

PGL Travel

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53876

Name of lead inspector: Cliff Rose HMI

Last day of inspection: 02 October 2009

Type of provider: Employer

Address: Alton Court, Penyard Lane, Ross on Wye

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Information about the provider

1. PGL Travel Limited (PGL) is a privately owned company which provides residential activity holidays for young people at 29 centres in the UK, France and Spain. The head office is in Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire. PGL has 250 full-time permanent staff and employs approximately 3,000 seasonal staff. The company provides training in hospitality, customer service, sports and leisure and travel to its employees.
2. PGL has 97 learners on sports, hospitality and customer service programmes, 77 are funded by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Of these, 32 are completing apprenticeships with a level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) in sport, recreation and allied occupations (activity leadership) and 15 are completing advanced apprenticeships with a level 3 NVQ in outdoor education, development training and recreation. Eight apprentices and six advanced apprentices are on hospitality programmes. Eight apprentices and eight advanced apprentices are on customer service programmes. A further 20 learners are working towards a level 2 NVQ funded by the National Skills Academy. Inspectors graded the provision in sport and recreation but not that in either hospitality or customer service.
3. PGL's apprenticeship programme manager is responsible for apprenticeship training. She is supported by a data manager and four internal verifier/assessors at head office. Line managers, assessors and mentors are involved on the various sites. As the provider is also the employer, normal management and HR functions for the company also apply to learners' training and development. A few centres have their own assessors. The activity centre managers are responsible for the welfare of learners at the centres.
4. PGL is now into its eleventh year of running apprenticeship programmes. Since the last inspection in 2005 the company has become part of the education division of Holiday break PLC. Government funded training accounts for 0.18% of PGL's income.

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09 |
|---|--|
| Employer provision: Apprenticeships NVQ | 135 apprentices 20 trainees |

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 | 1 |
| Quality of provision | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |
| Safeguarding | 1 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |
| Subject areas | Grade |
| Sport, leisure and recreation | 2 |

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of PGL Travel Ltd's provision is good. Directors and senior managers provide strong strategic leadership and recognise the importance of effective work based training to the success of their main business. PGL has maintained the strengths from the last inspection and made further significant improvements. The training, learners' job roles and the requirements of the qualifications are very closely matched. Learners achieve their qualifications particularly well and in good time. Health and safety arrangements are stringent. PGL makes good use of data and feedback from learners to inform its quality improvement arrangements. The organisation has successfully recruited equal numbers of male and female learners but so far its attempts to recruit more learners from minority ethnic backgrounds have had limited impact. The provider makes insufficient use of information technology to support teaching and learning. Managers do not carry out enough observations of new staff teaching the learners. Some learner's review records do not contain enough detail to make action points clear.

Main findings

- Success rates for learners are high. For apprenticeships, overall and timely success rates for 2007/08 were outstanding and well above national averages
- Learners demonstrate good personal and occupational skills in the workplace. Learners are well organised and professional in their approach.
- Learners progress well from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. Learners significantly increase their employability both as a result of their qualifications and their work experiences.
- Learners feel safe and use safe working practices. Learners follow stringent health and safety guidelines and they feel that they can report anything that may give rise to anxiety.
- Good assessment practice enables effective learning and timely framework completion. Written and oral assessment of learners is regular and thorough.
- Programmes are particularly well suited to the needs of the learners for this industry. The NVQ levels 2 and 3 in activity leadership and outdoor education dovetail particularly well with both the learners' aspirations and their job requirements.
- Learners benefit from good individual support, based on highly effective initial advice and guidance. Learners are placed on programmes that suit their own and PGL's needs well.
- Directors and managers provide strong strategic leadership and management encouraging staff to value the positive impact of work based learning on the business and their own job roles.
- PGL promotes the safeguarding of learners particularly effectively. Health and safety policies and procedures are robust and thorough. Learners benefit from the same safeguarding arrangements as the children visiting the activity centres.
- Managers make good use of feedback to improve the provision. Learner and centre staff feedback from evaluations, reviews and interviews contribute effectively to the self assessment process and quality improvement arrangements.
- PGL resource management is good. The firm makes very efficient use of its high quality resources and is committed to sustainability and the protection of the environment.
- PGL promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily, however initiatives to increase the percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups have had

limited success.

- Reviews and individual learning plans (ILPs) are being completed to a satisfactory standard. Reviews are completed regularly but are not consistently detailed to identify effective action points.
- Trainers and learners make insufficient use of information technology to support teaching and learning. Learners do not regularly use the internet as a resource. Learners do not have sufficient access to computers in some centres.
- Managers do not carry out sufficient observations of teaching and learning sessions delivered by new staff.

