

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



18 December 2009

Ms S Tipton  
Managing Director  
Protocol Consultancy Services  
Canterbury House  
85 New Hall Street  
Birmingham  
B3 1LH

Dear Ms Tipton

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: the role of employers in work-related education and training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 16 November 2009. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national survey of good practice in the role that employers play in work-related education and training. Published reports are likely to list the names of contributing organisations but individual organisations will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with five staff, three employers and five learners; scrutiny of examples of good practice provided; and a review of a range of documents, case studies and data.

I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify some areas for development and outline the main findings below.

The main strengths

- Overall success rates are consistently outstanding. In 2007/08, all leavers completed their frameworks, and completion rates for 2008/09 are 96%. Timely success rates have improved from 66% in 2005/06 to 92% in 2008/09, which is significantly higher than the national average of 46%. In the current year, all 19 leavers have achieved their frameworks on time.
- Employers are encouraged to be fully and actively involved in learners' programmes from the start. Protocol Consultancy Services (PCS) staff brief employers fully on the programme. Employers are aware of their expected

commitment and contribution to the programmes. They participate in choosing relevant National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and option units to suit the job role.

- PCS makes excellent use of workplace mentors to guide and mentor the learner through their programme. PCS trains the mentors well and provides them with a detailed handbook outlining their role and responsibilities. The mentor is involved in progress reviews and target-setting and is instrumental in motivating the learner to make good and timely progress.
- On- and off-the-job training is coordinated well. Assessors are flexible, visit the workplace regularly and communicate well with the employer. The workplace mentor is involved in day-to-day supervision and, therefore, can provide training that has been agreed at reviews and assessment planning meetings. Feedback is regularly sought from employers, so they can influence the training. Particularly good use is made of the Assessment of Prior Learning and professional discussion on advanced apprenticeships programmes, which employers and learners appreciate as it avoids duplication of training and assessment.
- PCS is successfully engaging unemployed 16- to 18-year-olds by directly funding a pre-apprenticeship programme for customer service and administration. Learners are placed with employers for a period of work experience, at the same time receiving intensive training by PCS for key skills, the technical certificate and aspects of the NVQ. The work experience acts as a trial period, and usually results in learners progressing to the apprenticeship programme.
- Employers benefit significantly from involvement in PCS's programmes. Learners develop excellent customer service skills and confidence, improving the employers' reputation and business. Employers gain highly skilled workers, and because of their close involvement, are able to identify and train learners for promotion. Learners also feel more motivated and valued by their employers.

The main area for further development is:

- involving more employers in developing occupational case studies and e-learning packages, to make Skills for Life and key skills more relevant. This would build on PCS's good practice in working successfully with a large travel agency to develop a realistic travel and tourism e-learning package based on its own systems.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the provision. If there are any points you wish to discuss, please contact me. We gather information on the impact of our visits. To this end, you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete six to 12 months after the visit. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website and will be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

V Bell  
Additional Inspector