

# Area 51 Education Ltd

## Independent Specialist College

<b>Inspection dates</b>		12–14 November 2014
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Requires improvement-3</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
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:

- the monitoring of students' progress from their starting points is poor, and trustees and managers do not have an accurate picture of the overall performance of all students in the college
- teaching and learning sessions are not consistently good or outstanding
- quality assurance is weak. Managers have not been sufficiently rigorous in assuring the quality of the provision, and identifying accurately all of the areas requiring improvement
- managers have been very late in developing transition plans for the students who will be leaving the college this academic year
- the number of trustees, and the proportion of independent trustees, is too low, limiting the breadth of advice and support available to the managers as they develop the provision
- too few students have external work experience placements.

#### This provider has the following strengths:

- students on all courses develop their communication and personal skills very well, and many students with high levels of need make good progress in learning to develop and improve their behaviour
- where teaching and learning are most effective, highly skilled teachers meet the diverse learning needs of the students very well
- the project-based curriculum meets the needs of the students well by focusing on the skills, knowledge and understanding they will require in the future
- the learning support staff are skilled at working in partnership with teachers and use positive behaviour strategies enabling students to focus on their learning
- led by the managers, all members of staff provide an inclusive, calm environment where students can learn and feel valued and respected.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that managers monitor the quality of all aspects of the provision, so that they and the trustees have a better understanding of the improvements needed, based on accurate data.
- Ensure that all teaching and learning are good or better, through robust observations and specialist training. Share the good practice in the college by team teaching and peer observations, so that all teachers provide activities that match the learning needs and abilities of individual students.
- Develop a system to capture the progress of all students from their initial starting points, so that managers and trustees can evaluate students' progress more accurately.
- Make sure that all students, parents/carers and relevant statutory bodies are involved in the development of transition planning for students from the start of their programmes, so that students are better prepared for their destinations at the end of the college programme.
- Increase the proportion of independent trustees so that managers can benefit from a greater breadth of expertise.
- Ensure that more students have the opportunity for external work experience and that the few who can benefit take accredited awards in English and mathematics.

### Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The provision caters for students with high levels of need who are studying on programmes below Entry level 1, with courses offered at three levels, depending on individual levels of need and ability. The three courses are Moving On, Pathways and Go FE. Most students are funded for three years. The students do not take accredited awards, and all progress is measured by the use of Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA). Inspectors observed activities across the whole of the provision and awarded one overall grade.</li> <li>▪ In 2013/14, many students made satisfactory or better progress towards their individual learning targets, although a minority of students made progress below the expected rate.</li> <li>▪ Managers do not have sufficient information to evaluate the progress of the third year students from their starting points. Although teachers have recorded progress made by students in learning sessions, managers have not collated data to show the progress of students over time.</li> <li>▪ A minority of students of minority ethnic heritage performed slightly less well than other groups in 2013/14, but there were no significant differences in the achievements of other groups of students.</li> <li>▪ Students develop their communication skills well. They make good progress in the development of personal and social skills, as well as skills to enable greater independence. Teachers make good use of the local area to enable students on the Moving On and Pathways courses to look after themselves, and engage more effectively and safely in the community. Many students develop the skills required to enable them to manage their own behaviour, in order, for example, to decide when they need to take time out.</li> <li>▪ Students develop their employability skills well through the project-based curriculum. On a small enterprise to create a college art gallery, students made, promoted and sold their art, generating a profit of £400. In a project to create a smoothie bar, a student, who initially found participation in learning very challenging, took on the role of managing director successfully.</li> <li>▪ Too few students participate in some form of external work experience. The managers have obtained a range of external work experience placements, including cafes, libraries and garden centres, but only four students have had the opportunity to participate.</li> </ul>	

- Students develop their English and mathematics skills well in many teaching sessions, making good use of the realistic opportunities provided in the projects to practise them. However, a few students, who could benefit from studying for accredited qualifications, have not been entered for them.
- Managers do not have any destination data, as they have not yet had any leavers.
- Rates of attendance and course completion are high.

### The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement, reflecting the outcomes, where many students achieve well, but a minority does not make the progress expected. Where teaching and learning are most effective, skilled teachers meet the needs of individual students very well and learning support staff enable students to communicate effectively. However, this good practice is not consistent across the provision.
- Most teachers and learning support staff are well qualified, with a good range of specialist experience in working with students with high levels of need. Teachers with less experience struggle to match activities to the level of understanding of the students.
- In the better sessions, teachers make good use of a strong multi-sensory approach, with music, sounds, lighting and textures to stimulate and relax students in preparation for learning. They plan short, timed tasks where appropriate, so that students with short spans of concentration stay focused and learn from the activity. Students make their responses in an appropriate medium, giving an oral reply, a full signed sentence, or a written answer.
- In a very good session, where students were developing their understanding of the world of work, the teacher had prepared a number of practical taster activities for office work, such as stock taking and sorting mail. Students demonstrated their functional use of English and mathematics as they carried out these tasks successfully. The teacher had planned these tasks very well, so that they were appropriate for the ability and communication medium of each student.
- In weaker sessions, teachers ask the students to make choices in relation to concepts that were too difficult for them. All students are required to respond to the same tasks, despite differences in their understanding of the purpose of the activity. Consequently, they learn very little.
- Classroom accommodation has been appropriately adapted to meet the students' needs, and teachers find creative ways to enhance the teaching environment. However, at times, the lack of natural light and noise intrusion have a negative impact on students' learning experiences. Teachers make good use of information technology in most sessions.
- Support for students is mostly good. Teachers and learning support staff work closely together to provide appropriate challenge and intervention. They make good use of positive behaviour management strategies that enable students to participate fully in college life.
- Teachers provide good feedback in many sessions, enabling students to recognise what they need to do to progress. However, in a minority of weaker sessions, the feedback is superficial. Teachers make positive comments randomly, irrespective of genuine effort or successful task completion, so the feedback does not help the students to improve.
- The initial assessment procedures are thorough, enabling the specialist staff to identify individual needs, place students on the appropriate level of course, and ensure that support, including speech and language and physiotherapy support, are in place.
- Information, advice and guidance provided to support students when moving on from the college are weak. Managers have not included transition planning in students' programmes to prepare the students for moving on at the end of their college life.
- Teachers embed aspects of English and mathematics appropriately into many sessions. All students have targets related to improving their communication skills. Staff make good use of signing, symbols and adapted technology to meet the individual needs of students. However, in

