

PGL Training (Plumbing) Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		16–19 July 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of learners achieve their qualification and most adult apprentices achieve their apprenticeship within the planned timescale.
- Learners quickly develop the confidence and technical skills they need to gain employment or to do their job better. In many cases, these skills are of a higher standard than learners need to pass their qualification.
- Apprentices benefit from good off-the-job training delivered by highly experienced and knowledgeable staff. These staff work successfully with employers to ensure apprentices have sufficient opportunities to practise the skills they learn and to carry out challenging tasks in the workplace.
- Learners' progress is closely monitored and, if needed, staff at PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited work closely with employers to adjust learners' programmes quickly. This ensures learners continue to make good progress.
- Managers quickly implement improvement plans arising from their evaluation of the provision; as a result, teaching and learning and assessment have improved.
- Managers have very productive partnerships with a wide variety of local and national employers. These ensure learners gain relevant qualifications that successfully prepare them well for the workplace.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The proportion of 16- to 18-year-old learners on intermediate apprenticeships and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities completing their programmes is too low.
- Not enough teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding and written feedback to learners does not give them enough information about how to improve the standard of their work.
- Recording and reporting of all aspects of the provision are not yet comprehensive enough for managers to monitor the impact of activities sufficiently.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of lessons, assessments and reviews that are outstanding by:
 - providing learners with written feedback that identifies what they have done well and targets for improving the quality of their work
 - providing more difficult activities for the more able learners
 - using information and learning technology (ILT) to provide learners with additional activities to reinforce and extend their learning
 - routinely correcting misspellings and grammar in learners' work
 - systematically setting and recording targets for all trainers and assessors that focus on improving the learning sessions they provide.
- Check the quality of assessment decisions throughout the delivery of programmes to ensure that assessors provide sufficient feedback to learners on the quality of their work.
- Introduce support plans for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities that anticipate their support needs and lead to the necessary adjustments being implemented.
- Increase the range and detail of reports that managers use to monitor all aspects of learners' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including reports on the attendance of different groups of learners, the progression of apprentices following completion of their training and feedback from employers.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Over the past three years, a high proportion of learners has achieved their qualification, with most apprentices achieving their apprenticeship quickly. Learners on advanced level apprenticeships and adult apprentices are particularly successful. The high level of success for apprentices dipped in 2010/11 to the national average. In 2011/12 the proportion of apprentices that achieved their apprenticeship increased to exceed that in similar providers.
- Too few learners aged 16 to 18 on intermediate apprenticeships achieve their qualification. Whilst a high proportion of younger apprentices on plumbing programmes are successful, too many of those on apprenticeships in plastering, dry-lining and carpentry are not. The provider has now stopped offering most of these apprenticeships. In the past two years, the small number of apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities has not been as successful as other apprentices.
- A large majority of learners studying short courses for employment in the construction industry are successful. Learners enhance their employment prospects by obtaining the health and safety card they require to work on construction sites.
- Learners' attendance is good and trainers work closely with employers to help them balance the demands of the workplace with learners' commitments to their studies. Staff have a good understanding of most learners' attendance but do not monitor trends in attendance by different groups of learners.
- Learners produce practical work of a good standard. For example, plumbing apprentices create soldered joints that are neatly finished and mechanically sound, and have produced an exemplary boiler and heating installation in the provider's workshop. In the workplace, apprentices are confident to take on challenging tasks and work diligently to ensure they complete these to a high standard.

