

The Premier League Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 54842

Name of lead inspector: Anthony Ward HMI

Last day of inspection: 24 September 2010

Type of provider: Employer

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Information about the provider

1. The Premier League (PL) is a limited company, with the 20 premier league football clubs as its shareholders and is based in central London. The league operates a youth development department, which manages the work-based learning contract for advanced apprenticeships in sporting excellence (AASE) within the premier league. The Skills Funding Agency National Employer Service funds the contract. At the time of the inspection 332 learners were on the programme based at 18 Premier League clubs and three Football League clubs. Since the previous inspection the organisation has restructured and relocated to a single location.
2. Each football club operates a football academy or centre of excellence, licensed by the league, which meets its standards and rules. Each club has a full-time head of education and welfare and a team of coaches who deliver on-the-job training. The delivery of off-the-job training varies between clubs to meet the needs of the club and their learners. Some subcontract the technical certificate to colleges or schools others provide it directly. Each club offers a number of places to players who join the programme direct from school and also train a small number of young footballers who are not eligible for the programme.
3. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the Premier League:
 - West Herts College
 - Birmingham Metropolitan College
 - Myerscough College
 - Blackpool Sixth Form College
 - Chesterfield High School
 - Grimsby Study Support Centre
 - Riverside College
 - Knowsley College
 - Newcastle College
 - City of Sunderland College
 - Barking Abbey School
 - Sandwell Academy
 - South Staffordshire College
 - Professional Footballers' Association
 - Optimum Potential
 - Kick It Out.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	352 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Grade 1
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	1
Subject Areas	
Sport leisure and recreation	1

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. Success rates are very high and have improved significantly over the last four years. Nearly all learners successfully complete their programme and make outstanding progress in developing football skills. Learners develop excellent personal and social skills and an ability to analyse and reflect on their own progress. The PL offers learners outstanding support to ensure they reach their footballing potential. The flexible programme enables them to take part in games at all levels, including first team and international, and develop high level skills while continuing their academic studies. Learners progress very well. Nearly three

quarters achieve a professional contract, while many others go into further or higher education or different sporting careers.

5. The coaching, training and assessment support from highly qualified and experienced coaches and other specialists is outstanding. Resources are excellent. Most training facilities are of the highest standard and often shared with first teams. The learners' working environment is protected and secure. Learners receive excellent individual support throughout their programme.
6. The board, senior executives and managers at all levels provide outstanding leadership and management. They are strongly committed to learners achieving high standards of football skills and education. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Staff and learners have high levels of awareness of equality and diversity which are reflected particularly well by the culture of respect that was apparent in all clubs. The PL demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve. The company's provision was judged good at its previous inspection and it has continued to improve.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Success rates are very high and show continuing and significant improvement over the last four years. In the current year 95% of learners have already completed successfully. Last year 88% of learners achieved the full framework and achievement rates within the planned time were also very high at 87%.
- Learners make outstanding progress in developing football skills. They also develop particularly good personal and social skills and the ability to analyse and reflect on their own progress. An extensive range of additional workshops enriches learning.
- Learners progress very well after their programmes. Nearly three quarters achieve a professional contract and of the rest, nearly all progress into further or higher education or other employment. Learners receive highly effective support to ensure they reach their potential in football.
- Learners are exceptionally well prepared to make informed decisions about their health and well-being and they feel extremely safe. Learners in most clubs make a major contribution to local community schemes and activities.
- Outstanding coaching, training and assessment support learning and development. Well planned coaching sessions with highly qualified and experienced coaches and specialists develop particularly high levels of individual physical and technical skills.
- Although the standard of teaching and learning in academic sessions is at least satisfactory and often better, it is too variable. Teachers do not always sufficiently challenge more able learners to meet their potential. The PL has planned appropriate improvements to the observation system.
- The programme is exceptionally effective at meeting the needs and interests of learners. The framework is very relevant and develops specific skills to meet

learners' career aspirations. Flexible arrangements allow learners to take advantage of all opportunities to play higher level football whilst maintaining their educational progress.

- Learners receive exceptional individual support throughout their programme. All staff prioritise the individual needs of learners and are dedicated to their welfare and progress. Learners recognise and value this support highly.
- Leadership and management are outstanding, with a clear vision and strategy to develop high level skills and education. The Premier League's board has strongly supported the improvement of the provision, maintaining its focus on the needs of learners and clubs. Relationships with clubs are excellent, aiding further development of quality systems with those in transition.
- Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. The organisation protects its learners very well. Criminal records checks on employees and volunteers are comprehensive and continually monitored. All activities are thoroughly risk assessed. Clubs receive good training and support and the PL actively promotes safeguarding nationally through extensive partnership working.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. A strong emphasis on actively combating discrimination is supported by all clubs and learners. Rates of recruitment of learners from traditionally under-represented groups are high and all groups achieve well. The PL fosters and ensures a very strong culture of respect. Equality and diversity publications are particularly good.
- Arrangements for improving the provision are highly effective, with many improvements since the previous inspection. Managers make particularly good use of extensive management information to set improvement targets. They have a clear and detailed understanding of programme performance, although some quality improvement targets are not sufficiently measureable.

