

# Aspiration Training Limited

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>22–26 July 2013</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
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:

- Too few apprentices achieve their qualifications.
- There are significant gaps in achievement between different groups of learners on the apprenticeship programme, with a very low success rate among male learners.
- Not enough teaching and learning on the apprenticeship programme is good or outstanding. Planning of teaching and learning does not ensure that all learners reach their full potential and assessors do not make sufficient use of technology to support learning or to develop independent learning skills.
- Assessment on the apprenticeship programme, including observations of workplace skills, is insufficiently evaluative to identify improvements that learners need to make in their practice.
- Feedback on apprentices' written work, including the correction of errors, does not provide enough detail to help learners to improve the quality of their writing.
- Self-assessment does not accurately identify all weaknesses and, as a result, is not effective in enabling the provider to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through observation of training activities is insufficiently rigorous.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- Many learners gain employment following completion of the preparation for work course.
- Teaching, learning and assessment on the preparation for work programme are good.
- Initial advice and guidance are thorough and detailed; consequently, learners are enrolled on the most appropriate level of programme.
- Leaders and managers have high aspirations for learners and have introduced a range of initiatives to improve the provision. These have begun to have a positive impact on outcomes for learners.
- Managers work successfully with employers to provide an apprenticeship programme that is responsive to the needs of both learners and businesses.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of learners successfully completing the apprenticeship framework within the planned timescale by setting realistic but challenging targets for each learner and ensuring that assessors carefully monitor progress and keep learners on track.
- Close the achievement gaps between different groups of learners on the apprenticeship programme by identifying and implementing actions for improvement based on a detailed and accurate analysis of the reasons for leaving among those who do not complete their programme.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment on the apprenticeship programme by:
  - planning more effectively to meet the individual needs of all learners to ensure that they make good progress relative to their starting points
  - developing learners' independent learning skills more effectively
  - making better use of information and learning technology including the virtual learning environment
  - ensuring that assessment, including observations of workplace skills, is accurate and successfully identifies improvements that learners need to make in their practice
  - ensuring that the quality of written feedback on learners' assessed work, including the correction of grammatical and spelling errors, is of a consistently high standard.
- Develop a more analytical and critical self-assessment process that:
  - accurately identifies areas for improvement based on a systematic collection and analysis of evidence of the quality of all aspects of the provider's work and, in particular, the standard of teaching, learning and assessment
  - leads to the identification of effective actions and measures to improve all areas swiftly
  - enables managers to monitor the impact of planned improvements.
- Increase the effectiveness of the observation of teaching, learning and assessment by focusing on the impact of teaching on learners' progress rather than the activities of staff.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Requires improvement
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- Too few apprentices achieve their qualifications. The proportion of learners that successfully completed in 2011/12 declined from the previous year to significantly below the average for similar providers.
- The provider's own data indicates that the overall success rate on the apprenticeship programme in the current year has improved significantly. However, it is still below the national average for learners aged 25 and above who form the largest cohort. On the intermediate programme, the success rate is now high, but it remains too low on the advanced programme. The proportion of the learners who achieved their qualifications within the planned duration of their programmes was low in 2011/12 but has improved significantly during the current year.
- The great majority of learners on short preparation for work courses achieve their qualifications. The success rate in 2011/12 and so far in the current year is similar to the rate among similar providers.

