

Inspection dates

10-13 November 2015

Overall effectiveness**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for learners	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- The managing director has enabled rapid improvement in the quality of provision by developing a culture of high expectations.
- Staff benefit from strong performance management and good support and training
- Nearly all aspects of provision previously judged to require improvement are now strengths, such as the considerable improvement in apprenticeship success rates that are now high.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in directly delivered and subcontracted provision are good. Most employers are involved well in designing and delivering apprenticeships.
- Apprentices and learners develop a good understanding of issues around equality, diversity and safeguarding within modern Britain.
- Technology is used well for training and supporting geographically dispersed apprentices.
- Many apprentices benefit from achieving relevant additional qualifications or functional skills at a higher level than required for their apprenticeship.
- There are no achievement gaps between different groupings of apprentices such as by gender, age, ethnicity, disability or learning difficulty.
- Progression from sector-based work academies into employment, education or training is good.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Training and assessment officers (TAOs) do not routinely correct spelling, punctuation or grammatical errors in apprentices' work or always identify and address these in sessions.
- Written feedback on apprentices' work is too often descriptive and does not clearly tell them how they can improve.
- Too many apprentices still do not complete their apprenticeship frameworks within agreed timescales.
- Managers do not systematically collect and analyse data for all apprentices to be able to show fully the impact of skills development or progression in the workplace.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Progress to Excellence Limited (PTE) is a privately owned company that has been operating since 1997, specialising in the provision of health and social care, administration and management apprenticeships. It also provides employability provision for unemployed adults seeking work in the health and social care sector. PTE has its head office in Birkenhead, Wirral and its apprentices work primarily in care settings in both large and small to medium-sized businesses across the country. PTE subcontracts with two other providers to deliver health and social care, management and spectator safety apprenticeship provision. Publicly funded apprenticeship programmes account for approximately 95% of the company's provision.
- Around 1,932 learners currently study with PTE and its subcontractors. About 1,819 are intermediate, advanced or higher apprentices, of whom 1,789 are aged 19+. Around 113 learners are on the short sector-based work academy provision for unemployed adults.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Annotate apprentices' work with detailed written feedback to increase the stretch and challenge for apprentices and provide clear written guidance on how they can further improve their work.
- Develop staff confidence and skills to identify and implement strategies that best support learners' development of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Continue to improve success rates for apprentices and further reduce the remaining difference between the success rate overall and for those completing within agreed timescales.
- Systematically collect, analyse and present data for all apprentices' skills development and progression within the workplace to evidence the full impact of apprenticeships on individual and employer performance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since the previous inspection when the provider was judged to require improvement, the managing director has very successfully established a culture of high expectations. Senior managers, guided by a strong sense of organisational good values, have supported TAOs successfully to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and this results in much-improved outcomes for apprentices.
- Significant investment in information and communication technology, such as electronic portfolios, e-learning systems and web-based virtual meeting systems, enables effective delivery of provision across many English regions.
- Comprehensive and robust performance management contributes well to the much-improved rate of apprentices' progress. Managers effectively monitor each TAO's performance targets, such as the proportion of their allocated apprentices who are progressing well, monthly. They use a broad range of evidence, including observations of teaching, learning and assessment, employers' and apprentices' views, and apprentices' progress to monitor staff performance and agree development plans.
- Managers use management information well to manage the provision and monitor the achievement of key performance indicators including success rates. The sampling arrangements provide good evidence for the broader impact of apprentices' skills development and progression in the workplace, but managers do not systematically collect and analyse data for all learners to be able to show the full impact of skills development or the full extent of the take-up of additional qualifications.
- Arrangements for supporting and monitoring the performance of contractors are strong and as a result subcontractors' apprenticeship success rates are high. Key performance indicators are frequently reported against and any underachievement swiftly dealt with. Subcontractors meet together regularly to share best practice and participate in training activities.
- Staff are highly valued for their work and are appreciative of the open and supportive management style. They have successfully developed new working practices that benefit learners, such as the use of web-based discussions and training sessions with geographically dispersed apprentices. Good communication arrangements including bi-monthly meetings of all staff contribute to the good support for the many employees who work remotely.
- The managing director and senior managers respond well to the training requirements of local, regional and national employers. The company provides training for apprentices in about 300 employers, of which around a third are national employers and two thirds are small to medium-sized enterprises. The vast majority of employers are in the care sector. The company has effective working relationship with 22 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Managers are well aware of the LEPs' priorities and consequently have developed provision to meet identified needs. For example, following a request by a number of LEPs the provider now offers employability training for unemployed adults.
- Systems to improve the quality of provision, including teaching, learning and assessment, are effective and consequently managers have a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. Outcomes from quality improvement activities are reported in detail at the senior management team meetings to monitor the effectiveness of training processes, and changes are made when required. Self-assessment is thorough, comprehensive and accurate and the resulting quality improvement plan is detailed and robust. The targets for improvement are detailed and frequently monitored and reviewed by managers.
- Leaders and managers prioritise well the development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills. Since the previous inspection the number of specialist tutors providing functional skills training has increased significantly. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that all TAOs correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' written work.
- Very effective training ensures that TAOs help apprentices and learners fully understand and apply fair treatment of individuals, and respecting the rights, beliefs and lifestyles of other people. One of the staff leads the development of TAOs in these areas, for example by providing training and monthly newsletters. He provides good training in relation to British values; democracy, tolerance of different cultures and religions, mutual respect, and individual liberty. Managers analyse learners' outcomes thoroughly and intervene where they identify gaps in achievement for different groups of learners. They have been successful in closing the previous performance gap between men and women.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The board of directors has supported the managing director well to implement changes such as a staff restructuring in 2014 to increase the pace of improvement.

