

Area 51 Education Ltd

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates

11–13 October 2016

Overall effectiveness		Good	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good		
Outcomes for learners	Good		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Students make good progress and achieve well; they progress to positive destinations appropriate to their individual needs.
- The standard of students' work is high.
- Pastoral, personal and learning support for students is very effective.
- Learning programmes are highly personalised and lead to good development of personal, social and communication skills.
- Students broaden their horizons through a wide range of activities held in different community venues.
- The promotion of fitness and health is good.
- The integration of British values into day-to-day teaching and learning is good.
- Governors, the principal, senior leaders and staff have a very clear view of the college's mission and vision.
- Governors, the principal, senior leaders and staff have worked hard to eradicate the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Staff benefit from, and use well, a wide range of professional development.
- Self-assessment is suitably critical and founded on secure and compelling evidence.
- The college provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum with a clear and strong emphasis on the development of skills that lead to independence.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Area 51 Education Ltd is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It provides for students with very high needs, and is based in a highly diverse area of Haringey in north London. The college started to cater for students funded by the Education Funding Agency in 2012. All of the students are day students. Most students travel to the college by minibus or taxi. Area 51 Education Ltd also provides services for students who are funded by social services, but this was not in scope for the inspection.
- The provision caters for students with high levels of need who are studying on programmes below entry level 1, personalised to individual levels of need and ability. There are three courses available to students: Pathways to Work; Moving On; and Go! FE. Most students are funded for three years and many have education, health and care plans coordinated by the students' home local authorities. The vast majority of students do not take accredited qualifications, and all progress is measured by the use of 'recognising and recording progress and achievement' (RARPA).

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop links with external parties and similar providers to explore further the provision of impartial advice and guidance to help students, their parents and carers make informed choices about the next steps in learning and appropriate placements for students.
- Ensure the implementation of quality assurance and improvement procedures and formalise all meetings in accordance with agreed college policies and plans.
- In order to continually improve the quality of provision, make sure that all:
 - policies and procedures are reviewed and updated
 - records of meetings accurately reflect the discussion and debate that take place and actions planned and carried out.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal and senior leaders have a very clear view of the college's mission and vision. They focus sharply on continually improving students' progress and achievement and the development of the skills they need to become more independent in everyday tasks, and to make a contribution to their communities.
- The principal, senior leaders and governors have worked hard to eradicate the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection in 2014 and improve the provision overall. For example, the number of external governors has increased, the transition arrangements now start at recruitment and the leavers in July 2015 and 2016 were successfully supported into their next stage of learning and life. The opportunities for external work experience for the very small number of students who could benefit from them, have increased. The principal has established an appropriate system to capture students' progress from their starting points and to show progress over time for the whole cohort of students, based on very effective RARPA processes.
- Staff benefit from a wide range of professional development, including coaching and mentoring from senior leaders and the recently appointed advanced practitioner. Staff work well as a team to provide students with a good learning experience. Managers provide good advice and support to teachers and learning support workers, for example when dealing with students' challenging behaviour. Teachers also give useful feedback to support workers to help them improve their practice.
- Staff and students are protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination through an effective range of policies and procedures and the culture and ethos of respect, fairness, equality and inclusion generated by the principal, senior leaders and managers. Staff model behaviours well and encourage students to be considerate, respectful and fair.
- Annual staff appraisal leads to good reflective practice. Managers use an effective range of initiatives that build the capacity of teachers and help them to continually hone their skills. These include a peer-based internal verification of assessment of students' progress, a staff forum and first-line management development. Managers have improved the observation of teaching and learning scheme to include stated actions for improvement, which has resulted in better teaching practice. However, observation records are overly complex and links to annual appraisal have lapsed. Joint observations completed by the vice-principal and inspectors confirmed that managers' identification of strengths and weaknesses is accurate and their judgements are secure. Managers have a good understanding of the provision and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers' evaluation of the provision is suitably critical and founded on secure and compelling evidence, including the views of students, their parents and/or carers, and students' experience with work-placement providers. However, managers are overly cautious in their self-assessment grades and give too much weight to weaknesses that have a minor impact on students' experience of teaching, learning and assessment and their progress and achievement overall.