less effective sessions, teachers do not introduce mathematical skills at the appropriate level, so students do not gain from the activity.

- The promotion of equality and diversity is good in many lessons. Teachers provide a calm and mutually respectful learning environment that is fully inclusive, and make good use of the diversity of staff and students. They model a tolerant, constructive approach to individual difference and ability.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. This provision is in its third year of operation. Most teachers work very well with the students, showing them respect, and demonstrating good behaviour management. However, quality assurance is weak. Trustees and managers have not been sufficiently rigorous in monitoring the progress of students and using data to improve the quality of provision.
- Trustees and managers have a very clear vision about the nature of the provision and are ambitious for the students. They have shown determination and tenacity in implementing a new approach to the curriculum, which is based on the use of carefully chosen projects rather than discrete subject areas. The early signs are that most teachers and learning support staff are taking advantage of the opportunity to approach their work creatively and engage individually with students to enable them to progress. However, in a minority of cases, the approach is not leading to teaching sessions that successfully match the diverse needs of the students.
- The curriculum matches the needs of students very well. The projects chosen are closely aligned with the skills, understanding and knowledge that students will need to engage meaningfully with the community or employers. Managers have identified that the local employment opportunities for students consist mainly of retail, gardening and catering. Projects successfully completed during the pilot phase included a lunch delivery service for businesses, the creation and selling of garden planters, and a public art exhibition.
- This project approach fits well with the study programme requirements, but other aspects require improvement. The managers have not arranged sufficient external work experience placements for students, who could benefit from it. Although English and mathematics are well embedded in many sessions, students who could benefit have not been entered for accredited qualifications in English or mathematics.
- The observation of teaching and learning is sound. Managers acknowledge in their self-assessment report that the practice of a minority of inexperienced teachers, who are new to the role, requires improvement. Their identification of areas of strength and areas for improvement matched those of inspectors and they know what needs to be done to improve.
- Managers implement the performance management arrangements of all staff rigorously, and provide additional supervision and support, including attendance on relevant training events. Where this fails to improve practice, they have required staff to leave the organisation.
- Quality assurance of other aspects of the provision is weak. In their self-assessment report, the managers and trustees accurately grade the overall effectiveness of the provision, but have given too high a grade to some aspects, such as the outcomes. They have not ensured that students' progress records are adequately completed; they have not required accurate data to measure the progress students make from their starting points; although incidents are recorded carefully, they are not monitored in order to identify any trends, and take action if necessary.
- Governance requires improvement. The trustees acknowledge that the number of trustees and the proportion of independent trustees are too low, and they had not been able to provide the breadth of support required in establishing new provision. Much time has been spent in searching for better premises, and advising on the curriculum, but they have not been sufficiently rigorous in requiring the managers to quality assure the provision.
- The focus on inclusivity and tolerance is good. The staff at all levels, guided by the managers, provide a very welcoming and respectful ethos that permeates the provision. Students and

members of staff come from very diverse cultural backgrounds; this contributes to a rich and stimulating environment. The staff model tolerance and respect of difference and strive to provide a calm, but stimulating, environment.

- Safeguarding requires improvement. Students say they feel safe. Managers' focus on student safety and on the prevention of harm is very strong; managers are constantly vigilant in minimising the health and safety risks in the premises. Safeguarding training for staff is sufficient, although managers have yet to implement the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Risk assessments for individual students are monitored and updated, but trustees do not receive summaries of incident reports.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

### Area 51 Education Ltd

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

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
<b>Independent Living and Leisure skills</b>	<b>3</b>

Type of provider	Independent specialist college							
Age range of learners	19+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	13							
Principal/CEO	Ms Nicki Quarterman							
Date of previous inspection	N/A							
Website address	www.area51ed.org.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+
	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	-	-	-	-	-		-	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
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:	N/A							

## Contextual information

This is the first inspection of this provision. Area 51 Education Ltd is an Independent Specialist College. It is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It caters for students with very high needs, and is based in a highly diverse area of North London. All of the students are day students; the college does not provide residential provision. Most students travel to the college by taxi. The college started to cater for students funded by the EFA in 2012. Area 51 Education Ltd also caters for students who are funded by social services, but this was not in scope for the inspection. None of the provision is accredited and all of the students are over 19 years of age. The aim of the college is 'to empower young people with the most complex and profound learning difficulties and disabilities to participate successfully in adult life'.

## Information about this inspection

### Lead inspector

Joyce Deere HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Curriculum Stream Leader as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions. 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 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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