- Learners make good progress on their courses. Trainers closely monitor the work learners complete and regularly report their progress to employers. As a result, trainers quickly identify learners who are at risk of falling behind, identify the reasons for delays and address these. They involve employers well to ensure that any issues in the workplace that affect the learners' progress are addressed.
- Learners develop skills that employers value, including mathematical skills. Learners who are not able to use a tape measure accurately quickly learn how to do so and then progress onto acquiring skills to measure areas and volumes. Employers are highly satisfied with the improvements in learners' confidence. A local employer in the tourism industry reports that his employees work more confidently with customers as a result of their training and that customers are providing more positive feedback on the service they receive. Learners use their vocational skills well in the workplace and are able to enhance their employer's business, for example through passing on the up-to-date knowledge of industry practice they have been taught.
- A high proportion of unemployed learners progress into employment and a majority of intermediate level apprentices progress into higher level apprenticeships. Staff have many good examples of apprentices progressing in their employment, but they do not collate and analyse this information in order to establish the impact of training and any trends in the employment of their ex-apprentices.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, ensuring that most learners make good progress and successfully achieve their qualifications. Learners are motivated by the enthusiasm of staff and enjoy the challenging activities that they are set. They value their trainers' vocational expertise and apply the knowledge they have acquired from trainers well in the workplace.
- Learners benefit from trainers' high, but realistic, expectations. Trainers mostly set challenging goals for learners in lessons that are designed to develop problem solving, team working and diagnostic skills. For example, in a session on installing heating systems, learners worked well in groups to create and justify alternative boiler and radiator systems that will maximise the control of the heating zones within a client's house and therefore reduce running costs.
- Staff are suitably qualified and have good knowledge and experience of current industry practice. Resources are good and are continually being developed to reflect changes in the industry. For example, two superstructures of bungalows have been built in a workshop with easy access to the roof and loft areas so that learners can study renewable technologies. Learners have access to an appropriate range of electronic learning resources. However, trainers and assessors are not using ILT imaginatively to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Personal support is good and learners are confident to approach staff should they need this support. Good relationships between staff, learners and employers lead to well-coordinated support that removes barriers and provides learners with very good opportunities for rapid progress within their programme. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are welcomed and staff suggest adjustments that will help them to carry out their studies. However, these adjustments are not planned sufficiently to ensure learners' long-term support needs are anticipated.
- Assessors use questioning well to encourage learners to reflect on their learning and to test learners' knowledge and understanding. Verbal feedback is comprehensive and useful. Business administration and customer services apprentices are set stretching targets following assessments that clearly inform them what they need to do in order to improve. In other subjects, written feedback often provides praise but lacks a thorough evaluation of what the learner has achieved and written targets do not sufficiently capture all the areas for improvement that were discussed.
- Assessors visit the workplace frequently to review learners' progress, carry out assessments and discuss learners' development with employers. As a result, employers are able to provide the

opportunities at work that learners need in order to complete their course quickly and learners make rapid progress. Staff encourage learners to manage their programmes independently and use a highly detailed tracking mechanism to ensure learners and employers understand current progress and what needs to be done for learners to complete successfully.

- Learners develop the mathematics skills relevant to their industry well and receive good support from a specialist tutor. This support identifies what they need to do to improve and how this can best be achieved. Learners' development and application of English skills are satisfactory; however, teachers and assessors miss opportunities to correct misspelling and grammar in learners' written work.
- Staff work well with other organisations such as Jobcentre Plus and schools to ensure potential learners are provided with good information, advice and guidance. Staff provide good information, advice and guidance to employers and potential apprentices through the contacts they have with local employers in the Exeter area and the commercial training courses that the company runs.
- Staff promote equality well by teaching learners how respect for, and understanding of, people's individuality are crucial to good customer service. Learners respond well by treating each other, staff and their customers with respect, therefore developing skills that are useful to them in employment. However, not all staff have sufficient understanding of how diversity can be promoted and celebrated within their own particular vocational areas.

Building and Construction

Good

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and lead to the high achievement of apprenticeships. Teaching is lively, energetic and purposeful. Trainers know their learners well and, in most cases, ensure individuals develop rapidly by taking account of differing abilities and needs when planning lessons.
- Teachers have up-to-date knowledge and successfully bring construction concepts and practices alive by using their own site experience and contemporary electrical and plumbing components in lessons. Employers value the quality and rate of training that ensure learners move rapidly onto commercial work. Many learners are working on customers' properties and installations very early in their apprenticeship programme.
- Teachers provide constructive encouragement and learners acquire the confidence and skills to achieve high standards and work independently. In plumbing and heating, learners use manufacturers' data well to determine the serviceability of domestic appliances and produce accurate calculations to determine the ventilation and combustion rates for domestic boilers and fires. However, trainers do not always set harder work for more able learners.
- Assessment is accurate and fair, with assessors providing supportive and encouraging verbal feedback on performance. Assessment decisions are checked for accuracy at the end of the course but, in the gas test centre, they are not routinely checked during the course to ensure assessors are providing learners with high quality, timely feedback.
- Learners' mathematics skills are well developed. Learners are expected to work to high degrees of accuracy and be able to switch between imperial and metric units of measurement. Learners have a sound understanding of the science that underpins the principles of thermodynamics. For example, intermediate learners understand the relationship between pressure, temperature and volumes in liquids and gas within heating systems. Measuring skills are taught well and learners apply these through accurate measurements when on site.
- Initial assessment is used effectively to inform teachers, assessors and employers of individuals' abilities and to plan learning and assessment strategies. Employers who are new to apprenticeships are given a particularly helpful induction into the apprenticeship their employee

will follow, including how they can help learners collect evidence that meets the criteria for assessment.