- The implementation of quality assurance and improvement procedures has slipped. Managers have not been consistently effective in their review and implementation of key policies and procedures to ensure that what needs to happen, actually happens. For example, managers do not always meet policy review dates in line with the quality assurance calendar, ensuring that the actions for observations of teaching, learning and assessment link to annual appraisal, and formalising the senior leadership team meetings and actions. As a result, performance management arrangements, linked to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, are weak.
- The provision of impartial information, advice and guidance is under-developed. The principal and senior leaders work tirelessly to find provision that meets the needs of students and continues to enable their skills development; however, students often progress to Area 51's day-care services as other appropriate provision to meet students' needs is limited.
- Senior leaders and governors have organised the curriculum to ensure a broad and balanced learning experience for students. There is a clear and strong emphasis on the development of skills that lead to independence as appropriate to the specific needs of students and their complex and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, work-related skills development, work experience and independent living skills are a significant part of the curriculum, alongside the development of literacy, numeracy and communication skills, appropriate to students' current capacity and potential.

The governance of the provider

- The governing body has increased its membership to include greater representation from interested and experienced external parties; as a result, governors' roles and responsibilities more helpfully align with the skills needed to help steer the college.
- Established governors know the college well. More recently recruited governors gain greater knowledge of the students' needs and interests and of how the curriculum works through carefully planned visits to teaching and learning sessions and other activities.
- The chair of governors, with considerable experience in the education of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, provides good support and challenge to the principal, enabling well-considered exploration of relevant research and a sound understanding of policy and practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Policies and procedures are appropriate and comprehensive, relating very clearly to the needs of the students, their vulnerability and protection. This includes a policy and procedure to ensure the appropriate and correct use of restraint, if needed.
- Staff undertake suitable checks prior to appointment and no member of staff has unsupervised access to students until these are complete.
- Incident and accident records, including the use of restraint, are thorough and an overview reported to governors enables close scrutiny and the identification of any concerns that require further exploration or investigation.

- Staff receive ongoing training to ensure that they are up to date with safeguarding requirements, including the 'Prevent' duty, particularly as it relates to students with profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Designated safeguarding officers are visible to staff and students, their parents and carers. Risk assessments are thorough and comprehensive and ensure safe working practices. Students feel safe and are safe at college and at the external venues used by the college. Governors have received appropriate training in-house and are completing further training via the local authority's traded services governor training; this includes further training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- A recently produced policy on the prevention of extremism and radicalisation, including an appropriate referral process introduced at the last governors' meeting, is clear, comprehensive and appropriate. It is firmly rooted in the context of the college and the profile of the students.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff know their students well and use this knowledge to provide support to students from the first moment they contact Area 51, to the time that they leave. Teachers' assessment of students' abilities at the start of the course is thorough and teachers use practical skills assessments well to establish what students can and cannot yet do. Teachers are sensitive to the needs of their students and settle them in well when they arrive on their programmes. They place students in coherent groups and build a positive atmosphere and trusting relationships with their students. They also judge well when to challenge students and move them on.
- All students have detailed individual learning and care plans which create good opportunities for students to work at their own level. Teachers match the students' abilities, targets and activities well, for example during a gym session, where students engage in ball games, skittles and 'new age kurling'. However, in a very few cases, the activity is too complex for the group of students to achieve it.
- Teachers set appropriate and meaningful targets for individual students, which help them improve over time. For example, one student who had no verbal communication on entry to the programme has developed her vocabulary in English and Makaton significantly in the last year.
- The range of activities in lessons is good. Teachers plan activities well and in a logical sequence. For example, in a session on 'making smoothies', students wash and dry their hands, learn to hold utensils and mash fruit.
- Teachers provide sound evidence of students' progress over time. They produce both assessment records and examples of evidence, such as videos of students in action and pictures of work produced.
- Staffing levels are appropriate for the range of students and their spectrum of needs. Teachers and support workers work well together in lessons. Teachers brief their learning support workers well before the lesson and give useful feedback after it. However, in a few sessions, teachers do not fully utilise support workers, for example to engage all students in an end-of-lesson review.