- The board members have a clear understanding of the importance of increasing the number of learners while maintaining a high quality of provision.
- Their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision is good and board members use the main indicators of quality, such as the quality of training and the proportion of apprentices who succeed, to provide effective support and challenge.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Arrangements for safeguarding are effective, underpinned by comprehensive policies and procedures, and supported by appropriate checks on staff, workplaces and subcontractors.
 - All staff and both subcontractors have received detailed training that has improved their knowledge and skills in identifying signs of abuse, neglect, radicalisation and extremism. They know the risks which apprentices and learners can encounter and discuss these well during progress reviews.
 - Apprentices and learners feel safe and know who to contact if they have safeguarding or health and safety concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment for apprentices in directly delivered and subcontracted provision are good. TAOs have high expectations of apprentices and set professional standards. Apprentices are enthusiastic, work hard and make good progress. TAOs use good questioning techniques and a range of relevant resources to check understanding and to consolidate and reinforce learning.
- Well-qualified and experienced TAOs use their subject expertise well to plan good individual coaching sessions that motivate and interest apprentices and meet individual needs. Learning is relevant and meaningful to the everyday experiences of their job role. Apprentices are supported well to choose optional units that best match their interests and their work environment.
- Apprentices are encouraged to work independently and track their own progress. The e-learning system motivates them, through a wide range of interesting learning resources, to extend their knowledge and skills outside of learning sessions. Management apprentices skilfully and confidently demonstrate techniques when dealing with staff issues. TAOs make good use of the electronic portfolio system and email to provide individual support for apprentices between sessions, helping them to make good progress.
- Most employers are engaged in the design and development of apprentices' programmes and are kept well informed of their apprentice's progress. Workplace mentors provide good support for apprentices, and the relationship between assessors and employers is highly effective in supporting apprentices' progress and providing work-based assessment opportunities to develop higher-level skills and knowledge.
- Assessment is good and apprentices produce a wide range of evidence in their portfolios. TAOs give immediate, encouraging and helpful oral feedback in sessions that often enable apprentices to develop their thinking and understanding further. However, they give insufficient written evaluative feedback on assessed work, which impacts on apprentices' depth of knowledge and understanding being extended and challenged.
- Apprentices' support and additional learning needs are identified through timely, accurate and effective initial assessment. Apprentices identified at pre-level one in functional skills are allocated functional skills specialist support. Those apprentices in need of further personal or learning support are provided with an individual education plan that details the specific support provided; this is effectively monitored and adjusted to respond to apprentices' ongoing needs.
- Apprentices benefit from very good promotion of equality and diversity across all programmes. TAOs use a wide range of current and topical materials and case studies to explore issues relevant to the different apprenticeship subjects. For example, in health and social care extremism and radicalisation was tackled for a learner working in an autism environment through a real-life case study about a young man with Asperger's who was radicalised to attempt a suicide bombing.
- Progress reviews record effectively the development of equality and diversity. In most cases reviews develop apprentices' understanding and awareness of the issues pertinent to their workplace; as a result they are more sensitive and tolerant to colleagues, clients and their work environment. Apprentices' and staff's awareness of equality and diversity issues is supported well by an equality and diversity principal officer who provides good resources, communicates through a monthly bulletin on topical issues and provides training and development on a range of subjects including British values and safeguarding.
- Apprentices develop a broad understanding of safeguarding and how it applies to keeping themselves, their staff and service users safe. For example, a domiciliary care learner identified improvements to operational practices relating to data protection.

