

igen Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		10–14 March 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
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:

- Learners overcome their significant barriers to successful participation in education, training and employment. They develop good personal, social and employability skills. The vast majority have very low starting points in the use of English and mathematics and progress well to develop these skills.
- Good teaching, training and assessment ensure that the large majority of learners who are on the study programme progress well from their starting points in developing vocational skills. They enjoy their programmes and improve their attendance and punctuality.
- igen tutors and the tutors in subcontractors support learners very well. They plan sessions carefully to include a good range of practical and interactive activities that involve learners fully and help them to apply what they learn to new situations, for example enterprise projects.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of learners. They have planned and developed the study programme well to increase learners' chances of success, for example, by planning courses so learners can join any time of the year.
- Effective subcontracting arrangements provide learners with a good range of opportunities to learn about different vocational areas. Managers and tutors have integrated work placement and industrial experience well into the structure of the study programme.
- igen sets high expectations for learners to respect each other and others which have contributed to them behaving well.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not outstanding.
- In 2012/13, the progress of foundation learners to further education, training and employment was not high enough. Their success rates in English and mathematics qualifications required improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for learners by improving further the attendance rates and the proportion of learners who successfully complete their functional skills qualifications.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring:
 - tutors use information gathered during initial assessment well so that learning provides each learner, including more able learners with sufficient challenge
 - learners receive sufficiently detailed feedback so that they know how to produce better quality work
 - all tutors use a good range of activities to engage all learners
 - tutors make better use of technology to provide learners with additional activities to extend and reinforce their learning.
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness and quality of all aspects of the study programme, including the quality and the availability of work placements for learners in subcontractors.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- igen's learners are aged 16 to 18 and have significant multiple barriers to education and training. The vast majority face substantial challenges including living independently as lone or young parents, severe hardship, exclusion from schools or as school non-attenders. These learners who are on the study programme progress on their course well from their low starting points. Six months into the programme, their progression to further courses is high. Progression rates in most subcontractors are also high, but in others require improvement.
- Since the start of the study programme, learners' attendance and punctuality have improved significantly. igen staff and subcontractors fully recognise the importance of learners' regular attendance and good punctuality and work hard to increase further these critical aspects of learners' employability skills. Learners' behaviour is good.
- In 2012/13, the proportion of learners on foundation learning, a programme which igen does not offer any longer, who progressed to positive destinations, including progression to apprenticeships and/or employment improved but required further improvement. Achievement rates of learners on classroom-based courses were high, but retention rates were low.
- The majority of learners have very low-level skills in English and mathematics when they start their programme. This year, due to tutors' good focus on developing learners' English and mathematic skills, most current learners develop these skills well. In 2012/13, despite improvements, foundation learning learners' achievements of qualifications in functional skills required improvement.
- Learners reflecting the high expectations of their tutors develop a good range of practical skills in vocational areas such as hairdressing, motor vehicle maintenance and childcare. Most learners take justifiable pride in their enhanced employability skills. For example, a group of learners as part of an enterprise project repainted and decorated reclaimed wooden items and sold them in craft fairs, developing skills in market research, design, advertising and finance. Some learners report that the study programme has given their lives a structure.
- Learners benefit from good work placement opportunities and the work that they do to prepare for work placement. So far in the year, learners who have gained experience with employers or in work-experience placements have developed particularly good employability skills, which have improved their chances of securing employment.

- In 2012/13, most learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability on classroom-based courses achieved as well as other learners. Good use of data has contributed to performance gaps between different groups of learners narrowing.
- Learners demonstrate safe working practices and have a good understanding of health and safety. They understand their rights and responsibilities well. Learners respect each other and others and work together well. This mutual respect contributes to a reduction in learners' offending behaviour.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in the subcontractors, is good and contributes to learners' good progress, skill development and behaviour. Most learners benefit from tutors' very effective planning of teaching activities which contain a good variety of interesting learning tasks that challenge learners to extend their skills and knowledge.
- In the better sessions, including in the subcontractors, skilful questioning techniques help tutors to have a clear idea of the level of learners' understanding, enabling them to use more probing questions that make learners think and develop problem-solving techniques. Most learners have a good awareness of their progress. Tutors encourage learners effectively to reflect on their learning and to identify how they can improve.
- In the less effective sessions, tutors do not provide sufficient stimulus for learners to be fully engaged, the pace of learning is slow and learners sit passively for too long, becoming bored. Tutors do not have high expectation for all learners and rely too heavily on handout completion that does not challenge all learners. Too often learning objectives lack clarity and learners' progress cannot be measured or monitored effectively. Tutors' questioning techniques are weak; they do not give sufficient time for learners to consider questions and solve problems.
- Carefully selected work-experience opportunities meet learners' needs well. Employers offer taster sessions, work experience and workplace visits that very effectively ensure learners understand how to progress into their chosen occupational areas. Learners speak enthusiastically about mock interview sessions, presentations and competitions to which employers contribute. A two-phase approach to placing learners in work placements ensures that less confident learners are introduced gradually to placements, which extend in scope and length as they progress. The range of work placements in all subcontractors is not equally well developed.
- Learners benefit from highly effective care and support. Tutors understand the barriers to learning that many learners face. They motivate, and in some instances inspire, learners to achieve and to respond well to challenges. Staff and learners have mutual respect where praise and encouragement develop learners' confidence very effectively. Support is well directed, ensuring that many learners work independently for the first time. Progress reviews vary in quality; some focus exclusively on employment-related goals and do not consider learning adequately. Learning targets in some reviews lack detail.
- Most learners benefit from good learning resources. The majority of classrooms provide good industry-relevant settings and suitable learning environments. In the best sessions, tutors use technology imaginatively to develop resources and to engage learners, for example, by using video games as a basis for data analysis and spreadsheet development. However, not all tutors use information learning technology adequately to add interest or to promote research and independent learning.
- Well-qualified tutors use their vocational expertise effectively to increase learners' understanding of chosen vocational pathways. Practical techniques demonstrated in the study programme sessions contribute to good development of learners' skills and good standard of work.
- Initial assessment is thorough and generates useful information, which most tutors use well to plan learners' individual programmes in line with the study programme requirements. All learners have access to a wide range of vocational training opportunities available across the