- There are significant gaps in the rate of achievement among different groups of learners. Male learners perform much less well than females. Just over half of the male learners in 2011/12 successfully completed their apprenticeship framework compared with a much higher success rate among female learners. The provider has not identified the cause of this gap in achievement or taken specific action to address it, and male learners continue to perform much less well than female learners in the current year. The achievement rate for learners aged 25 and above is significantly lower than for those aged 24 and under.
- Learners on the apprenticeship programme make adequate progress in developing the skills and knowledge that they need to work successfully in the health, social care, and childcare sectors. However, they do not consistently extend their learning or develop their professional skills beyond the requirements of the qualification.
- Learners successfully develop broader personal and social skills that enable them to gain work and make progress in their careers. Learners on the apprenticeship programme successfully develop the personal skills that they need in their current employment and in their future careers including their confidence to communicate effectively in the workplace. On the preparation for work programme, learners increase their confidence and improve the skills they need to gain sustained employment. A significant minority gain additional short qualifications such as manual handling, food hygiene, and health and safety.
- On the apprenticeship programme, learners develop their English and mathematics skills successfully in the early stages of their training through a functional skills element of the programme. However, learners have insufficient opportunity to apply and further develop these skills during the rest of their programme.
- Many learners on the apprenticeship programme progress successfully on to the next level. For example, almost half of the learners recruited in 2012/13 on the advanced-level childcare programme progressed from the intermediate level, and a significant proportion of the learners on the higher-level health and social care programme progressed from the advanced programme. Progression into sustained employment is good among learners on the preparation for work programme. On completing the course, a significant proportion of learners gain employment in a wide range of sectors including health and social care, retail, and catering and hospitality.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Requires improvement
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement as reflected in the provider's success rates and the variable quality of learners' experiences.
- Apprentices value highly the flexible and responsive support that their assessors provide in guiding them towards the achievement of their qualification. Effective personal support successfully enhances the motivation of learners to achieve, particularly those who are making slow progress.
- Staff have a broad and relevant range of vocational experience and use this well to illustrate key learning points during workplace coaching sessions. For example, during a childcare session the assessor used her own experience of implementing policies to safeguard children when giving personal care, which successfully enhanced learners' understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- The planning of coaching and review sessions on the apprenticeship programme does not focus sufficiently on how learners can successfully extend their skills and knowledge and reach their full potential. Assessors do not always ensure that learners gain a thorough understanding of relevant ideas and theories related to their professional practice and, as a result, the progress of a significant minority of learners is too slow.

- In the better workplace coaching sessions on the apprenticeship programme, assessors successfully use questions to consolidate and extend learning. For example, in a residential care setting, the assessor skilfully encouraged learners to describe their responsibility in maintaining hygiene. In the less effective sessions, assessors direct learners too much and provide insufficient opportunity for learners to interact or to become more independent in their learning.
- Assessors make insufficient use of information and learning technology to enhance learning. They make little use of on-line resources in their teaching and rarely encourage or support learners to use the internet to research relevant topics. Managers have recently developed a virtual learning environment but most learners do not yet use it.
- On the preparation for work programme, teachers successfully develop learners’ ability to gain sustainable employment by enhancing their skills in searching and applying for a job and providing opportunities for valuable work experience. As a result, many learners gain sustainable employment.
- Initial advice and guidance are thorough and detailed, and result in learners following the most appropriate level of programme. Initial assessment accurately identifies the English and mathematics skills that learners need to develop further and any additional help that learners need during their training. Learners on the preparation for work programme benefit from sensitive and effective additional support from teaching assistants during their lessons.
- Assessors do not consistently use information from initial assessment and about previous learning when setting targets for individual learners. Too often, targets do not clearly indicate what the learner needs to do improve specific skills and experience. The assessment of workplace skills through observations is not sufficiently evaluative to enable learners to improve their professional practice. Assessment on the preparation for work programme is regular and thorough and, as a result, learners are very clear about their progress and what they need to do to improve their skills further.
- The quality of feedback to learners on the apprenticeship programme requires improvement. Written feedback does not provide sufficient detail to guide learners to improve their work or fully recognise the relationship between the content of their written assignments and professional practice. The checking of learners’ written work is not always sufficiently thorough and too many assessors do not correct spelling and grammatical errors. Most verbal feedback clearly identifies areas for improvement and motivates learners well.
- Specialist tutors support apprentices very well to enable them to improve their English and mathematics skills at the beginning of their programme. This improves learners’ self-confidence and their motivation to succeed. However, assessors do not encourage further development of English and mathematics during the rest of the programme or highlight their significance for professional practice.
- Learners’ understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding meets the required standard for completion of the apprenticeship framework. However, assessors do not take advantage of naturally occurring opportunities during coaching and assessment sessions to extend or reinforce learners’ understanding of equality and diversity in the context of caring professions. Assessors ensure that all learners have a good understanding of safe working practices.

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	Requires improvement
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- Leaders and managers have high expectations of learners to achieve their qualifications. They have recently introduced a wide range of initiatives to improve the provision including a revised model for the delivery of functional skills and a new process to increase employers’ contribution to learners’ progress reviews. They have expanded the range of provision since the previous inspection through the introduction of a successful preparation for work programme located in a well-equipped training venue in the centre of Birmingham.

