

Xtp International Ltd

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

Xtp International Limited (Xtp), originally Portfolio Plus Limited, is a private company established in 2003. Its head office is in Didsbury, Manchester. In January 2004 the company was acquired by the current managing director. Since 2004, Xtp has held contracts with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council to provide government-funded 'Employer Training Pilot' and, more recently, 'Train to Gain' provision in civil enforcement, security, skills for justice (policing and custodial care) and spectator safety. Learners work towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 in controlling parking areas and in providing security.

At the previous inspection in January 2009, inspectors judged the effectiveness of the provision as satisfactory overall. In particular, the outcomes for learners were good and success rates were consistently high. The quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. This report focuses on key themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and development planning

What progress has been made in making the self-assessment process sufficiently self-critical and linking it to a coordinated development plan? Significant progress

In its second self-assessment Xtp has made significant progress in producing a self-critical report leading to a clear, focused and detailed electronic development plan. At the previous inspection, the self-assessment process was judged satisfactory and inclusive. The report was clearly structured and broadly accurate. Xtp has built on this process and also produced an accurate position statement before the monitoring visit.

Xtp now has a significantly enhanced development plan which is available to staff on the intranet. The plan is detailed, has a 'named person' and a completion date for targets against each item. It is monitored monthly at the staff meeting. Items on the plan are derived from inspection results, the self-assessment report, internal and external verification, employer and learner feedback, data and staff. There are plans to link the new software learner tracking system to it. A number of actions have already been completed that improve learner outcomes.

Outcomes for learners

What progress has been made in using management information to develop effective strategies that sustain the previously high success rates? Significant Progress

Xtp has made significant progress in using data and management information to develop strategies to improve success rates. Success rates in 2009/10 up to period 9 have returned to the previous high levels at 92%. The percentage of learners achieving within the agreed timescales has also improved and is now good at 77%.

Xtp has recently invested heavily in new computer software to support the full range of its business needs. Staff are becoming adept at using the new software to provide meaningful reports for managers, assessors and for monthly management meetings. These reports review overall learner performance against a range of criteria and measure their progress against company profiles. These are effective in identifying both over and underperformance. The reports show the progress and achievement of all learners during a specific period. The system records individual learner progress as a percentage of the total qualification. Records are effective in identifying learners who are on schedule, or those not making good progress.

Another improvement is the development of a 'master' diary system on the new software. This records all assessor and internal verifier activity to ensure that assessors maintain appropriate contact with learners and that schedules for assessment are adhered to.

Quality improvement monitoring

What progress has been made in implementing better arrangements for quality improvement monitoring, and in particular, the evaluation of and improvement in standards of teaching and learning? Reasonable progress

Xtp has made reasonable progress in improving arrangements for quality monitoring, judged to be developed insufficiently at the previous inspection. Following the development of an action plan, Xtp has greatly enhanced its quality improvement cycle with an annual plan of activities and established regular and thorough audit processes that are detailed in policies and procedures.

At the previous inspection, the observation of teaching and learning was not thorough and did not lead to the improvement of programmes. A formal evaluation of the observation reports is now carried out by an external consultant and this is linked into the development plan. A new peer review system has been implemented; peers observe assessors regularly at induction and the process reinforces and reviews standards. However, it is too early to judge the impact of these recent developments.

Monitoring of learners' progress

What changes have been implemented in the planning and monitoring of learners' programmes in order to maximise their learning experience? Reasonable Progress

Xtp has made reasonable progress in implementing changes in the planning and monitoring of learners' progress through their qualification, found to be insufficiently thorough at the previous inspection. At the detailed registration and induction process learners complete a 'skills check' to identify any learning support needs and also to ensure eligibility for funding. Key factors are recorded and stored on individual learning plans, which are copied and given to learners. A shorter record of main learning goals is also maintained on an assessment planner. These are also given, or emailed, to learners. The assessor supports learners with identified learning needs during the programme or they are referred to other specialist providers for support.

Assessment 'activity' is agreed during the first visit to learners. The assessment planner records this detail and is left with the learner for their own records and to assist them in their preparation. Assessments are scheduled to meet learners' work and shift patterns. The approach taken by assessors is holistic in nature and ensures that as well as the planned assessment activities, all available evidence is captured and used. Learners sign a detailed 'contact log' that records in detail the units which have been assessed and a percentage completion rate.

Equality of opportunity

What progress has been made in promoting equality of opportunity to learners? Reasonable progress

Xtp has made reasonable progress in promoting equality of opportunity. At the previous inspection, Xtp did not promote equality of opportunity and diversity sufficiently well, and there was little training for staff in equality and diversity. Xtp has an increased focus in this area. An effective 'equality audit framework' has been developed and implemented; staff have received training and this is supported by briefing sheets. There is a range of initiatives to widen participation. Regular reports are produced from the new learner tracking software. A comprehensive single equality scheme has been written but it is yet to be implemented fully.

Since the previous inspection, Xtp has developed a list of questions to raise with learners at their regular reviews. These are discussed, one at each review, and responses recorded in the learner's electronic portfolio. This is satisfactory in building learners' awareness. However, the questions are based around factual items such as 'state the definition of bullying', rather than exploring what actions might be considered a form of bullying within the work place. Equality and diversity are now also included within a unit of the NVQ qualification followed by learners.

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