

Working Wonders (Education) Ltd

Inspection date

26 June 2009

Inspection number

334909

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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:

- Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

Description of the provider

1. Working Wonders (Education) Ltd (WWEL) contracts with Greater Manchester LSC to provide Train to Gain provision up to and including level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy. During 2008/09, 50 learners were on programmes including seven learners currently. This is the first inspection of the Train to Gain contract. WWEL has a subcontract with Wigan Council to deliver adult and community learning. The subcontract includes two funding streams. The first is neighbourhood learning in deprived communities (NLDC) funding to deliver a 'first steps' Skills for Life programme of eight sessions to each learner, including ESOL. Approximately 86 learners are on this programme. The second is funding for personal and community development learning (PCDL) non-accredited short courses. Approximately 85 learners are on this programme. In addition, the company has a subcontract with Connexions funded through the Activity Agreement pilot to deliver literacy and numeracy to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) at Connexions centres. This is not within the scope of the inspection.
2. Train to Gain is delivered at WWEL's headquarters, located near Wigan town centre, as well as in other venues as required. Adult and community learning takes place in a number of venues and libraries across the Wigan area; currently at 10 centres for NLDC courses and 15 centres for PCDL courses.
3. WWEL is managed by a senior management team of four, supported by administrators and a bank of approximately 30 hourly paid tutors. Two of these act as course team leaders and have an additional six hours for administration. One tutor leads on dyslexia.
4. Around 56% of residents in Wigan Borough live in the 20% most deprived wards in the country. The unemployment rate in March 2007 was 3.7% compared with the national average then of 5.5%, but with pockets of much higher unemployment in the most deprived wards. Wigan has an estimated 62.9% of residents with literacy levels below level 2 and 88.9% with numeracy levels below level 2. This is significantly above the national average of 56% for literacy and 75% for numeracy.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|---|--|
| Effectiveness of provision | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Adult and community learning Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Capacity to improve | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Achievement and standards | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Adult and community learning Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Quality of provision | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Adult and community learning Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Leadership and management | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Adult and community learning Train to Gain | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 |
| Equality of opportunity | Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4 |

Sector subject area

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Literacy numeracy and ESOL | Inadequate: Grade 4 |
|----------------------------|---------------------|

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4
Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate. Achievement and standards are inadequate overall, but satisfactory in Train to Gain. Achievement rates in Train to Gain are good, while timely success rates are satisfactory. Adult and community learning targets are not sufficiently challenging and records of learners' progress are inadequate. Data is inaccurate and unreliable.
6. The quality of provision is inadequate overall, but satisfactory in Train to Gain. While teaching is satisfactory, the use of information technology (IT) across literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision is insufficient. Processes to improve teaching and learning are ineffective for adult and community learning and are not in place for Train to Gain. Planning and the processes for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) on non-accredited learning are inadequate in adult and community learning. Learners' needs and interests are not met adequately overall, but are met satisfactorily in Train to Gain. Social inclusion is satisfactory.
7. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are effective through established links with the council's adult and community learning team. Support for learners is satisfactory.
8. Leadership and management are inadequate. The use of partnerships to widen participation and gain funding to sustain the viability of the company is satisfactory. Strategic management is weak. Arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of the provision are inadequate. The understanding and use of data to identify areas for improvement are inadequate. Equality of opportunity is inadequate. The planning, promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity are inadequate.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

9. WWEL has an inadequate capacity to improve. This is its first full inspection. In Train to Gain, achievement rates are good and timely success rates are satisfactory. Learners' targets are not sufficiently challenging or in appropriately small steps to promote understanding and enable learners to record progress. Processes to improve teaching and learning are inadequate. RARPA processes are inadequate. WWEL does not have a clear structure for strategic management and development. Curriculum management is ineffective. Regular management meetings are not established. Arrangements to assure the quality of provision and to promote continuous improvement are inadequate. The use of data to monitor and improve the provision is incomplete. Data is inaccurate and unreliable.

10. The self-assessment process is inadequate in promoting continuous improvement. Staff are consulted satisfactorily in the process. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently accurate. Some of the stated strengths, such as challenging targets, are areas for improvement. It identifies many areas as strengths when they are only standard practice. It is insufficiently evaluative. Judgements are not supported by sufficient evidence. Self-assessment grades are significantly higher than inspection grades. The quality improvement plan is insufficiently challenging and timely. The report accurately identifies the need to reinstate quality improvement meetings but fails to identify the significant improvements needed in strategic management and the RARPA process.

