

Aspiration Training Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		19 – 23 January 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement-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:

- not enough learners complete their qualification within the time expected
- too much teaching and learning are not matched to learners' individual needs
- written feedback does not provide learners with clear guidance on how to improve further
- target setting does not include sufficient reference to learners' skills development
- trainers do not prioritise the teaching of mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and to a lesser extent English, sufficiently to raise learners' skills in order to improve their employment prospects
- learners do not receive effective support to enable them to overcome identified learning difficulties
- learners do not develop a good enough understanding of equality or of the celebration of diversity to support their workplace practice
- managers do not use their quality systems effectively to look at the impact their actions have on the learners' experience.

This provider has the following strengths:

- trainers provide good verbal feedback and learners are supported to feel confident in their jobs
- learners benefit from the provider's clear ethos of mutual respect and understanding
- information, advice and guidance have improved and learners clearly understand career routes
- safeguarding of learners is good
- observation of teaching, learning and assessment has much improved and trainers feel supported to improve further to produce good or outstanding lessons
- managers take account of the local enterprise partnership's (LEP) priorities and employers' needs; they have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of employers, learners and the wider community.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Plan more precisely according to the potential and experience of individual learners, in order to increase the number of learners who complete their qualification within the expected time.
- Provide trainers with more precise action plans subsequent to the observation of their teaching sessions, so that they can improve the quality of learning and progress more rapidly and effectively.
- Provide trainers with the support to be able to give learners precise, written feedback so that learners understand how to improve further, and monitor the impact this has on learners' progress.
- Ensure that learners understand the importance of, and develop skills in, English, mathematics and ICT so that they can complete their qualifications and progress within their chosen careers.
- Develop the review process to ensure that trainers and managers incorporate specific and time-bound targets, so that on- and off-the-job learning are better co-ordinated.
- Train staff in order that they can better support learners with a recognised learning difficulty so that they are able to complete their qualification and progress.
- Ensure that all learners gain a clear understanding of equality and diversity so that they can demonstrate this in their job role and are better prepared to work in a diverse community.
- Support managers to use self-assessment and quality improvement planning more effectively to drive up the quality of the provision more rapidly, and so improve outcomes for learners and the quality of their experience.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
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- Aspiration Training Limited (ATL) provides intermediate and advanced apprenticeships for learners predominantly aged over 19 years. Over half of the provision is in the health and social care and childcare sectors. Recently, managers have started to offer distance-learning packages to enhance their offer to businesses, making up another third of the provision.
- The number of learners who complete their qualification on time has risen this year but remains an area for improvement. Vague target setting, together with delays in assessments, result in learners not achieving within their expected timeframe. A few learners are disadvantaged owing to trainers and employers cancelling assessments, often at short notice. This delays assessment or observation of work practice and slows learners' progress.
- Trainers do not sufficiently recognise the skills that learners develop, including those they acquire in the workplace. Trainers do not sufficiently challenge learners to reach their potential, and too few learners make progress onto the next level of studies.
- Trainers provide appropriate English and mathematics tuition at the start of learners' programmes. However, due to a lack of vocational relevance and practice in the workplace, learners do not gain enough skills or consolidate their learning in these subjects to enable them to progress within their chosen career.
- Although trainers provide informal support for learners with identified learning needs, they do so without specialist qualifications or training; as a result, this small group of learners achieve their qualification at a lower rate than those without a learning difficulty.

