

Azure Charitable Enterprises

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		25–27 March 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Progression rates into further education and employment were low last year.
- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement.
- Planning for individualised learning does not sufficiently stretch and challenge all learners to achieve their maximum potential.
- Target-setting across the programme is insufficiently personalised.
- Azure pays insufficient attention to the further development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Leadership and management require improvement.
- Senior managers and trustees do not sufficiently challenge programme leaders regarding performance against the key programme objectives.
- The systems used to quality assure the programme is not sufficiently rigorous.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Learners achieve good outcomes. A significant number achieve their core objectives including a qualification in horticulture and employability and personal development.
- The good support from training staff creates a very effective learning environment for the learners.
- Trainers are successful at developing the learners' practical skills in horticulture and their personal and social skills to prepare them for work.
- The good identification and selection of high quality projects is very effective in supporting learning objectives.
- The good financial support from the charity to enable the programme to continue.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the planning for learning in some sessions to ensure that individual learners' needs are identified so that learners are stretched and challenged.
- Ensure that target-setting at the start of the programme and at subsequent reviews appropriately addresses individual learner's needs improving progression rates into further education, higher-level programmes or employment.
- Ensure that all staff focus on promoting literacy and numeracy throughout all aspects of the provision.
- Improve the oversight and challenge by senior managers and trustees of the funded programmes through more detailed reports by the senior manager.
- Formalise quality assurance procedures so that all staff constantly strive to improve the quality of the learner experience.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on the horticulture and the employability and personal development programmes at foundation level are high. Both learners who studied the employability and personal development programme at entry level succeeded.
- Because of the very small learner numbers, there are no discernible gaps in achievement between genders. All learners have a recognised learning difficulty.
- The positive learning environment and support from all training staff and assistants is very effective in promoting learners' development of their personal, social and employability skills. The detailed verbal feedback gives learners instant and positive reinforcement of their performance.
- All learners complete an initial assessment of their basic skills even though all of the current learners have attained introductory level qualifications at other providers. Assessment indicates that they perform at a lower level than their qualifications indicate.
- Azure also makes good use of high quality projects to develop both personal and social skills of learners, as well as their employability skills. The training staff create a positive learning environment with a good rapport between all concerned. The learners enjoy their work and work well together.
- Azure focuses very well on developing skills such as good time-keeping, personal hygiene, group and team working and taking responsibility for self and others. The skills acquired on the accredited programmes, especially horticulture, prepare learners well for work in this sector.
- Last year, the achievement rate was good but the progression rate into further education or employment was low. So far in this year, 2012/13, three learners have left the programme, all of whom completed their key objectives, and two have progressed into full time employment.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Foundation Learning