- Good facilities at centres in Taunton and Exeter contribute to the high standards of training and assessment. Learners have access to industry standard tools and equipment with a strong focus on green technologies, for example ground source heating installations. Learners work on a wide range of domestic and commercial properties which contributes to their rapid rate of progress.
- Health and safety are well managed within the centres and on site. Learners are respectful of other trades and develop well-considered risk assessments and method statements. Assessors check learners' understanding during the review process through staged questioning, but future training needs, although discussed, are seldom recorded. All learners wear appropriate personal protective clothing, and in workshop lessons learners take responsibility for health and safety as a nominated representative where they meet and greet visitors, record their details and ensure visitors are aware of the workshop safety rules.
- Staff make good use of learning materials and methods that help foster good working and social relationships in class and the workplace. Learners have a good understanding of issues facing customers, particularly the elderly and those facing fuel poverty. Behaviour is good, and learners are respectful of each other's opinions as well as customers' needs and expectations.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Managers provide strong leadership of the company, and continue to implement strategies that improve the quality of the learners' experience. They have successfully developed a coherent strategic plan and a strong corporate ethos in which all staff achieve the high standards of training needed to improve quality and maintain financial viability.
- Since the last inspection, managers have implemented strategic initiatives that have successfully improved the provision. They have opened new centres in Yeovil and Taunton that are responding well to the needs of these localities. They have also secured additional funding to support growth. New staff are able to deliver high quality training more readily due to mentoring by experienced colleagues during their probation period.
- Senior staff have a strong focus on the core business of equipping learners with skills in plumbing, electrical installation, carpentry and renewable technologies. They also respond quickly to emerging local needs and national initiatives. For example, they have introduced successful apprenticeships in business, administration and customer services alongside short courses for the unemployed. New apprenticeships are now offered in response to the government's Green Deal initiative, a scheme that helps property owners to install more green technologies.
- Senior staff use their partnerships with a large number of employers well to develop high quality courses that meet the industry's needs. They facilitate excellent links between employers and trainers. Staff at the Exeter centre use their links with local industry extremely well to help learners secure apprenticeships and employment. Employers value the flexibility that PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited allows their apprentices to meet their workplace commitments and deadlines. Where employers raise concerns about learners' progress, or gaps in their learning, managers are swift to implement extra training to meet these needs.
- Managers have improved significantly the effectiveness of the trainer observation scheme. They have implemented strategies, for example an internal quality review, that have focused trainers on exactly what they need to do to improve the quality of their teaching. Trainers receive feedback from observations that is robust and focused upon what learners are doing. This leads to individualised professional development that most staff complete successfully. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved significantly; the vast majority of sessions, assessments and reviews are now good.

- Managers have a good understanding of the quality of the apprenticeships and other courses that they offer. Key strengths and areas for development are identified accurately and appropriate targets for further improvement are in place. Staff are encouraged to contribute fully to the on-going process of evaluating and reflecting upon their work and do so confidently. Learners also contribute very effectively, for example using wall charts on which they write their comments and feedback. However, managers' efforts to capture feedback from employers through surveys have not been effective and other methods for doing this have not been successfully developed.
- Managers and staff do not sufficiently evaluate the progress they are making towards achieving targets. This is primarily because they do not capture enough evidence about the impact of the teaching, learning and assessment. For example, managers have too little information about the progression of learners once they have completed their apprenticeships and they do not record staff targets for improving their teaching and assessment practices.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Managers have appropriate procedures in place. Criminal record clearance is documented for all staff, and managers carry out suitable risk assessments to cover the period between the appointment of a member of staff and receipt of criminal record clearance. The majority of staff have appropriate qualifications in the protection of young people and vulnerable adults, although managers do not respond quickly enough when gaps in training become evident. The very small number of reported incidents of bullying or harassment are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Managers have put in place a policy that adequately ensures all learners have equal access to learning opportunities and resources and they move swiftly to deal effectively with any reports of discrimination. They oversee the health and safety of learners and staff well and ensure that staff carry out and record appropriate, high quality risk assessments of workshops. As a result, learners work in a safe environment.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited

Inspection grades are based on a provider’s performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Building services	2
Construction crafts	2

Provider details

PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: N/A
	Part-time: 294
Principal/CEO	Mr Andrew White
Date of previous inspection	March 2008
Website address	www.pgltraining.com

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)								
Full-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Part-time	-	10	-	28	-	5	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	21	35	14	28	-	-		
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							

Additional socio-economic information

PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited is a small independent training provider that has been trading since 2004. It primarily delivers apprenticeships for the construction industry, with most learners following apprenticeships in plumbing. In recent years, PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited has started delivering programmes for unemployed learners referred from Jobcentre Plus, as well as apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualification programmes in customer service, team leading and business administration. Most learners are in the Exeter area, where unemployment is lower than the Great Britain average, and there is a significant growth programme for the local area. A high proportion of the local population has qualifications at intermediate level or above.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Steven Tucker HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Operations Manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area identified in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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[Piccadilly Gate](#)
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