- Managers and trainers have reduced the achievement gaps between women and men and between small groups of learners of different ethnic heritages by increased scrutiny of performance data and improved information, advice and guidance.
- Trainers do not inspire learners sufficiently to encourage them to progress to higher levels of study or gain promotion at work. Trainers who support learners on employability programmes are not helping them gain jobs in a timely manner.
- All apprentices study personal learning and thinking skills to a level appropriate to their job roles. Trainers help learners to gain confidence and enjoy their learning experience. Employers support learners in gaining new skills, such as manual handling and the safe handling of medicines, through good training opportunities.
- Trainers support learners and employers to gain additional qualifications relevant to their job such as dementia care, customer service and paediatric first aid to enhance learners' practice and improve their employment prospects.
- Learners understand what progression opportunities are available to them. Trainers support learners to plan future career paths in line with LEP priorities and sector skill shortages. Managers have introduced a higher-level apprenticeship route to enable learners to make progress into management positions. Trainers consult with employers so that learners choose the most relevant optional units to meet the needs of the business.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved since the previous inspection, but still require improvement to be good. Too many learners do not complete their qualifications within the time allocated. Inspectors sampled all areas of the provision and focused on those with the largest volume of learners.
- Assessment planning and practice require improvement. Although trainers give good verbal feedback, their written feedback to learners is not sufficiently detailed. It does not help them improve their skills or standards of work. Too much time elapses between learners submitting their work and receiving feedback. Trainers do not adequately plan assessments to ensure that learners are set challenging tasks and that they produce work beyond the expectations of the qualification.
- Trainers set targets that focus on learners completing units and qualifications and give insufficient focus on their skills development. Trainers do not sufficiently record learners' skills development in the workplace as part of the review. They spend a disproportionate amount of time completing review documentation that does not have a significant impact on learning and progress. Learners do not benefit from reviews, as trainers do not explore fully opportunities to discuss the importance of health and safety, equality, diversity and safeguarding and applying them in their job role.
- Trainers do not sufficiently develop learners' mathematics skills in vocational subjects or sector practice which are essential for their future employment, such as in drug dosages or body mass indices. Trainers who deliver employability programmes make insufficient use of early assessment to meet learners' needs and as a result, they do not improve their English and mathematics beyond their starting point.
- Vocational trainers do not have appropriate training or qualifications to support learners who have specific learning needs such as dyslexia or where English is their second language. Trainers support these learners by spending more time with them, or visiting more frequently but team leaders do not monitor this consistently. Managers do not ensure that all learners receive specialist support to meet their needs effectively. This results in this small group of learners not achieving as well as those without a known difficulty.

- Managers have developed learning resources and materials on the virtual learning environment (VLE) developed both commercially and in-house. These support learning effectively outside of sessions. Managers monitor levels of learners' participation on the VLE and follow up those who have not participated in the previous two weeks to ensure they are participating in learning outside of assessments. Managers have developed new resources for the VLE to support learners' understanding of cyber bullying, safeguarding and diversity. However, the vast majority of vocational trainers do not support or mark learners' online work for the first five months of their programme, which delays progression.
- Staff do not promote sufficiently equality and diversity in teaching, learning and assessment. Trainers do not extend learners' knowledge and understanding of practices in sessions to enable learners to promote equality and celebrate cultural diversity in their work settings. Discussions to challenge perceptions and develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues are not routinely included in sessions. However, trainers in health and care develop learners' understanding of individualised care to a high standard.
- Information, advice and guidance have improved since the previous inspection and learners receive guidance more closely aligned to their career goals and knowledge of the local labour market. Trainers reinforce these discussions with paper-based information. This has resulted in fewer learners leaving their apprenticeship early compared to the same point in the previous year.
- Apprentices develop valuable English, ICT and employment skills in their lessons that will support their future career progression. Vocational trainers correct spelling and grammar and many, but not all, use helpful guidelines for marking English and mathematics for a more consistent approach. In a few mathematics sessions, trainers provide effective coaching to help learners understand mathematical concepts and solve problems. For example, learners work out ratios and proportions in relation to everyday situations. Learners develop skills such as team-working and time management, which are essential for their future careers.
- Trainers use their coaching skills to help learners develop their personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS). Childcare learners and learners on employability courses further develop these skills, using prompt cards, as part of the review process.
- Work-based learners receive good personal support from their trainers who offer flexibility in planning individual sessions and assessments that keep learners on programme. Trainers on employability courses develop learners' confidence, team-work and presentation skills.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The board of directors gives good strategic direction and monitors more closely performance and quality, with a clear focus on improving the quality of learners' experiences. However, managers are too slow at implementing changes to ensure sufficient and rapid impact upon the quality of the provision.
- Improvements since the previous inspection are evident in aspects such as overall success rates, in the observation of learning process and in developing learners' independent learning skills. However, progress is still insufficient in ensuring learners complete on time, in strengthening employers' involvement in learning and in the promotion of equality and diversity. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is still too variable across and within subject areas.
- Quality improvement planning is not sufficiently effective. It does not reflect strategic objectives and, although managers record actions on the quality improvement plan, these are not sufficient or precise enough to achieve the improvements required. For example, the action to improve employer involvement focuses uniquely on the review process. Managers currently concentrate on tackling weaknesses and do not seek to reinforce existing strengths. Progress is too slow in too many instances, with late implementation of actions.

