

Twin Group

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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:

- Health, public services and care
- Education and training

Description of the provider

1. Twin Group is based in Lewisham, was established in 1993 and is a provider of training solutions, English language courses and travel services for students from all over the world. Twin Employability & Training is the government funded training arm of the Twin Group, delivering projects for learners and employers, offering pre and post employment training and support which is funded by DWP contracts and others. This inspection looked at the Train to Gain provision only. In all Twin Group employs 141 people. A director, five managers, seven assessors and three verifiers manage the Train to Gain element of Twin Group's business. Government funded learning represents 22% of Twin Group's business.
2. Twin Group was awarded a Train to Gain contract in October 2008 by London East LSC. It directly delivers national vocational qualifications (NVQ) in supporting teaching and learning in schools, customer service and team leading and management. They have a sub contract with another provider, edu-k, to deliver health and social care NVQs. At the time of inspection, there were 42 Train to Gain learners across London following NVQ's at level 2 and 3 in health and social care, 16 in education and training, 11 in customer service and 36 in leading and management. Only health and social care and education and learning are reported on in this inspection and all learners have been on programme less than 15 weeks. Learner numbers in customer service are small and the management learners only started shortly before the inspection, however, some of these learners were included in the sample visited by inspectors.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Education and training	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

3. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in health, public services and care and education and training. Train to Gain provision is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. Twin Group has demonstrated a satisfactory capacity to improve. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Twin Group has recently established a good quality framework which includes new initiatives to improve the provision. Actions to improve quality are detailed and have realistic timescales. Some good recent strategies to improve the inadequate internal verification in some areas have been implemented, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.
5. The self-assessment process is good. It is thorough, inclusive and takes account of employers' and learners' views through a survey. The resulting report is good and inspectors agreed with its findings. This was the first self-assessment for Train to Gain, although the company has self-assessed its other provision for a number of years.

Key strengths

- Good development of learner confidence and skills
- Very effective involvement of employers
- Highly committed and valued staff

Key areas for improvement

- Inadequate internal verification in education and training

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Learners have not been in training long enough to achieve, but they are making satisfactory progress towards timely completion of their qualifications and for a few progress is good. Learners generally produce a satisfactory range and standard of work in their portfolios and some of it is good.
7. Learners demonstrate good workplace skills. Learners are gaining confidence from their increased knowledge and they enjoy the opportunity to learn through their work, to improve their understanding and to be able to develop personally. They show increased confidence in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in education and training and satisfactory in health, public services and care. Sessions are well planned and learners enjoy and benefit from group work.
9. Assessment of learning is frequent and matched to patterns of work. It is based on a range of evidence sources and is conducted fairly. For education and training learners assessment planning is weak and internal verification inadequate.
10. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners have a satisfactory induction and initial assessment, although in health, public services and care insufficient use is made of the findings. Arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory and learners are signposted to specialist support if needed.
11. The involvement of employers is very effective. They are engaged with the planning of training. The NVQs undertaken by learners are relevant to their work.
12. Support for learners is satisfactory. Assessors are enthusiastic, trained and have good occupational competence. They visit learners often and make themselves available in between planned visits if needed. At the end of an assessment session assessors usually give an effective one-to-one coaching session.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Leadership and management at Twin Group are satisfactory. The group has astute business planning. The plan relevant to Train to Gain is thoughtful making very good use of staff and resources to expand the training offer and secure new business and contracts. Staff feel secure, particularly in today's difficult financial climate, and they are motivated. Team roles and responsibilities are clear. There are sections in the plan on market and business analysis, and a comprehensive SWOT analysis. Broad aims and objectives are laid out and the whole plan is shared openly with the team.
14. Links with employers and partners at Twin Group are good. From contacts made through their work on DWP contracts, they are well known in the area and have developed good relationships with a range of bodies in and around London. One example is the sub contract with edu-k to provide training in health and social care. Twin Group worked with edu-k in a consortium on a previous learning contract, and edu-k are now a subcontractor for Train to Gain provision. The contract with edu-k is satisfactory and backed by a service level agreement. Monitoring of the contract is monthly and there are regular meetings between the organisations.
15. Twin Group has a very open culture. Staff are able to contribute new ideas and raise concerns or share their difficulties without fear, knowing they will be listened to and supported if necessary. The management style is inclusive and performance results are clearly displayed. For instance across one of the staff room walls are displayed current financial monitoring and performance data. There is an annual staff appraisal system resulting in a personal and group training plan. Staff have good support for continuing professional development and have undertaken a range of courses including assessor awards, centre support and risk management. Many staff have been with the company for years and demonstrate good skills development and job progression. They feel valued and respected by the company and are enthusiastic to help learners progress. This was recognised in the self-assessment report.
16. Resources are satisfactory and Twin Group has recently refurbished its offices and there are plans to develop them further making more space and the entrance more attractive for learners. Data on learners is collected satisfactorily. Twin Group has recently installed a new proprietary software package to monitor learners and appointed a new administration manager. Earlier reports on trainee performance are satisfactory and recent reports with the new system show more detail.
17. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Twin Group's policy is clear, detailed and comprehensive and applies to both employees and learners. The policy was reviewed recently to ensure it covered all activities and complied with all