What does the Premier League need to do to improve further?

- Fully implement improvements in the use of observation, in order to improve further the quality of teaching in theory sessions experienced by learners.
- Ensure that progress towards programme goals can be demonstrated through increased focus on setting clearer measurable targets in quality improvement plans.
- Further develop the support given to those clubs experiencing major change to ensure that all learners receive the best level of provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the welcoming and friendly environment
- the excellent support that is always available
- the structure of the education element
- the high quality coaching sessions

- living in friendly homes
- specialist scientific support
- excellent quality playing facilities
- being able to take other subjects as part of the course.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the number of training sessions with first team players
- opportunities to play in every game
- proportion of sessions which are practical rather than classroom based
- the quality of laptops in a few clubs.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- very well qualified and experienced staff
- the outstanding support for players and staff
- the close match of the qualification to the needs of professional footballers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

7. The Premier League (PL) demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve. Judged by inspectors as good at the previous inspection, the PL has continued to improve its provision. Success rates have continued to rise to very high levels with little difference between overall and success rates within the planned time. Clubs welcome the investment in additional staff who directly support them to fulfil their quality improvement function. Resources continue to improve and are shared with partner organisations providing the programmes. The virtual learning environment has been successfully introduced and the PL is encouraging the use of the latest technologies in teaching and learning. The management information system has further improved the monitoring of learners' progress, and the analysis of individual clubs' and learner groups' performance. This has helped improve success rates within the planned time. Managers have detailed knowledge of individual learners including their destinations. The views of learners and of club and college staff have effectively informed improvements. Parents' views are also sought and used well. Senior managers are fully involved in the improvement process, particularly in setting targets and raising standards. Subcontracting arrangements are robust and effectively monitored.
8. Self-assessment is very good. The report provides an accurate and comprehensive analysis of the apprenticeship programme. Managers demonstrate a good understanding of the quality of the provision and, in the latest draft self-assessment findings, have identified accurately areas where it could be improved. Local managers are developing self-assessment at club level in a way which reflects the interests of learners. The new club support manager role is already helping improve the process. The senior managers' quality improvement group drives continual improvement; planned improvements are detailed and thorough. The PL manages internal verification effectively. Quality improvement plans have identified areas that have been improved. However, some targets are not expressed in a sufficiently measurable way to show progress clearly.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

9. Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Success rates are very high and show continuing and significant improvement over the last four years. In the current year 95% of learners have already completed successfully. In 2008/09, 88% of learners achieved the full framework, and a very high 87% of learners completed within the planned time.
10. Learners make outstanding progress in developing football skills, technically, tactically, physically and mentally. Learners are able to develop good coaching skills by working with, for example, younger players. Learners develop excellent personal and social skills supported by an extensive range of workshops

including practice in dealing with the media and working with football agents. Learners' ability to analyse and reflect on their own progress through match analysis and use of reflective journals is extremely well developed.

11. Learners progress well to good destinations. Nearly three quarters achieve a professional contract and, of the rest, most progress into further or higher education or other employment. Examples include scholarships in the United States and careers in other sports.
12. The development of learners' economic and social well-being is outstanding and is enhanced by the provision of additional sessions, for example in money management and driver awareness. Learners receive outstanding support both from the PL and clubs to ensure they develop fully as individuals. Learners feel extremely safe; they train safely and show good knowledge of safe working practice when playing. A highly effective induction ensures learners fully understand relevant club procedures. The learners' working environment is protected and secure, with restricted entry and security guards. Learners are able to carry out rigorous and regularly monitored risk assessments for their activities.
13. Learners are exceptionally well prepared to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. They have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and this is reinforced by specialist nutrition input. Advice is also given to parents about learners' diets, including to house parents where they are living away from home. Healthy food choices are provided at clubs. Learners complete a food diary as part of the programme which underpins their practice and develops their understanding of nutritional theory. Personal fitness is paramount with individual fitness plans devised for each learner. Learners in most clubs make a very positive contribution to community schemes and participate in activities such as visits to hospices, fundraising and presentations at awards evenings.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