What does PGL Travel Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Maintain high success rates by continued use of rigorous individualised assessment of learners.
- Continue to identify initiatives and implement actions to increase the percentage of learners from minority ethnic groups.
- Develop information technology and improve learners' access to computers and electronic resources to further promote learning
- Include more judgements and supporting evidence in the self assessment report to justify the grading of the provision.
- Ensure that learner reviews set clear targets and actions to clearly identify learning goals.
- Introduce an effective programme of observation of teaching and learning for new staff.
- Consistently complete Individual Learning Plans to clearly identify key completion dates for the different aspects of the framework.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- Being able to gain a valuable qualification while working
- The help and support from staff
- The way the training is tailored to individual needs
- Regular and frequent visits from trainers and assessors
- The opportunity to obtain additional qualifications relevant to the industry
- The availability of trainers and other centre staff to deal with queries or provide assistance
- The experienced and knowledgeable staff.

What learners would like to see improved:

- More access to computers
- Better provision for the support roles to the company's core sport and recreation activities
- More varied menu choices
- Some of the training could be more generic as it is too focused on PGL practices

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- The way they are kept involved and informed of learners' progress
- The increased enthusiasm and understanding of their job roles shown by apprentices
- The direct relevance of the training and qualifications to the learners job roles
- The flexibility of training and assessment to fit around work commitments
- The way the trainers adapt their approach to suit the individual learners
- The good understanding of the working of an activity centre by the trainers and assessors due to their previous job roles within PGL
- The opportunities for less academically successful staff to gain good vocational qualifications

What employers would like to see improved:

- Nothing reported

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

6. PGL has responded well to all the key challenges from the previous inspection. In particular the overall success rates for advanced apprentices have improved over the last three years from poor to satisfactory and timely success is now well above the national average. Success rates for apprentices have improved year on year and are now outstanding. The support for learners with additional learning needs has improved. However, it continues to be largely practical support to help learners complete the framework rather than improve their literacy and/or numeracy skills. The provider has introduced a number of initiatives to promote the apprenticeship programmes to under represented minority ethnic groups. So far they have had limited success. The high standard of teaching and learning has been maintained. Quality improvement arrangements are effective. Changes are well planned in response to perceived needs and thoroughly evaluated. The self assessment report lacks judgement and evidence to support the grades awarded. However, the associated quality improvement plan clearly details the areas for improvement identified by the process and the measures being taken to overcome them.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

7. Success rates for learners are high; overall 82.8% and timely 80% in 2008/09. For apprenticeships, overall and timely success rates in 2008/09 were outstanding at 94.4% and 92.9% respectively. Following a consistent upward trend in 2008/09 overall and timely success rates for advanced apprenticeships have both improved to 63.6%, just below national average for overall, but well above for timely.
8. Learners demonstrate good personal and occupational skills. Learners are well organised and professional. Their communication and group management skills are well developed. They take individual responsibility for young client groups, regularly reinforcing health and safety during activities. Teamwork is well developed. Learners work effectively with other instructors in potentially hazardous situations. Learners effectively encourage teamwork amongst the client groups. For example, they encourage young people to take responsibility for each other's well being in rope work.
9. Learners progress well from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. They significantly increase their employability both as a result of their qualifications and their work experiences. Many continue to work within PGL, often at a more senior level including the management and supervision of colleagues. Trainers have themselves undergone the training programme and are role models for apprentices. Ex learners also find equivalent or similar employment within the industry.