Key strengths

- Good achievement in Train to Gain

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently challenging targets
- Insufficient use of IT in literacy, numeracy and ESOL
- Inadequate planning and RARPA processes for non-accredited learning in adult and community learning
- Weak strategic management
- Inadequate arrangements to monitor and improve the quality of the provision
- Poor accuracy and use of data
- Inadequate arrangements for planning, promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Inadequate: Grade 4

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Achievement and standards are inadequate overall; satisfactory in Train to Gain but inadequate in adult and community learning. While overall achievement of Train to Gain literacy and numeracy qualifications is good, the timely success rate is satisfactory with 54% of learners achieving within the planned time. The self-assessment report partially identifies this strength but overgraded it. Many targets for Train to Gain learners are insufficiently challenging and are too broad.
12. Most learners develop appropriate social skills which help them in their everyday life and in work. Learners' attendance, punctuality, standard of work and awareness of safe practices are satisfactory.
13. In adult and community learning, targets are not sufficiently challenging. Records of learner progress are inadequate. The self-assessment report did not identify these areas for improvement. Short-term targets are too broad, are not sufficiently measurable, and are not broken down into small steps to enable learners' understanding and recording of their progress. Insufficient learners across the provision have targets to promote personal skills development. Adult and community learning achievement data is inaccurate and could not be used to assess the provision. WWEL does not use data systematically to analyse the performance of different groups of learners.

Quality of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. The quality of provision is inadequate overall; satisfactory in Train to Gain but inadequate in adult and community learning. Most teaching is broadly satisfactory, and some tutors manage diverse groups effectively. Teaching and learning resources are broadly satisfactory and many venues have IT facilities. Support in sessions is used appropriately across the provision. Volunteers act as effective learning support for identified learners. Accommodation and classrooms are generally appropriate, though a few lack privacy. Teaching staff have relevant qualifications and experience.
15. IT is used insufficiently to support teaching and learning across literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision. Many tutors rely heavily on handouts without using other appropriate resources to provide variety and promote learning. A new

mobile IT server is being trialled at venues with no internet access. However, its use is not fully effective.

16. Planning and RARPA processes in adult and community learning are inadequate. The planning and monitoring of learning is insufficient to motivate learners. Most targets are not broken down into small, understandable steps in learning. Learner evaluations are not recorded effectively against targets and in many cases learners' comments are not recorded, only the date. Many learners record session activity instead of learning and progress. Session evaluations have insufficient detail on learning and skills development. Tutors' comments are not sufficiently evaluative, and paperwork often contains insufficient judgements to clearly identify progress. In some cases, this is unsigned and undated. No summative reviews of progress are produced in adult and community learning. The self-assessment report failed to identify this area for improvement. Progress reviews for Train to Gain learners are satisfactory.
17. The range of provision does not adequately meet learners' needs and interests, although it is satisfactory for Train to Gain. Social inclusion is satisfactory, as WWEL focuses its provision closely on the identified needs of the local community by running courses in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. Transport is provided for learners to attend courses at centres that are hard to access by public transport. Adult and community learning provision is located conveniently in disadvantaged areas. It comprises first steps courses to attract people into learning, providing progression routes into literacy and numeracy provision. However, key aspects of non-accredited learning are inadequate, particularly target-setting and the RARPA process in adult and community learning. WWEL does not have planned targets for prioritising and engaging underrepresented groups. In PCDL, some learners are uncertain about follow-on courses and progression opportunities. Employers' needs are met adequately for Train to Gain, and literacy and numeracy provision enhances working practice. The self-assessment report overgraded this area.
18. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. The self-assessment report overgraded this area. Pre-enrolment procedures, course information and advice are satisfactory. The induction handbook and newly produced DVD adequately outline what learners can expect from their course. WWEL has links with the council's adult and community learning service that provides an information and guidance service for learners in community venues. Individual support is arranged appropriately as necessary for learners, either during sessions or on an individual basis. Some links with external agencies, such as women's refuges, drug and substance misuse centres and homelessness agencies provide specialist support. A motivational reading scheme is being trialled which assists learners with very poor reading skills in developing learning strategies. Learners who show signs of dyslexia are routinely referred for diagnostic testing.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

19. Leadership and management are inadequate. The use of partnerships to widen participation and gain funding to sustain the viability of the company is effective. Communication across the organisation is satisfactory in relation to daily operations through emails, informal discussion and the very recent regular curriculum team leader meetings. A twice-monthly tutors' newsletter has recently been reintroduced and contains relevant information on new policies, resources and staff training. The range of staff training and development is satisfactory. Resources are satisfactory, including accommodation and a staff team with appropriate qualifications and experience. Arrangements for staff recruitment, induction and appraisal are effective.