14. Outstanding coaching, training and assessment support learning and development effectively. Extremely well planned coaching sessions develop particularly high levels of individual physical and technical skills. Highly qualified and experienced coaches and other specialists give regular and detailed feedback to enable learners to set and monitor challenging targets for improvement. Outstanding use of technology by coaches, sports science specialists and learners informs specific performance targets for each individual player. However, the standard of teaching and learning in theory sessions is sometimes only satisfactory. In less effective sessions, teachers do not fully utilise techniques to ensure that learners of all abilities, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged.
15. Resources are excellent. Most training facilities are of the highest standard and often shared with first teams, with very well kept training pitches, astro turf areas, fully equipped gyms, hydrotherapy pools and rehabilitation suites.

Besides coaching and teaching staff, learners have access to club doctors, physiotherapists and chiropodists.

16. The programme meets the needs and interests of learners exceptionally well. The framework develops specific skills for learners' career aspirations. Flexible learning arrangements allow learners to participate in higher level football whilst maintaining their educational progress. They are very aware of opportunities both in football and alternative careers. Highly effective partnerships with other football clubs provide learners with opportunities to further their careers. Sometimes clubs produce DVDs of individual learners as a promotional tool. Managers and staff generally use other partnerships well to enhance aspects of the curriculum, such as sports psychology, counselling and chaplaincy.
17. Care, guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Learners receive excellent support throughout their programme on both personal and professional issues. All staff prioritise the individual needs of learners and are dedicated to their welfare and progress. Club staff make parents welcome and regularly update them on learners' progress. Where learners are living away from home, clubs forge strong links with both parents and house parents, making sure they are informed and supported.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

18. The board, senior executives and managers at all levels provide outstanding leadership and management. They are strongly committed to learners achieving high standards of football skills and educational standards. The PL has very effectively managed the reorganisation of the AASE programme, leading to much improved results. Leaders and managers set very high expectations for learners and staff. The arrangements for monitoring performance are very effective. Particularly effective arrangements are in place to support clubs who are relegated or promoted to ensure learners are not disadvantaged.
19. Managers successfully apply very clear strategies to develop the programme. They use outstanding management information systems very effectively to evaluate, plan and improve performance. Internal and external communications, to support the performance and development of the programme, are very good and well managed. The PL includes in its development activities all the partner organisations which contribute to the provision. Staff work very effectively to meet individual learners' needs, particularly in supporting those not offered premiership contracts. Subcontractor arrangements are well managed and monitored. Clubs which offer training in-house are very well supported in doing so.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and exemplary. An extensive range of safeguarding policies and procedures, overseen by a dedicated manager, are rigorously implemented and monitored. Training in safeguarding learners takes place at every club three times a year, and the role of the PL is highlighted in a range of well-written publications. Risk assessments are completed for all

aspects of the programme and clubs are closely monitored. Learners attend child protection workshops and understand how to ensure their own and others' safety. Health and well-being are an integral part of the apprenticeship and provide advice and support to learners about fitness, diet and general health. Criminal records checks on staff and volunteers are comprehensive and regularly monitored and the PL has planned well ahead for changes in vetting arrangements. A code of practice is in place for the use of images. There is clear guidance on player recruitment and use of agents. Partnership working ensures the PL plays in active part in setting national standards for safeguarding. The same principles are applied to the very effective management and monitoring of the health and safety of learners. Examples include training in internet safety and the use of social networking sites.

21. Arrangements for equality and diversity are outstanding. Staff and learners have a high awareness of equality and diversity, reflected particularly well by the culture of respect found in all the clubs. Regular training for staff and learners is supported by a wide range of high quality materials. Learners are supportive of each other and respectful of different cultures. The participation of under-represented groups is high and all learners succeed well because of the extensive support they receive in overcoming potential barriers. The PL leads in successful initiatives to combat racial discrimination and homophobia, and makes good use of inspirational role models. Managers take quick action to tackle potential problems. Strict anti-bullying and harassment procedures are in place and successfully implemented. Reviews check learners' welfare and some aspects of equality and diversity. However, some opportunities are missed in teaching to reinforce aspects of equality and diversity.
22. The PL provides outstanding value for money. Success rates are very high and improving. Excellent resources are well managed. Continued high levels of investment support the delivery and further development of the programme. Learners benefit from being able to work with exceptional coaching staff.

Information about the inspection

23. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's curriculum manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
24. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, visits and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews and examined a range of documentary evidence.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
The Premier League 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	332	332
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Capacity to improve	1	
Outcomes for learners		
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	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	1	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2	
Quality of provision	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1	
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?	1	
Leadership and management	1	1
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	1	
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?	1	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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