legislative and contractual requirements. edu-k's policy is less detailed but adheres to similar principles and standards. Satisfactory promotion of equality and diversity takes place at the learner's induction and is included in discussions at assessors' visits and reviews. Similar promotion takes place at induction of new staff. Regular training sessions keep staff updated on new legislation and procedures and help them to become more aware of how to avoid discriminatory practices. The ethnic diversity of staff reflects that of the locations in which the company operates and of learners. Learners are well aware of how to report areas of concern. At the time of the inspection there were none recorded. Access to and in the main building is difficult for learners with mobility impairments. There is a lift, but learners have to arrange access in advance. The procedures for safeguarding meet current government requirements.

18. The Train to Gain contract is new with few learners initially. The open way that staff relate to each other has enabled an informal quality monitoring system to operate. Twin Group recognises in the self-assessment report that it needs a more structured approach. Twin Group now a good formal quality improvement framework with many new initiatives that are at an early stage of implementation. A new and highly experienced quality manager has been appointed and another member of staff has a new role to lead the assessors, however, internal verification in the directly delivered learning is inadequate to systematically assure the quality of current learners. New learners joining are better served and the new systems applied to them are thorough, although yet to be tested. Twin Group has plans to apply these systems to existing learners.
19. The self-assessment process is thorough, inclusive and takes account of employers' and learners' views through a survey. All staff took part in an externally facilitated development day. Relevant staff then drafted their section, and the whole team reviewed the completed report, however, edu-k's involvement was minimal. The resulting report is good and inspectors agreed with its findings. This was the first self-assessment for Train to Gain, although the company has self-assessed its other provision for a number of years. The resulting action plan has clear, time bound targets and has already resulted in improvement.

What learners like:

- We enjoy the training sessions
- We like meeting teaching assistants from other schools
- The group work is really useful
- Helpful and supportive assessors
- Assessors always accessible, even Sunday evenings sometimes
- Clear explanation of what is required (health care assistant)
- This is my first British qualification

What learners think could improve:

- Better guidance on the portfolios
- A longer programme
- There is too much paperwork
- More visits by assessor
- Course taking too long to get started

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

20. Twin Group subcontracts the management and delivery of its Train to Gain health and social care provision to edu-k. There are 42 learners working towards NVQs, 12 of whom are undertaking an NVQ level 2 programme in health and social care, 17 an NVQ level 3 in health and social care and 13 an NVQ level 2 in support services in health care. Forty % of learners are male and 90% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. All are employed full-time or part-time in NHS hospitals. All training and assessment is delivered in the learner's workplace.

Strengths

- Good development of knowledge and skills in the workplace
- Very effective involvement of employers in training

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of initial assessment
- Inappropriate recruitment of some learners

Achievement and standards

21. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners demonstrate good workplace skills. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Learners gain confidence from their increased knowledge and become more aware of their responsibilities. They enjoy the opportunity to learn through their work, to improve their understanding of why they do what they do, and to be able to develop personally.

