

John G. Plummer & Associates Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 52632

Name of lead inspector: Gerard McGrath HMI

Last day of inspection: 2 October 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. John G Plummer and Associates operates 12 dental surgeries in central and east Norfolk and north Suffolk. Five partners, all of whom are practising dental surgeons, manage the company. One of the partners has responsibility for child protection and safeguarding arrangements. A sixth member of the management team has responsibility for finance and is the course director of the dental nurse training. The course director has overall responsibility quality improvement and equality and diversity.
2. The company has provided training in dental nursing for over 25 years. The Norfolk Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds the company's dental nurse training.
3. A dental surgeon and dental nurse supervise the learners in the workplace. Learners work across different dental practices, which they visit on rotation each week. Learners attend off-the-job training one day a week at the company's education centre, located at one of the dental practices, for theory lectures and preparation for assessment. Two full-time practice tutors have operational responsibility for the training and supervision of learners. Seven dental nurses have trained as assessors. The training coordinator has responsibility for internal verification.
4. John G. Plummer & Associates Ltd was inspected in September 2005 when the effectiveness of the provision was good, as were the outcomes for learners, leadership and management and equality of opportunity. Inspectors judged quality improvement satisfactory.
5. The proportion of the population in Norfolk claiming Job Seekers Allowance [JSA] is 3.6% compared with 4.2% nationally. The region has small pockets of deprivation and small areas of affluence. The minority ethnic rate for the region is low at 3.8% compared with 8.7% nationally. The percentage of GCSE pass rates at grades A* to C, or equivalent, is 60.9%, compared with the national average of 65.2%.
6. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
 - Great Yarmouth Further Education College

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	29 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject areas	Grade
Medicine and dentistry	2

Overall effectiveness

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The course director and training coordinator provide good leadership and management of the provision. Strategic direction and support for learning are excellent. Training is well managed. Staff and learners are strongly encouraged to be ambitious. Staff and learners complete a wide range of additional relevant training. John G. Plummer & Associates have improved the provision since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is good and supported by good resources. The quality of the apprenticeship programme in dental nursing is good. The training programme meets the needs of both employers and learners well. Learners make good progress and achieve their qualifications well. Learners' health and safety is given a high priority. Arrangements to safeguard learners meet government requirements. Learners say they feel extremely safe. They adopt very good safe working practices. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The proportion of male learners is higher than in other similar training programmes nationally.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates declined to around the national average in 2008/09. However, retention rates have improved and the provider's

own data indicates that 82% of those due to finish in 2009/10 have already completed. Learners make good progress.

- A very high priority for the safety of learners. Learners have high levels of health and safety awareness. In clinical areas, learners follow good safe working practices.
- Particularly flexible delivery of training and assessment. Learners who are unable to attend training sessions, are offered additional individual coaching sessions. Good accessibility to assessment in clinical settings supports learners in making good progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learners enjoy training sessions. In the best group sessions, learning is interesting and brisk. Learning resources and accommodation are good.
- Good support and guidance for learners on career development and progression. Learners have a good understanding of career opportunities and relevant qualifications. Learners are encouraged take on additional work responsibilities.
- Very effective involvement of dental surgeons in training and learning. Dental surgeons are involved closely in the induction of learners and provide good supervision and informal training in surgeries.
- Learners make an outstanding contribution to health promotion in the local and wider communities. Learners prepare and deliver dental health care advice to a range of groups, including senior citizens and teenage mothers. Learners offer support and treatments for children from the Chernobyl area of the Russian Federation.
- Formal progress reviews are satisfactory overall. Progress reviews clearly record completion of assignments and NVQ units. However, they show little detail about vocational, literacy, numeracy and personal skills development.
- Insufficient opportunity for learners to develop their key skills above the minimum levels required for the framework. All learners undertake key skills in communications and application of number at level two. Insufficient challenge is offered to learners with good skills and relevant qualifications.
- The provider has promoted successfully the participation of males in training. Improved marketing materials include images of males at work. Staff attend recruitment events at local schools to promote dental nursing and other related careers. Male recruitment is currently higher than national averages.
- Leadership and management of learning are strong. Managers provide good direction and support for learning. Training is well organised and supervision of staff is strong. Staff development is good.
- Arrangements for improving the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently systematic. Observations of training sessions occur. However, no criteria are in place to support consistent judgements about the quality of these sessions. Formal arrangements to ensure the quality of sub-contracted provision are under developed.