20. Strategic management is weak. The self-assessment did not identify this issue. The strategic roles and responsibilities of senior managers are unclear and directors perceive themselves as operational managers because of the company's subcontract with Wigan Council. Management of the curriculum is ineffective and fails to identify significant variations and areas for improvement across the provision. Senior managers have insufficient knowledge and understanding of wider strategic and legislative issues including equality and diversity. No meetings have taken place since September 2008. A recently written three-year development plan does not provide a clear strategy to develop the provision and does not link sufficiently with the quality improvement plan. Links between a range of strategic documents are insufficient to promote a comprehensive strategic management framework to enable continuous development and improvement. Several strategies including health and safety, RARPA, equality and diversity and Skills for Life are incomplete and the management meetings structure is not in place to discuss, develop and monitor these areas. The quality improvement plan does not sufficiently integrate actions from all these strategies. The self-assessment failed to identify these issues.

21. Arrangements to assure the quality of the provision and promote continuous improvement are inadequate. Aspects of the provision are incomplete and inconsistent. WWEL has no strategy for the observation of teaching and learning other than through the council's processes for adult and community learning. While adult and community learning is monitored regularly by Wigan Council's quality team this has been ineffective in identifying the areas for improvement found at inspection. Too many sessions were graded outstanding. No formal quality arrangements are in place to monitor the Train to Gain provision. WWEL's quality improvement committee has been reinstated very recently after a year's gap. Management roles and responsibilities for quality assurance are unclear. The very recently appointed quality improvement manager does not yet have a contract or a job description. While he has reinstated some formal processes and has a good understanding of the need for greater formality, it is too soon to

assess the effect of this role. WWEL collects learners' feedback but this is not sufficiently analysed and its effect on promoting improvement is not clearly documented. The understanding and use of data to identify areas for improvement is ineffective. The management information system is developing but much of the data remains inaccurate and unreliable.

22. The self-assessment process is inadequate in promoting continuous improvement. Staff were appropriately consulted in the development of the report. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently accurate. Some of the stated strengths, such as challenging targets, are areas for improvement. Self-assessment grades are significantly higher than inspection grades. Many of the strengths are no more than standard practice. Strengths and areas for improvement do not have sufficient supporting evidence. The report accurately identifies the need to reinstate the quality improvement meetings, but fails to identify the significant improvements needed in strategic management and RARPA.
23. The arrangements for the planning, promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities are inadequate. WWEL has a caring ethos which is reassuring to non-traditional learners, as identified in the self-assessment report. The premises it uses are generally accessible, and action has been taken to ensure that inaccessible buildings are no longer used. WWEL makes appropriate reasonable adjustments for learners with particular needs. Some provision is sited on premises which have adjacent childcare facilities to make learning accessible to parents and carers. WWEL provides relevant courses in specialist venues such as hostels for the homeless. A minibus service is provided to help some learners attend classes. Collaboration with external agencies is effective in referring learners for additional support.
24. Some awareness training in equality and diversity has been provided for staff, and more is planned through Wigan Council. However, WWEL's equal opportunities policy is inadequate and fails to make reference to relevant legislation such as the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) or the revised duties in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which came into force in 2006. No appropriate equality and diversity action plan is in place and staff have an insufficient awareness of the requirements of recent legislation and equality impact assessments.
25. WWEL locates its provision in areas of deprivation, but does not have strategic targets for engaging underrepresented groups. It does not identify who its priority groups for engagement are. WWEL does not use data systematically to monitor and analyse the comparative engagement and performance of different learner groups. The self-assessment report did not identify these areas for improvement. The council's adult and community learning service checks compliance through its observations of teaching and learning, but has no systematic monitoring of equality practice in relation to the curriculum. The language used to identify support needs for learners on the enrolment form is too complex. WWEL provides guidelines on equality and diversity for both learners and staff, but the information given is unclear and focuses largely on harassment.

26. Procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adult learners meet current government requirements. Staff have benefited from relevant training, and know how to respond if issues are identified. A single central register is in place, but the flowchart for establishing who to contact in relation to safeguarding issues is not sufficiently well defined.

What learners like:

- 'They're very nice people'
- Being able to help children and grandchildren with mathematics and English
- 'I've improved and gone up a level in literacy, and I'm really proud of it'
- 'Attending the sessions helps me communicate with others'
- 'Doing this course got my brain working again'
- 'I can now measure my garden as to where to put my plants'

What learners think could improve:

- 'I'd like to carry on, but I'm not sure if there's a course for me'
- 'The courses could be better advertised'
- 'At times the tutor spends more time with the less able and we're sitting waiting'
- 'There's no IT available, only paper'
- Better learning resources
- 'Every fourth week it would help if the tutor covered certain areas for revision'
- More detail about specific issues such as timetables, percentages and fractions
- 'It would be more balanced if there were some men in the classes'