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement. Good achievement of core objectives, development of personal skills and good support for learners' welfare contribute to judging outcomes as good. However, too much teaching is not sufficiently individualised or planned to ensure learners maximise their progress whilst on programme, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Most learners' work is of a satisfactory standard and a few learners produce work above the level expected for the stage and level of programme. However, staff miss many opportunities to stretch and challenge some of the more-able learners throughout their journey.
- Trainers build a good rapport with learners and all learners benefit from the high levels of care and support from teaching staff. Effective additional support from vocationally experienced teaching assistants helps to create a positive learning environment where all learners enjoy their learning and make significant progress in developing their confidence, communication and team-working skills.
- The choice of offsite project work is particularly good and meets learners' needs and interests well. These projects engage and motivate learners through interesting and relevant activities that effectively develop the practical skills needed to succeed in the key objectives of horticulture and employability. The informal interaction with staff at these projects and a common interest by the learners in the local stories surrounding the history of the project site encourages the development of their communication skills significantly.
- However, throughout these projects, staff miss opportunities to maximise learners' progress in English and mathematics and there is little evidence of a consistent approach to developing these skills at any stage of the programmes.
- The better lessons, especially in horticulture, are well structured, supported by good resources and involve a range of activities that motivate learners to contribute effectively. Although learners make good progress with tasks, gaining knowledge and developing skills, planning for some lessons lacks sufficient detail to effectively stretch and challenge learners to meet their individual learning goals.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory and takes place routinely for all learners to determine their literacy, numeracy, support requirements and initial starting points. However, target-setting to address these is weak and many targets are too generic. Trainers carry out regular reviews with learners but these are often too broad and insufficiently personalised. The targets set do not always make it clear what steps they need to achieve next.
- Training staff and learning assistants routinely give effective and encouraging verbal feedback to learners and this supports the development of learners' personal skills well. However, written feedback is brief and does not clearly identify what the learners need to do to improve further. Staff do not always identify incorrect spelling or grammatical errors, so these are not followed up with remedial actions.
- There is insufficient attention paid to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The lack of detailed planning for some sessions means trainers miss some opportunities to include these in the lesson. Review documents do not capture well enough learners' progress in either skill.
- All learners receive appropriate initial advice and guidance at the start of the course. A programme of taster days allows the learners to try out courses prior to joining the organisation. Induction during the first week is detailed and effective in introducing key aspects of the programme to the learners. Trainers work individually with learners on preparing them for their chosen destination.
- The offsite projects foster good relationships and positively promote equality and diversity. However, lesson plans do not identify opportunities for equality and diversity issues to be included in taught lessons or other activities to enhance or broaden learner knowledge and understanding.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Azure's charitable mission supports their on-going engagement with and support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Azure charity underwrites the current Foundation Learning programme substantially. With the limited staff resources, they still expect learners to achieve their key objectives and be successful in achieving the main qualifications offered.
- Although the senior manager presents regular reports to both the senior management team and the board of trustees regarding all of the funded learning programmes, these are sometimes too brief and do not sufficiently provide clear evaluations of strengths, threats and areas needing improvement. Trustees and other senior managers do not sufficiently challenge these reports.
- Formal quality improvement activities are not rigorous enough. Staff are well qualified with a range of qualifications and they have attended a number of professional-development activities. Regular discussions take place informally between the small team of staff who deliver the programme at regular team meetings; however, these do not result in clear action plans. The programme leader functions as the quality assurer for other staff. In the past trainers have received observation reports to provide feedback on their performance; however, these do not take place as frequently as before.
- Azure does not undertake a formal self-assessment of the Foundation Learning programme but team meetings do review the performance of the programme. Managers and staff maintain sufficient focus on learner achievement. However, they have not fully implemented all of the policies and procedures identified at the last inspection.
- Azure has now developed a system to gather the 'learner voice' as identified at its last inspection, and they now engage more effectively with learners to gather their views and opinions. They use and respond to these well to modify programme content.
- Azure has successfully managed the transition from the former Entry to employment (E2e) programme to the current Foundation Learning programme in direct response to the identification of need from the local authority. The programme effectively offers an opportunity for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to access accredited programmes in horticulture and develop the personal, social and employability skills.
- Azure's systems to promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination are effective. A detailed induction programme introduces concepts of equality and diversity well and very effectively covers bullying and discrimination. Staff monitor learner behaviour well and address instances of potential bullying in a timely and effective manner. Learner numbers are too small to identify a meaningful achievement gap.
- Azure's systems for staff recruitment and the further protection of learners are detailed and extensive and fully meet statutory requirements. Staff handle any instances of disclosure very effectively and make very good use of the full range of external support agencies.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Azure Charitable Enterprises		
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Foundation Learning
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3
Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Grade
Foundation learning		3

Azure Charitable Enterprises

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 13
	Part-time: N/A
Principal/CEO	Peter Elliott
Date of previous inspection	February 2009
Website address	www.azure-charitable.co.uk

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<div> <div></div> <div>N/A</div> </div>							

Additional socio-economic information

Azure Charitable Enterprises is located in Cramlington, just north of Newcastle in the North East of England. Azure target this provision at learners who have moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage of pupils in the local area gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and mathematics is 6% below the national average.

Unemployment is comparable with the rate for the northeast, which is more than 2% above the national average. The proportion of the local population who have no qualifications is 23.6%, which is 1.4% more than nationally. The proportion of the local population who hold qualifications at advanced level or above is 44%, which is 4.3% above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Tim Gardner HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the senior manager for employment services and landscapes as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's 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 to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions and a wide range of documentary evidence. The inspection took into account all of the EFA funded 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 listed 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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