What does name of provider need to do to improve further?

- Further develop systems for the consistent evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, including sub-contracted provision.
- Offer the more able learners opportunities to undertake higher level key skills qualifications.
- Improve the focus on the discussion and recording of the development of learners' skills in formal progress reviews.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- Learners enjoy developing their work-related skills
- Learners find training sessions interesting
- Regular meetings with assessors
- Working as part of a team within the dental surgeries
- Meeting other students each week

What learners would like to see improved:

- Would prefer an earlier introduction to their named assessor

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- Training produces good dental nurses
- Good working relationships with tutors and assessors
- Understanding the apprenticeship programme

What employers would like to see improved:

- No suggestions made

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

8. The provider has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to make further improvements. At the last inspection in 2005 the provision was judged to be good overall with the exception equality of opportunity, which was satisfactory. The company has made improvements since the last inspection. The provision of dental nursing programmes remains good. Weak assessment practice, which was a key area for improvement identified at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. Success rates for the 4 years to 2007/08 were good. Success rates in 2008/09 declined to around the national average. Qualification success rates in the current year have recovered and are now good. The company places a high priority on quality improvement. It has developed its quality improvement systems and arrangements for the observation of training and development activities are now in place. However, further developments are required to ensure consistent judgements about the quality of training.
9. Self-assessment is effective and used well to improve the quality of provision. Inspectors recognised many of the judgements in the report, but disagreed with some of the grades. The self-assessment report is critical, but too descriptive in places. Although a few strengths are overstated, the provider accurately identified almost all areas of good practice.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

10. Outcomes for learners are good. Since the last inspection apprenticeship success rates have been consistently good at around 80%. The rate fell to around the national average in 2008/09 but are now improving.. The four learners who left early went to higher and further education and to other employment. All learners who are retained until the end of their programme successfully complete all parts of the framework.
11. Learners make good progress and achieve their identified learning goals. Inspectors noted the useful personal and vocational skills developed by learners and how these contribute to the effective support they provide dental surgeons in their clinical practice.
12. Learners make an outstanding contribution to health promotion in the local and wider communities. This is an example of good practice. Learners frequently take part in a wide range of activities with community groups. Learners are able to demonstrate their improved confidence, knowledge and skills by delivering dental health care advice to community groups of senior citizens and teenage mothers, advising on, for example, the care of children's' teeth and other relevant oral health care topics. Learners also offer treatments and oral health education for children from the Chernobyl area of the Russian Federation.

13. The company places a very high priority on the safety of learners. Learners work in challenging job roles that require a high level of health and safety awareness. Learners are very aware of work-related risks particularly when working with sources of radiation and biologically hazardous products. In clinical areas learners follow good safe working practices. Learners say they feel very safe in their work environment.