22. The first intake of learners was recruited in late November 2008 and the earliest planned completion dates are the end of May 2009. Most learners are making satisfactory progress towards timely completion of their qualifications and for a few progress is good. Attendance at training sessions is high. Learners generally produce a satisfactory range and standard of work in their portfolios and some of it is good.

Quality of provision

23. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Attendance at training sessions is good. Learners value the opportunity of working in groups and being able to share ideas and issues arising from their work. Assessment is generally fair and accurate. Assessment planning is sound and some assessors set challenging targets and deadlines for production of work. They respond promptly to work produced by learners and give

appropriate feedback. Learners are kept well informed of the progress they are making on each unit and the NVQ programme overall. Learners are very clear about their target dates for completion of individual units towards completion of the qualification and how this will be achieved.

24. The involvement of employers in training is very effective. This was identified in the self-assessment report. In conjunction with edu-k employers are fully engaged in planning the structure of the training sessions and in making facilities available for these sessions and other visits made by the assessor. Many employers attend the progress reviews of learners, prepare the way for learners to be able to undertake particular activities for the NVQ programme and to plan training to complement that provided by assessors. edu-k provides employers with a monthly update of the progress of their learners. A new management information system is able to identify the percentage completion of each unit by the learner which is important with the use of a holistic approach. There are plans to use this information in the monthly update.
25. Insufficient use is made of the information gained from the initial assessment to inform the most effective assessment strategies for individual learners. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Learners with identified literacy problems are sometimes asked to produce extensive written reflective accounts. Some are signposted to other providers to meet other identified additional learning needs but frequently do not follow this advice. Skills scans sometimes are not fully completed or used effectively to plan learners' development needs.
26. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners satisfactorily. The range of provision is satisfactory. It is giving learners a chance to gain qualifications and improve their career prospects. For a significant minority this will be their first qualification. Provision meets the needs of the employer in developing the skills of the workforce and is also addressing national skill shortage priorities.
27. The recruitment of some learners was inappropriate. They had only been in post for three to four weeks before starting the NVQ programme and before completing their in-house induction and training for their role. These learners are making slow progress. Remedial action has been taken to prevent a recurrence.
28. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners value the support, both personal and programme related, of assessors and employers. Assessors visit the workplace regularly. They make themselves accessible in between visits to clarify understanding of what is required for the next meeting. Assessors boost the confidence of learners, many of whom are uncertain of their ability to cope with the demands of a national qualification. Induction is thorough and clearly explains to learners what is required to complete the NVQ. The provision of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

29. Leadership and management are satisfactory. An appropriately qualified and experienced internal verifier satisfactorily implements a range of procedures. There has been a recent slippage in planned activities and low attendance at standardisation meetings. Action has been taken to redress this. The management information system is still being developed. Staff are well qualified and experienced for their roles. Currently all assessors are freelance and edu-k plans to achieve a balance between full- and part-time staff in the assessor team. Recruitment of assessors is currently taking place. Equality of opportunity is introduced at induction. Learners have an appropriate understanding of relevant issues which is reinforced in subsequent visits by assessors.
30. The self-assessment report is generally accurate in identifying key strengths and areas for improvement with the exception of the inappropriate recruitment of some learners. edu-k had minimal involvement in the self-assessment process and edu-k staff are not familiar with the report.

Education and training

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

31. There are 16 learners following the supporting teaching and learning in schools NVQ. Six of the learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 and 10 at level 3. One learner is male and 66% are from a minority ethnic background. Learners are employed at a number of primary schools in the London areas of Putney, Fulham, Bromley and Lewisham. Learners are employed at schools which are private sector and state run.

Strengths

- Good development of learner confidence
- Good training

Areas for improvement

- Weak assessment planning and target-setting
- Inadequate internal verification

Achievement and standards

32. Overall achievement and standards are satisfactory. At the time of inspection all learners had been in learning less than 15 weeks and none were due to have completed the full qualification. All learners are making at least satisfactory progress. Many learners are in the process of developing portfolios which contain a good standard of work based evidence. While many learners had collected large amounts of evidence, these were not yet presented in a format appropriate for assessment.

