

Azure Charitable Enterprises

Not for profit organisation

Inspection dates		10–12 June 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-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:

- The success rates and achievements of the vast majority of learners are consistently good.
- Learners develop good personal, social, employability and vocational skills that help them prepare for employment and further learning.
- Tutors and learning assistants have high expectations of learners and offer them good care and support which enables them to remain engaged in their learning and make good progress.
- Tutors help learners choose from the wide range of programme units and ensure the programme meets their needs and interests and extends their skills.
- Learners receive good advice and guidance that prepares them well for leaving the programme. Progression rates into further education or employment were high in 2012/13.
- Azure's strong networks provide many opportunities for learners to extend their skills through work experience and socially useful projects which are valued by the local community.
- Strong trustee support and good management actions have enabled Azure to tackle weaknesses identified at the previous inspection by using well-monitored and targeted action plans, and improved quality assurance systems.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not enough teaching, learning and assessment are yet outstanding.
- Tutors do not promote sufficiently the full range of functional skills and particularly the development of learners' skills in speaking, listening and writing.
- Not all reviews successfully consolidate learning or sufficiently encourage learners' independence.
- Some aspects of the new quality assurance systems are not yet sufficiently established and practice is variable. Examples include: feedback to learners on written work; the quality of record keeping; setting targets for learners and the recording of reviews.
- The arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are not yet fully developed and consistently applied.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Give higher priority to the promotion of learners' functional skills and in particular, extend the range of opportunities for learners to improve further their speaking, listening and writing skills.
- Strengthen the quality of reviews and consolidate learning to enable learners to become more independent.
- Review arrangements for improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and extend the skills of observers through further training to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. Ensure written observation records are evaluative so that good practice and areas requiring improvement are fully recorded and used to develop practice.
- Improve the recording of, and the consistency of practice in implementing, all aspects of quality systems.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Overall, the outcomes for learners are good. The large majority of learners make good progress towards the achievement of their learning goals. Over 80% of current learners are on target to achieve their certificates in horticulture and employability, personal and social development. Learners enjoy their learning, develop positive attitudes to their studies and produce good practical work. In both 2011/12 and 2012/13 retention rates were high and the overall success rates for learners were above the national average.
- Historically, male learners have achieved more highly than female learners and this is mainly because male learners tended to enrol with higher levels of prior attainment. The majority of learners are male and currently there are only two females within the cohort of ten learners. Achievement rates were higher at entry level compared with level 1 in 2012/13. Numbers are too small for the analysis of trends between particular groups to be statistically valid. All Azure learners have a recognised learning difficulty and/or disability.
- Learners develop and value the good personal, social and employability skills they acquire on their programmes and these are used effectively during their work placements. They become more confident in carrying out their roles and develop good collaborative working skills, including in teamwork. They are punctual and generally attend well. Learners' success is celebrated publicly and parents and carers appreciate opportunities to witness their success.
- Learners benefit considerably from good opportunities to practise personal responsibility and problem-solving skills through imaginative and socially useful projects that are valuable to the local community. For example, learners improved their numeracy skills while measuring the time and distance needed to walk the footpaths that they had helped to construct on the Northumberlandia estate. This helpful information was subsequently used to advise walkers and included in an information leaflet for visitors. Other horticultural learners prepared colourful planters to decorate a fashion show catwalk in a National Trust property. These opportunities enable the work of learners to be appreciated by a wider public.
- All learners improve their functional skills well particularly in reading and numeracy but these skills are less well developed in speaking, listening and writing where they require further improvement. Learners' language skills are not sufficiently developed and tutors do not always routinely correct spelling and grammatical mistakes in their written work. Some learners display good communication skills when they feel confident and are in familiar settings.

- The proportion of learners obtaining full-time paid employment is low but in 2012/13, the vast majority moved on to positive destinations. Of the 11 learners who completed in this year, eight progressed to Workskills programmes, employment, further education or voluntary work. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Learners benefit from good careers advice and are well aware of the range of progression options available. Some learners with more complex needs develop good skills in independent living and travel.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good which is reflected in the high number of learners who make good progress and achieve their main aims. Learners enjoy their learning, considerably improve their practical, employability and personal skills and are more confident about their future prospects.
- Tutors have high expectations of learners and set challenging activities which motivate them. Learners benefit from very good care and support from tutors. Learners feel comfortable to learn and have a positive and enthusiastic attitude to their learning. The additional support from the learning assistants is very effective in helping learners make good progress.
- The good teaching and learning sessions are well-prepared and successfully engage learners, promote and sustain their interest and motivation. Learners apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills confidently in their practical work in horticulture and as they contribute to lively discussions during lessons. Tutors use a broad range of techniques to assess and develop learning, such as skilful questioning, observation, practical activities and group discussions. The standard of work in portfolios is satisfactory and often good.
- Where learning and skills' development is less successful, planning is not always thorough and tutors do not spend enough time on reviewing and consolidating learning. A few learners are too dependent on tutors and support workers who do not give them enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Resources for practical work are good and are used well to develop learners' skills. However, tutors do not use technology sufficiently to enliven their teaching and make learning more stimulating. Well-planned off-site project work and work-experience opportunities engage learners well in interesting and relevant activities. Through these they improve their practical work skills, as well as their personal skills, in areas such as communication and teamwork.
- Initial assessment is thorough. Detailed information is gathered on learners' starting points, prior attainment and any barriers to successful learning. Tutors use learners' current levels of experience, learning and aspirations to plan the learning programme and ensure that appropriate support is rapidly put in place.
- Individual learning plans are used effectively to record information and to monitor learners' progress. Learners understand their vocational and personal targets. However, some of these targets relating to the small steps that learners need to take to improve are not sufficiently clear or precise. Learners value highly their regular progress reviews and are motivated by them. They know what they have achieved and what they need to do next. Progress in vocational and personal development is often recorded well but the practice is inconsistent. Learners are proud to highlight their achievements on the timeline that is displayed on their classroom wall.
- Learners benefit from good and detailed constructive oral feedback. They know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their practical skills further. Feedback on their written work is less effective and does not contain enough information for learners to refer back to at a later date when revisiting learning.
- English and mathematical skills are developed both in discrete sessions and in a vocational context through the careful selection of employability and personal development units. For example, learners prepare budgets in preparation for their residential stays; they weigh and measure ingredients when cooking and conduct research on the internet. However, tutors do