subcontractors. In the more effective sessions, tutors use the results of initial assessment well to ensure that learning meets individual needs, providing appropriate challenge and support. Where this information is not used well, training materials and activities fail to meet learners' differing ability levels, resulting in slow progress.

- The development of learners' English and mathematics skills is good. Tutors maximise opportunities to encourage learners to use and develop these skills. Learning is most effective in the sessions that tutors ensure learners understand how to apply these skills to real life situations or within their vocational subjects. Assessment of learners' work in mathematics is rigorous and tutors provide clear feedback about how they can improve. However, the quality of feedback about their written work is variable. Tutors overlook too many spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Learners receive very good, impartial information, advice and guidance about opportunities available through the study programme. Good information about training and employment opportunities provided in conjunction with local employers, colleges and training providers motivates them.
- Tutors promote equality and diversity principles well, encouraging learners to use their understanding to analyse issues and to challenge established stereotypes. In some vocational sessions, tutors miss the opportunity to apply this understanding in context. There is a good culture of cooperation where learners recognise the contributions and views of their peers and the work of their tutors.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have prioritised well the development of the study programme, made significant investment in the accommodation and staffing and communicated a clear vision of high expectations for learners. Effective planning and partnership working provide good opportunities for many learners to restart their education and training. Leaders and managers have learnt well the lessons of the less successful foundation learning programme and implemented good strategies to improve learners' outcomes. For example, since the start of the study programme learners' attendance rates have continually improved.
- Operational management is good and management of subcontractors is effective. igen supports subcontractors well and takes effective actions when the performance of learners who study in subcontractors declines. igen is aware that the attendance and punctuality rates in all subcontractors is not equally high and in a few require improvement.
- Governance is effective. The board of directors has a wide range of very relevant experience of strategic, operational, educational, and financial leadership and management and uses it well to support and challenge leaders. Directors take good interest in the development of the provision and have a good knowledge of the challenges that the organisation faces. The board receives information about the performance of learners on a monthly basis; however, the information about the accumulative performance of learners is not sufficiently prominent in the briefing papers.
- Managers have deployed effective strategies to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The teaching and learning observation process is rigorous. Managers use the outcomes of teaching and learning observations well to plan staff development to improve the quality of teaching and learning. For example, in the last year staff development has improved the delivery of functional skills in both igen and subcontractors. The management of staff performance is good.
- igen has taken effective action to rectify the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Management and use of data is particularly good; data are collected and analysed well and used to evaluate the impact of policies and practices, for example, good monitoring of the proportion of learners who progress to other courses or employment has resulted in the development of an employer engagement strategy.

- The self-assessment process is inclusive and well informed and the self-assessment report is broadly accurate. The quality improvement plan is comprehensive. igen gathers learners' feedback at regular intervals, and uses the views to improve provision.
- igen meets well the needs and interests of learners who are at the high risk of social and economic exclusion. The study programme is designed well, for example, learners can join the programme at any time of the year. igen's strategy to provide vocational training through subcontractors is successful and learners choose a wide range of vocational subject areas as part of their study.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well, tackle bullying and discrimination, and narrow the achievement gap. Tutors, including tutors in subcontractors, promote a strong expectation of respect which has contributed well to learners' good behaviour in sessions and a positive learning environment. Learners broaden their understanding of equality and diversity well through a range of activities, for example, by taking part in the BBC's 'sport relief'. igen's staff training in relation to issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people is good.
- The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Appropriate health and safety arrangements are in place to protect staff and learners during training and while on placement.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**Provider name**

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	2

Type of provider	Independent learning provider								
Age range of learners	16-18								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 82								
	Part-time: 1113								
Principal/CEO	Mr Steve Higginbotham								
Date of previous inspection	March 2012								
Website address	www.igengroup.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		
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	
Full-time	304	N/A	80	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Part-time	350	N/A	44	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Number of traineeships	16-19			19+			Total		
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher				
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+			
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16									
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Construction Skills Academy Limited Cardigan Centre Dimensions Training Solutions Limited Full Circle Learning Limited Inspiring YOU(th) Limited Meanwood Valley Urban Farm Nacro Quality Personal Development Training Limited The Leeds Groundwork Trust YMCA Training 								

Contextual information

igen is a 'not for profit' organisation and delivers a number of publically funded contracts. Its mission is 'To inspire, guide and enable individuals to achieve their potential'. A board of directors sets the strategy of the company and oversees its operation. A Chief Executive is responsible for all aspects of the company and is supported by an Operations Director who is responsible for the inspected provision and a Finance Director. igen operates from its head office in Leeds, and offers provision in Leeds, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Hull and Blyth. A network of 10 partners extends igen's offer both vocationally and geographically. In all areas with the exception of Dewsbury, the number of 16-year-olds achieving five GCSEs at Grade A* to C including English and mathematics is below the national average of 59.2%. In Leeds it is only 50%.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Shahram Safavi HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Quality and Performance 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 relevant 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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