenticeship programmes are making satisfactory progress.
10. Current learners on the Train to Gain programme started in January 2008 and have not yet reached the completion date for their programme. However, most are making satisfactory progress towards achievement of the NVQ.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Teaching and learning for apprentices are good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Lessons are well planned, imaginative and maintain the interest of the learners, who are well motivated and keen to develop their understanding of a wide range of childcare matters. Schemes of work and lesson plans include a range of activities to meet individual needs. Carefully planned activities build from general discussion to more challenging individual tasks. Learners enjoy their lessons. Tutors use a good range of strategies to promote learning and make skilful use of questioning to help learners make good links with their practical experiences. Learners are well prepared for safe working in their placements. They carry out a wide range of activities, which cover aspects of health and safety relevant to nursery practice. Learners effectively apply their knowledge of first aid to their work with children.
12. Resources for learners are satisfactory. Learners enjoy completing their online portfolios and have access to a range of textbooks and internet based resources to assist them with their research activities. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Parenta has satisfactory arrangements for ensuring a safe learning environment.

13. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Employers ensure that their learners have relevant and frequent opportunities for assessment in the workplace. Learner reviews take place regularly and learners and employers contribute to the process. However, some target-setting lacks detail and does not tell learners what they have to do to make progress. Learners enjoy their training and assessment in workplace settings.
14. Satisfactory arrangements for initial assessment are in place and where appropriate, additional learning support is offered. Until recently Parenta employed a special educational needs coordinator, but this post is currently vacant and no suitably qualified member of staff is in place to support those learners who have been identified as having additional learning needs. The delivery and assessment of key skills is not an integral part of the learning experience and opportunities for learners to integrate key skills with their experience with children are not taken advantage of.
15. Parenta satisfactorily meets learners' needs and interests. Assessors are flexible in the choice of assessment methods and carefully match them to learners' preferred learning style. Many learners choose to study through the company's e-learning route and they appreciate the flexibility of this innovative approach. However, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the e-learning route is still in the early stages of development. The company provides a range of programmes from Level 2 to Level 4 to meet the needs of learners aged 19 and over who are interested in a childcare qualification. This helps to meet the needs of employers effectively, to extend the skills of their workforce and to improve the quality of childcare practice.
16. Support and guidance for learners' are satisfactory. Employers provide good support in the workplace. Assessors provide good pastoral support and are quick to respond to personal or other difficulties faced by learners. They have regular weekly contact with learners by telephone or email and visit them in their workplace at least once every month. Learners value assessors' accessibility and the clear explanations they give to support them in meeting the required standards of their programme. However, some learners experience significant difficulties in contacting their assessor. For these learners, progress towards achieving their qualification is often slow. Assessors provide appropriate information, advice and guidance (IAG) on career progression, but none have an IAG qualification. Links with the local Connexions service are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The strategic direction of the organisation is clear and effectively communicated to all staff. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to Parenta and to its values and they are clear about their specific roles and responsibilities in the company. Internal communication is open and effective. Staff at all levels work collaboratively. Constructive comment is encouraged. The company holds regular formal meetings resulting in action points, which are effectively followed through. A strong focus is placed on continuously improving the organisation and its performance.
18. The management of change is good. Parenta has gone through a period of recent and significant change. The management structure has been thoroughly reviewed and reorganised. Much of the senior management team has only been in place for about six months. All the company's systems and paperwork have been reviewed and subsequently revised. The company now has effective systems for the recruitment, initial assessment and induction of learners and for the review and monitoring of learners' progress and achievement. Changes have been thoughtfully and sensitively carried out to ensure that the company continues to meet the needs of learners and of the business.
19. Parenta's arrangements for the initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy levels and needs are satisfactory. However, these arrangements are not sufficiently formalised and currently no qualified member of staff has responsibility for the coordination and management of initial assessment.
20. Staff appraisal and training are satisfactory. A new annual appraisal system has been devised and will be implemented in the autumn term. A comprehensive range of staff development and training has been arranged over the coming months to update staff. These include training in safeguarding and equality of opportunity. The management and deployment of resources are satisfactory.
21. Arrangements to improve the quality of the provision are insufficiently established. A system for observing teaching and learning has been developed and some observations have been carried out. Observation reports are not always sufficiently thorough. Some are insufficiently evaluative and do not focus clearly enough on learning. The company does not yet have sufficient information about the quality of teaching and learning sessions to enable it to analyse trends in performance. Good practice in teaching and learning is not routinely shared. Parenta carries out quarterly reviews of assessors and produces reports based on these reviews. These are beginning to provide a sound basis for the continuous improvement of assessment practice but the reports are not always of a good standard.
22. Management information is insufficiently analysed and is not used effectively. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. However, Parenta ensures that data is regularly collected and accurate. A new management information system has been developed which collects information on learner progress and achievement. This

information is effectively used to monitor performance. Basic management information is beginning to be analysed and used in team meetings to guide decision making and a greater focus is placed on the monitoring of progress and timely achievement. However, the system is not yet fully developed and does not currently produce reports on, for example, the rate of progress of Train to Gain learners, retention and achievement by different types of learner or reasons for non-completion of a learning programme.

23. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Staff and learners understand the policy and procedures for safeguarding. The company has a dedicated safeguarding officer. All staff, including those who are not directly involved in training, receive an enhanced criminal records bureau check and overall, learners feel safe.
24. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Parenta has recently updated its equality and diversity policies and procedures. Arrangements for the induction of new learners are satisfactory. Comprehensive and attractively produced learner and staff handbooks have recently been introduced and distributed in CD format and online. Apprentices demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of equality and diversity in their written assignments. Train to Gain learners show a satisfactory awareness of their employers' equality and diversity policies and procedures.
25. Promotion of equality and diversity is weak. The company recognises this in its self-assessment report. Parenta's staff check that employers' premises meet legal requirements. However, no formal checks are made on employers' equality and diversity policies. Learning resources and marketing materials reflect the local communities but these materials are not readily available in other formats or languages. Learners are not always sufficiently aware of their rights and responsibilities nor of issues related to "Every Child Matters". Some learners show insufficient understanding of how equality and diversity issues relate to themselves or the children in their care. Some staff have not received recent training in equality and diversity, although training for all staff is planned in the coming year.

What learners like:

- E-learning
- Practical approach to learning in the workplace
- Small technical certificate group
- Individual support from tutors
- Regular contact with assessors and the speed of their responses
- Friendly staff
- Course organisation
- Very supportive assessors
- Achievement certificates in technical certificate classes
- Flexible approach to methods of assessment
- Recent improvement in support

What learners think could improve:

- Length of time it takes to receive feedback about marked assignments
- Amount of feedback about progress
- Reliability of support to complete work
- Lack of support in the early stages of the programme

Annex

Learners' achievements

Table 4

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider/college **2004/05 to 2007/08**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04/05	overall					
		timely					
	05/06	overall					
		timely					
	06/07	overall					
		timely					
	07/08#	overall	4	100%	66%	50%	58%
		timely	3	33%	43%	33%	37%
Apprenticeships	04/05	overall					
		timely					
	05/06	overall					
		timely					
	06/07	overall					
		timely					
	07/08#	Overall	8	88%	66%	75%	62%
		timely	15	13%	47%	13%	43%

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record (ILR)

When available and validated by the LSC