33. Learners are developing high levels of confidence in the workplace and some additional workplace skills. Employers have noticed increased motivation since the training started. The opportunity to work towards a nationally recognised qualification which will accredit the learners existing and developing skills is a key factor in improved levels of confidence.

Quality of provision

34. Quality of provision is satisfactory. Both on and off-the-job training is good. All learners benefit from well planned and informative theory sessions which focus on the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. All learners are given time to attend these training sessions away from the demands of day-to-day teaching assistant duties. Tutors are very knowledgeable and frequently offer examples from their own experiences to bring the theory to life.

35. A range of good quality resources and effective teaching methods are used during the fortnightly training sessions. Activities are designed to promote learning and

active participation by the learners in the training. Group discussions are well managed to ensure all learners participate. Most learners enjoy the group training sessions and in particular the opportunity it gives them to work alongside teaching assistants from different types of schools. Learners discuss and share experiences and this broadens the individual's understanding of the different issues facing different types of schools in the London region. The learners particularly value the increased knowledge they gain on issues such as regulation and legislation and this helps them to understand the wider issues facing the whole school beyond those arising within the classroom.

36. Assessment practices are mostly satisfactory. The assessment team incorporate a variety of assessment techniques including the effective use of professional discussion where appropriate to individuals needs. However, assessment planning and target-setting is weak. There are many examples of incomplete or inconsistent record keeping. Records do not contain key aspects of the assessment process. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Some assessment plans lack specific and measurable targets and frequently dates for assessment are missing. Learners are usually aware of the purpose of most assessor visits but in some cases a detailed plan is not given in advance which they can then share with the head teacher. Some visits are not scheduled in advance and there are schools where the head teacher has identified this as an issue. Progress reviews are not always treated as a specific activity which is separate to assessment and the records of the review are sometimes confused with assessment. Some progress reviews do not result in clear and detailed plans for learning and learners are given vague actions which are not then directly related to the individual's learning plan. The employer is not always directly involved in the formal review process. Some individual learning plans lack key information and some are not dated for subsequent monitoring.
37. Written and verbal guidance is offered to all learners describing how to build a portfolio and also to describe the different types of evidence which are suitable but some learners have found the concept of portfolio building confusing and for some this remains a challenge. The NVQ in supporting teaching and learning meets the needs of individual learners and the employers well.
38. The programmes followed meet the interests and needs of learners satisfactorily. Learners are employed as classroom assistants, are enthusiastic about their course and ambitious to progress further. Provision meets the needs of the employer in developing the skills of the workforce
39. Support for learners is satisfactory. Assessors visit regularly and are available between visits by phone. The tutors ensure that the needs of all learners are met through effective and supportive one-to-one coaching at the end of each session. All learners undergo satisfactory initial assessment of basic skills at the start of the programme and if additional needs are identified learners are signposted to appropriate support.

Leadership and management

40. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Internal verification is inadequate. The system has not quality assured the current learners' overall experience. The internal verification strategy is not consistently and thoroughly applied. There is no overarching internal verification plan which details the dates internal verifiers' planned activities. Twin Training is unable to monitor the internal verifiers' actual activities against a plan. Different individuals share some aspects of the internal verifier role and this approach has not been wholly effective. Some employers have expressed concerns over aspects of the NVQ process and while these have been noted and now put right these issues were not identified by the internal verification system. Similarly the internal verification process has not identified some of the omissions and anomalies in the assessment paperwork. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity issues. These are covered in induction and reinforced by assessors.
41. Twin Group has made several recent improvements to the assessment paperwork and to assessment and verification practices but it is too early to judge the impact of these. Some of the assessors have only recently achieved an assessor award and the internal verification procedure to ensure comprehensive support and monitoring of assessor activities including record keeping has not been effective. This was recognised in the self-assessment report and new staff have recently been recruited to improve quality improvement and internal verification, but again it is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives.
42. The self-assessment process is good and mostly accurate, and many of the issues identified at inspection were also highlighted in the self-assessment report.