- Managers review and develop the performance of teaching staff effectively. They use data well to monitor individual learners' progress and to manage the performance of assessors, which has led to an improvement in success rates in the current year. Regular appraisals help staff to identify areas for further professional development arising from the analysis of their learners' progress, learner feedback and the outcomes from internal observations of teaching and learning.
- The self-assessment process is insufficiently evaluative and comprehensive. The current self-assessment report does not accurately identify all the issues that affect learning and is not used effectively to agree clear and measurable improvement targets. Strategic planning makes insufficient use of data to enable managers to measure accurately the impact of planned improvements on learners' success. Senior managers have not been successful in improving all areas for development identified in previous inspections, particularly target setting for learners, the involvement of employers in training, and the promotion of equality and diversity in teaching and coaching.
- The process for the observation of teaching and learning requires further development to be fully effective. Staff are observed regularly delivering training and undertaking assessments. However, the evaluation of observed sessions focuses too much on the activities of the assessor rather than the quality of the learning taking place. Assessors' post observation actions plans are insufficiently detailed and have not yet resulted in consistently good standards of teaching and learning.
- Managers use feedback from staff, employers and learners well to make improvements to provision. Arrangements for collecting and using feedback on the quality and impact of training programmes have improved since the previous inspection through the successful introduction of a learner forum, surveys and regular programme reviews.
- Arrangements to identify and share best practice are ineffective. The quality of key aspects of the provision, such as written feedback on learners' work and planning to meet the individual needs of learners, varies significantly. Managers have not identified actions to enable assessors to improve the provision through the sharing of best practice. Meetings of assessors are not used effectively to identify and share good practice.
- The provider has strong relationships with employers which results in flexible arrangements for training and assessment that suit the needs of the learners and businesses. The creation of an employer engagement team has significantly improved the range of work taster opportunities for learners on employability related programmes.
- The preparation for work programme is planned well to meet the needs and interests of learners and employers. The provider works well with managers from Jobcentre Plus and with local employers to ensure that learners have access to relevant job opportunities and a range of useful vocational qualifications that improve their employability. The planning and coordination of apprenticeship programmes, which make up the majority of the provision, are satisfactory.
- Learners have an adequate awareness of relevant equality and diversity issues and demonstrate respect for each other and their vulnerable service users. Company policies, procedures and learning materials provide useful guidance to staff and learners on how to promote equality and diversity. Managers have not identified actions to close the achievement gaps between groups of learners.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. The safeguarding policy is updated regularly in order to reflect any changes in legislation. Staff receive relevant training on safeguarding matters. Incidents and concerns are taken seriously, investigated and resolved appropriately.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Aspiration Training Limited

<p><b>Inspection grades are based on a provider’s performance:</b></p> <p>1: Outstanding                  2: Good                  3: Requires improvement                  4: Inadequate</p>	<b>Overall</b>	Apprenticeships	Employability
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	3	3	2
Outcomes for learners	3	3	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Health and social care</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Early years and playwork</b>	<b>3</b>

## Provider details

<b>Aspiration Training Limited</b>	
<b>Type of provider</b>	Independent learning provider
<b>Age range of learners</b>	16+
<b>Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year</b>	Full-time: 1,649
	Part-time: 0
<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Kelly Windsor
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	July 2010
<b>Website address</b>	<a href="http://www.aspirationtraining.com/">http://www.aspirationtraining.com/</a>

<b>Provider information at the time of the inspection</b>								
<b>Main course or learning programme level</b>	<b>Level 1 or below</b>		<b>Level 2</b>		<b>Level 3</b>		<b>Level 4 and above</b>	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)</b>								
<b>Full-time</b>	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0
<b>Part-time</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>		<b>Advanced</b>		<b>Higher</b>			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	56	186	27	327	0	26		
<b>Number of learners aged 14-16</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of community learners</b>	N/A							
<b>Number of employability learners</b>	137							
<b>Funding received from</b>	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
<b>At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ N/A</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

Aspiration Training Limited operates in England under the name Aspiration Training (England) Limited and provides apprenticeship programmes in health and social care and in early years and playwork. The great majority of the apprenticeship provision is in the West Midlands, with a small amount in the South West. The provider also offers a preparation for work programme at a training venue in the centre of Birmingham. The company's head office is in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. The large majority of learners recruited in 2012/13 are adults, approximately 76% are female, and 32% are from a minority ethnic background.

## Information about this inspection

<b>Lead inspector</b>	Steve Hailstone HMI
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Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Managing Director 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 areas 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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