Quality of provision

Grade 2

14. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Learners enjoy the off-the-job training sessions. The content and delivery of group sessions are varied and interesting. All learners are involved in activities and demonstrate clear understanding of their learning objectives. Learning resources and accommodation are of good quality. Good use is made of anatomical models to demonstrate points of anatomy. The company provides all learners with appropriate textbooks.
15. Delivery of training and assessment is very flexible to meet the needs of learners. If learners are unable to attend off-the-job training sessions the company offers additional off-the-job coaching within a week to cover all theory topics in one-to-one sessions. Frequent opportunities for assessment support learners in making good progress. Supervisors in surgeries are particularly effective at identifying interesting, relevant clinical activities and supporting learners in the collection of evidence for assessment.
16. Dental surgeons are involved very closely in training and learning. They provide good clinical supervision in surgeries and some aspects of induction. Surgeons are aware of the topics learners are studying; they identify opportunities for learning and the collection of evidence of effective practice. Learners and surgeons spend much time in informal training and professional discussions. Surgeons are involved in progress reviews and provide useful feedback on learners' performance and areas for improvement.
17. Good support and guidance for learners on career development and progression. Learners have a good understanding of a variety of job roles relating to oral health care and career progression routes. Staff provide good support and guidance on further training opportunities. The company encourages learners to progress and take on additional work responsibilities. Many learners go on to achieve professional qualifications at higher levels and gain promotions. For example, the majority of assessors were previously learners within the company.
18. Opportunities for learners to develop their key skills above the minimum levels required for the framework are insufficient. Learners complete an initial assessment of literacy and numeracy skills and undertake key skills in communications and application of number at level two at the local college. For learners with good skills or experience of study at higher levels this offers insufficient challenge.

19. Progress reviews are satisfactory overall; completion of NVQ/VRQ units and assignments is recorded clearly. Dental surgeons are involved regularly and provide detailed feedback on learners' progress and areas for further improvement. However, the recognition and recording of learners' vocational, literacy, numeracy and personal skills development is insufficient.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Leadership and management are good. The course director and training coordinator continue to provide excellent strategic direction and support for learning, as they did at the time of the last inspection. They manage training well. Monitoring of staff performance is good. Good use is made of resources. Training accommodation and information learning technology [ILT] to support learning have been improved since the last inspection. Staff and learners are strongly encouraged to be ambitious. Very good support is given for staff progression; training and development is effective in aiding this. Tutors have undertaken appropriate teaching qualifications. Staff and learners complete a wide range of additional relevant training. Learners are very aware of future career opportunities and anticipate undertaking higher level professional qualifications to further their careers.
21. Child protection arrangements meet current government requirements. Staff and learners have attended child protection awareness training. Clear policies are in place and understood by staff. Arrangements for improved safeguarding and vetting regulations are well underway.
22. The self-assessment process is good. The current self-assessment report was written in October 2008. Inspectors agreed with most of the main findings of in the current self-assessment report, although the impact of a few of the judgements is given too much significance and the report is overly descriptive in places. Good use is made of learner feedback from regular surveys and frequent verbal discussion of the programme of learning.
23. Arrangements for improving the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently systematic. Observations of the key aspects of the provision take place, including off-the-job training sessions. No criteria are in place to support consistent judgements about the quality of formal training sessions. Observations focus on the activities of the tutor rather than on the learning. Arrangements to ensure the quality of the sub-contracted provision are under developed.
24. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The provider has increased successfully the participation of males in training which is now higher than that found nationally for dental nursing programmes. Staff attend a range of recruitment events at local schools and promote dental nursing to potential learners. Recently improved marketing materials used at careers events contain positive statements about the organisation's commitment to diversity, and

images of men and people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds working in dental care.

25. Learners have a good understanding of the needs of their patients who have speech and swallowing difficulties and reduced mobility. The provider ensures that learners work in a variety of surgery settings to experience working with people from minority ethnic groups. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of relevant topics including race and sexuality.
26. The company recruits learners from rural areas and provides transport for them to attend work and off-the-job training, or meet the costs of public transport. The proportion of learners who come from minority ethnic groups reflects the local population.
27. The company has an appropriate equal opportunities policy and provides all staff and learners with information on equality of opportunity and copies of the organisation's policies during induction. Staff attend relevant equality and diversity training.
28. Monitoring of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Formal progress reviews include a series of questions to test learners' understanding of equality and diversity. The provider collects data on ethnicity, gender and disability for all learners and although systematic analysis of data is not carried, the course tutor has an excellent awareness of the achievement and retention rates for all learners. There are no significant variations in outcomes for different groups of learners.

Information about the inspection

29. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's training coordinator, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
John G. Plummer & Associates Ltd
 Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	0	0
Part-time learners	29	29
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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