- Managers, teachers and support workers are enthusiastic about their work and have appropriate qualifications and skills. They have access to a wide range of training opportunities, which they use to good effect in the classroom, for example moving and handling, trampoline therapy and Makaton.
- The quality of the accommodation is adequate and managers have made reasonable adjustments to the building. In addition, they have created access to a very good range of venues elsewhere, for example, to an allotment and shop unit in the local shopping centre. Students also have access to the gym in a local community centre and have work placements in the café attached. This centre also provides space for weekly drumming sessions. Since students often have had little access previously to venues beyond home and school, the variety of venues and activities widens their horizons significantly.
- The use of resources is good. Electronic devices enable non-verbal students to express themselves. For example, one student used his effectively to communicate what colour paints and tool he had used during the lesson evaluation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Students develop good social skills while working with staff and alongside their peers. They develop particularly good relationships with their teachers and learning support workers. Students' behaviour is good and staff have good protocols in place to anticipate and manage situations that might create anxiety. The calm atmosphere in lessons creates good opportunities to develop self-confidence and to focus on skills development. Parents report real benefits of the provision in terms of students' increased well-being and improved behaviour.
- Students develop useful personal and employability skills. For example, they learn how to hang up clothes, recognise coins and count money. Students do not just work on these skills in the classroom, but apply them in real-life situations, for example in the shop unit in the local shopping centre and in the café. These are not only relevant in day-to-day life, but also in the workplace, and provide good skills development for those who are able to move into work placements and beyond.
- Many activities promote fitness and health well. Staff encourage students to participate in sports activities in the gym. Teachers also use a trampoline during 'rebound' therapy to help students who are wheelchair users experience a whole new range of movement. Students love this experience. In addition to increased physical movement, students improve their eye-contact and communication skills. In other sessions, students develop their hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills, for example through picking up beakers, painting and in the gym. Attendance rates at sessions are very high.
- Students and parents have access to a good range of information on entry and during the programme. However, managers recognise that the provision of impartial advice and guidance at transition to the next stage, when students leave the project, needs further consideration.

- Students are safe at the college and in the community venues. All students have extensive individual assessments with specific guidance on how to mitigate risk. Staff also carry out thorough risk assessments of all venues. Staff have a good understanding of the practical implications of safeguarding and work hard to keep students safe. They know what action to take if they have concerns. However, while they are aware of the 'Prevent' duty, teaching staff need more support to apply this aspect securely.
- Senior leaders, managers and teachers have integrated British values well into the core values of the organisation. Staff embed these values well in teaching and learning, for example establishing eye-contact, turn-taking and sharing resources with others.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- Many students have significant and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those who are able to, make good progress over time; others manage to maintain their skill levels.
- Students make good progress in relation to their starting points. The majority of students achieve or exceed their learning aims.
- There are no significant differences in the progress rates for different groups of students, as the programmes are highly personalised and progress relates to individual circumstances.
- The standard of students' work is high. In the 'Being Banksy' art project, students produced good-quality and interesting art works, including one now hanging in the British Library staff room. More advanced students use flowers and stems to create flower arrangements to a good standard. They create very well-thought-through and attractive floral displays.
- Students enjoy their lessons, projects and work-related learning activities. They are keen to attend college and participate in lessons.
- Progression through the levels of learning provided by Area 51 is good and appropriate to the specific learning needs of each student. The steps needed to progress through each level have clear criteria with good evidence required to demonstrate achievement.
- Those students that can, progress to work placements, and others to positive destinations, such as day-care provision.

Provider details

Unique reference number	139243
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	30
Principal	Nicki Quarterman
Telephone number	02088817739
Website	www.area51ed.org.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	34	–	–	–	–	–	–
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 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	34							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, curriculum, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Rosy Belton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Philida Schellekens

Ofsted Inspector

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