10. Learners feel safe and use safe working practices. They follow stringent health and safety guidelines and feel that they can report anything that may give rise to anxiety. Learners are briefed regularly about the health and safety and safeguarding of themselves and others in their care. They rigorously reinforce health and safety practice, thus contributing to the overall safeguarding of their young clients.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. Good assessment practice promotes effective learning and timely framework completion. Written and oral assessment of learners is regular and thorough. Holistic observation of learners' performance results in detailed written feedback that provides information to develop their skills. This is particularly relevant at level 2, with, for example, the importance of strong voice projection in group management is emphasised. Assessment records are comprehensive and communicated well to the learners. They clearly know how well they are progressing and how they might improve.
12. Trainers and learners make insufficient use of information technology to support teaching and learning. Learners do not regularly use the internet as a resource. In some centres there are insufficient computers for learners to use. This lack of readily available information technology discourages independent research that supports learning. A dedicated intranet site for learners to draw upon relevant resources or to use as a forum is not in place.
13. Programmes are particularly well suited to the needs of the learners for this industry. The NVQ levels 2 and 3 in activity leadership and outdoor education dovetail well with both the learners' aspirations and their job requirements. A variety of National Governing Body awards are available that are invaluable to learners for employment in this industry, for example in archery, fencing, orienteering and kayaking. These are highly valued by learners who are well aware of their worth.
14. Learners benefit from good individual support, based on highly effective initial advice and guidance. Learners are placed on programmes that suit their own and PGL's needs well. Guidance is provided on a regular basis as part of the review process. Learners speak highly of the support provided by colleagues who themselves have been through the process. Many managers show a caring and supportive approach to learners. For example those learners who need help at any stage are often supported by colleagues who may not be directly involved in the programme.
15. Staff complete reviews and ILPs to a satisfactory standard. They complete reviews regularly but do not consistently record sufficient detail to identify effective action points. For example, a review may list topics for research without indicating specific targets for completion. ILPs are detailed but rarely specify the required completion dates for each aspect of the framework.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

16. Directors and senior managers provide strong strategic leadership and management. They encourage employees to value work based learning and its positive impact on the company's wider business, to improve their performance in their current job roles and use training as a route to further advancement. PGL was a founder member of the National Skills Academy (Outdoors). Staff have actively contributed to the establishment of national standards and their use in the production of the apprenticeship frameworks. Consequently there is a very close correlation between job roles at PGL and the frameworks for qualifications in sport, recreation and leisure.
17. PGL's safeguarding arrangements for learners are outstanding. The company applies the same policies and procedures to the safeguarding of the apprentices as it does to the children attending its residential outdoor activities. Health and safety policies and procedures are comprehensive. PGL closely follows industry specific legislation. The company risk assesses all its activities. All staff including the apprentices have been subjected to CRB checks and records are held centrally. Each activity centre has a designated safeguarding officer and a deputy. Apprentices receive thorough briefings and advice on safeguarding issues pertinent both to the children and themselves. These include e-safety, drug and alcohol abuse and sexual behaviour. The management of apprentices ensures their exposure to situations of potentially false accusations of abuse is minimised.
18. PGL's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The company makes particularly good use of data to monitor all aspects of the provision, identify trends and areas for concern. It uses national and industry data appropriately. Learners of different groups achieve equally well. The company is however aware that, as in the wider industry, the percentage of apprentices from minority ethnic groups is low and has introduced a number of initiatives to attract more learners from these communities. So far the initiatives have had little effect. PGL actively promotes equality and diversity among its staff. Equality and diversity policies and procedures are up to date and comprehensive. The training department has recently introduced a bank of open questions to use at learner's reviews to reinforce the understanding and promotion of equality of opportunity; however staff do not yet fully exploit the resource. Equality and diversity is covered adequately at induction for all staff, including returning seasonal workers. Employee rights and responsibilities are covered in detail in an early unit of the main apprenticeship framework. PGL manages all incidents and complaints about disability, gender and race equality well. Staff deal with complaints sympathetically, investigate them thoroughly, and take appropriate corrective action when necessary.
19. The provider regularly collects and makes very good use of learner feedback to evaluate and improve the provision. Managers use the feedback to introduce immediate improvements, contribute to course or phase reviews and to the self assessment process. Close involvement of line managers and regular contact

with centre managers enable the training department to evaluate the wider programme effectively. The self assessment process is thorough and inclusive. Managers make good use of performance data to inform the process. Senior staff observe and grade trainers interactions with learners, including teaching and learning sessions and give constructive feedback. Managers do not carry out sufficient observations of teaching and learning delivered by new staff. Some staff, who joined the department this year but after the main group training sessions early in the season, have yet to be observed.

20. PGL makes very efficient use of its high quality resources. Resources supplied to carry out the core business are used well to support the training of the apprentices. The company is strongly committed to sustainability and protection of the environment. New build centres use solar energy and renewable resources. PGL is at pains to minimise any adverse impact of their activities on the local environment and communities.

Information about the inspection

21. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's training programme manager, 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) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
22. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls 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 each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

PGL Travel 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 | | |
| Part-time learners | 97 | 97 |
| Overall effectiveness | 2 | 2 |
| Capacity to improve | 2 | |
| Outcomes for learners | 1 | 1 |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning? | 1 | |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals? | 1 | |
| How well do learners progress? | 1 | |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development? | 1 | |
| 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> | 2 | |
| 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? | 1 | |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners? | 2 | |
| 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? | 2 | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | 0 | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 1 | |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 3 | |
| 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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