not give enough attention to promoting the full range of functional skills and particularly the development of learners' skills in speaking, listening and writing. For example, written work is not always routinely corrected for errors in grammar and spelling.

- The quality of information and advice provided before, during and on leaving the programme is good and very effectively helps learners to make progress and explore the options available to them. External speakers attend the centre to provide specialist advice, and learners are encouraged to develop their social skills by participating in a range of outside activities and fund-raising events. Staff promote a strong sense of acceptance of their peers' many and varied needs and barriers to learning. Learners are very supportive of their peers and work well in their groups, for example they offer good encouragement to each other and treat each other fairly and with respect. The promotion of learners' understanding of equality and diversity is mostly good. Learners know who to report any concerns to and how to work safely.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management are good. The Skills Builder programme supports Azure's core mission and has a high profile within the charity even though it constitutes only a very small part of its work. The Board has strengthened its capacity to monitor the quality of the programme and now effectively challenges managers on programme performance. A nominated Board member liaises with staff and learners, contributes well to observations of teaching and learning and reports to the Board regularly on programme activities.
- The programme receives good financial support from charity funds and is well resourced, staffed and managed. Learners' success is celebrated publicly at an annual awards ceremony and this opportunity along with good support from staff encourages learners to raise their expectations and ambitions.
- The recently established observation process has helped to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and strengthened the link with the performance management of staff. Although procedures are still being reviewed and observers are reviewing and further developing their practice, observations are contributing to improvements in teaching and learning. However, procedures are not yet consistently applied and written records are not wholly accurate because they are not always evaluative. Developmental support is given to staff through peer observations. Staff are appraised annually, have an appropriate range of skills and make good use of the specialist accommodation and facilities available.
- Tutors and training assistants review each learner's progress and any concerns about their individual learning needs on a weekly basis. The small staff team works collaboratively and shares plans and ideas. They regularly identify common areas for improvement and elements of good practice to be shared.
- Targeted management plans and actions have contributed to good progress being made in tackling most weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Action plans are scrutinised well and deadlines for completion are largely met. Quality assurance systems and processes are now more thoroughly recorded through a central database; the work and needs of individual learners and the various stages of their learning journey are more fully documented.
- Not all quality systems are sufficiently well established and practice varies, such as the quality of record keeping, feedback to learners, session planning and explicit references to equality and diversity. Data and learners' feedback are collected but are not always analysed in sufficient detail or summarised to provide an overview of findings.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive and mostly evaluative. Action plans are specific and precise. Most areas for improvement are well understood and clearly articulated.
- Curriculum planning is particularly good and learners appreciate a well-designed and coherent programme full of varied learning activities to meet their needs. Learners choose from a wide range of units in working towards their employment and personal and social development

qualification. The programme is well managed and benefits from the charity's extensive networks that support the work experience programme and specific projects. It is taught flexibly to meet individual and particular needs. However, the development of learners' English, mathematics and functional skills is not always promoted sufficiently.

- Azure's policies and procedures to promote equality and diversity and to tackle issues of bullying or discrimination are effective. Staff regularly monitor learners' behaviour and any issues are recorded in their individual learning plans.
- Eight of the ten current learners have completed a unit on diversity in society as part of their personal development programme. Learners have improved their individual understanding of a range of disabilities through a disability awareness training programme. Learners receive very good support to meet their individual needs and this enables them to participate fully in the programme. Online training for staff on diversity is regularly refreshed. Learner numbers are too small to identify any gaps in achievement by particular groups.
- Azure meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Staff handle any disclosure issues well and make good use of a range of external support agencies. Health and safety practice and risk assessment are appropriate. Learners feel safe and are aware of safety issues. Learners with more complex needs are taught how to travel safely.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Provider name: Azure Charitable Enterprises

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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A
Outcomes for learners	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A

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

Type of provider	Not for profit organisation								
Age range of learners	16–24								
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	18								
Principal/CEO	Mr John Gemmell – Senior Manager								
Date of previous inspection	March 2013								
Website address	www.azure-charitable.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+	
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
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 traineeships	16-19		19+		Total				
	N/A		N/A		N/A				
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A								
Full-time	N/A								
Part-time	N/A								
Number of community learners	N/A								
Number of employability learners	18								
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"> N/A 								

Contextual information

Azure Charitable Enterprises is located in Cramlington, just north of Newcastle in the North East of England. Its Skills Builder Programme is managed as part of the Employment Services Department. It is a study programme aimed at learners who have moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities which prepares them for further education or employment. 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 six percentage points below the national average. Unemployment is more than two percentage points above the national average. The proportion of the local population who have no qualifications is 23.6%, which is one percentage point more than nationally. The proportion of the local population who hold qualifications at advanced level or above is 44%, which is more than four percentage points above the national average.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Fred Brown
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Two additional inspectors, assisted by the senior 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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