- Self-assessment is inclusive, with staff contributing well to judgements. The report is generally evaluative but focuses on processes rather than on the impact of processes on learners' experiences. As a result, self-assessment has not contributed enough to managers' efforts to improve the provision. Judgements around aspects such as safeguarding, and equality and diversity are insufficiently clear and do not inform the quality improvement plan. Managers make appropriate use of learners' feedback; for example, in producing new career pathways leaflets for apprentices.
- Improved performance management is beginning to drive improvements and to reduce the number of learners who make slow progress. The observation process is now more critical and leads to a greater focus on staff development. However, the resulting action plans are not precise enough to ensure trainers are clear about what they need to do by when to improve their teaching practice.
- Managers' collection and use of data in relation to learners' progress are improving, but still not sufficiently reliable. The new e-learning tool is beginning to provide information on learners' progress across the different components of their qualification, but this is not yet fully in place with accurate information.
- Managers take account of LEP priorities and, along with employer comments, have developed, a curriculum that meets the needs of employers, learners and the wider community. Managers work closely with the local job centres and provide training to fill gaps within the job markets locally.
- Staff training and development opportunities are good. Analysis of individual staff training needs identifies appropriate training, for example time management, questioning techniques, lesson planning, use of interactive learning technology and embedding English and mathematics. This has a positive impact upon learners' achievement of skills and knowledge. However, more work still needs to be done to provide trainers with the skills to support learners' mathematics skills and for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Partnerships with two subcontractors recruited last year are good and are helping to broaden the curriculum offer in relation to employability programmes and distance learning. Careful selection processes and effective quality monitoring arrangements are in place. Managers monitor performance carefully and share best practice effectively. However, they do not routinely request information on job outcomes from the subcontractor delivering employability programmes to be able to monitor effectively the progression of these learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is not sufficiently effective. Managers have identified actions to improve the promotion in teaching, learning and assessment, but implementation is too slow. Learners complete a useful interactive induction that raises their awareness of key aspects such as diversity and e-safety, but trainers do not plan routinely and systematically to promote and reinforce awareness and understanding better in sessions and at progress reviews.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Staff receive regular update training and have a good understanding of reporting and recording requirements. They deal with specific incidents carefully and provide appropriate advice and guidance. Learners work in jobs that require a good understanding of safeguarding and they increase their awareness through their qualification. Staff complete a thorough health and safety vetting of the learners' workplace and discuss safeguarding issues at reviews. Inspectors identified a few learners who did not have sufficient awareness to be able to raise concerns when they find themselves in potentially vulnerable situations and managers took immediate action to rectify this.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Aspiration Training Limited

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	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	3						3		
Outcomes for learners	3						3		
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
Health and Social Care	3

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	1,799							
Principal/CEO	Malcolm Free							
Date of previous inspection	July 2013							
Website address	www.aspirationtraining.com							
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+
	NA	NA	NA	895	NA	NA	NA	NA
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	48	327	32	226	NA	73		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	NA		NA		NA			
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	147							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E-resource ▪ Learning Curve. 							

Contextual information

Aspiration Training Limited is based in Bromsgrove and works predominantly in the West Midlands with some additional learners in the South West and East Midlands. Its main provision is apprenticeships in health and social care, early years and play work. The provider also offers a course to prepare learners for employment, which is subcontracted to a provider based in the West Midlands. The large majority of learners are adults; most are female and around one in five from a minority ethnic background.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Tracey Zimmerman HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), one associate inspector 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 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:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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