- The development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills is supported well by specialist trainers. Initial assessment is thorough, provides an accurate assessment of apprentices' starting points and is used very effectively to develop individual learning plans. Functional skills trainers provide good challenge for apprentices through appropriate activities to promote independent thinking and learning. However, assessors do not routinely correct spelling and grammar errors in apprentices' work and do not always identify and address these in sessions.
- For those learners on sector-based work academy programmes, initial advice and guidance is thorough and explores the reality of working in the care sector, enabling them to make informed choices about pursuing that as a potential career. The well-planned programme includes a good range of topics and activities that improve learners' knowledge and understanding of the care sector.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

- Many apprentices develop good skills that improve their effectiveness as employees and increase business efficiency. For example, an apprentice in a domiciliary care provider made alterations to the planning of staff rotas, consequently improving staff utilisation. Changes to emergency response procedures in another provider enabled them to achieve challenging government targets.
- Many apprentices benefit from achieving a wide range of additional qualifications or training. Where appropriate, some optional units, for example in administration of medicines, are taken at a higher level than required for the apprenticeship framework and some apprentices take units, for example in end-of-life care and in dementia care, as additions to their framework.
- Apprentices' achievement of English and mathematics functional skills is good. Success rates for these are high and well in excess of national rates. Many apprentices choose to take functional skills when they could be exempt. For example, almost all of the 600 higher apprentices have chosen to complete their level 2 functional skills.
- Functional skills activities support apprentices very well to develop their skills in the context of their work. For example, a training and assessment officer identified a relevant opportunity to apply newly acquired mathematics skills to work out all of the aspects of running a narrowboat project for service users, considering annual costs such as licences and insurance, running and maintenance costs such as average fuel usage, and staff-to-client ratios for maximum safety and safeguarding.
- Learners on sector-based work academy programmes enjoy the programme and gain relevant qualifications. They report improved awareness of the care needs of individuals, as well as increased self-confidence and development of employability skills.
- Apprentices feel safe and have a good understanding of health and safety and safe working practices. They are clear on how to report any concerns about bullying or harassment and are confident that any issues would receive swift intervention from staff.

Outcomes for learners are good

- At the previous inspection outcomes for apprentices were too low. Success rates increased considerably in 2014/15 and for apprentices on all programmes they are now high and well above national rates. Most apprentices successfully achieve their frameworks, with the large majority completing within the agreed timescales. Higher apprentices are particularly successful, with almost all achieving their frameworks.
- All the different groupings of apprentices, by age, gender, ethnicity, disability or learning difficulty, achieve well, with success rates well above national rates for similar groups. Success rates for apprentices within subcontracted provision are also high, with most apprentices achieving their frameworks.
- The large majority of learners on sector-based work academy provision progress into either employment, further or higher education. The majority of these enter employment.
- The large majority of apprentices remain in full-time employment after completing their apprenticeship, with a few progressing to other further or higher education qualifications. The large majority of those remaining in full-time employment confirm they have improved their career prospects, gained a better job or been promoted at work following their apprenticeships.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1154
Principal/CEO	Sandra Kirkham
Website address	www.ptoetraining.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	0	77	0	36	0	1	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	11	452	7	375	0	264		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14-16	0							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Partnership Training Limited ■ New Generation Training and Consultancy Limited 							

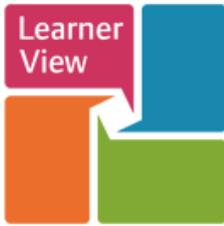
Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Mike White, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shahram Safavi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Margaret Hobson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Collis	Ofsted inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted inspector
Elaine Smith	Ofsted inspector

The above team was assisted by the Director of Quality, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They visited employers and observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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