

Dv8 Sussex Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

22–24 February 2017

Overall effectiveness		Requires improvement	
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement	16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement		
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement		
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Requires improvement	

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Managers have made insufficient progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning, and students' achievements.
- Tutors' classroom practice, in setting objectives, target-setting, checking students' understanding and challenging them appropriately, requires improvement.
- Tutors' expectations of the professional standards that students should attain, especially good attendance, are not high enough.
- Students' achievements are improving, but they require further improvement to become consistently good.
- Students' development of their English and mathematics skills requires further improvement and their achievement of high grades in GCSE English and mathematics is low.
- Managers' self-assessment of Dv8's quality is insufficiently incisive and does not prioritise strengths or areas for improvement, hindering their capacity to make the key changes needed.
- The proportion of students participating in external work experience, although increased, is too small.

The provider has the following strengths

- Managers and staff create an inclusive and welcoming environment for students, many of whom come from highly challenging backgrounds and personal circumstances, in which care and respect are paramount.
- Students gain in confidence and improve their skills during their studies, and their progression to further, more advanced, training is good.
- Tutors use their good industrial and commercial knowledge to set vocationally relevant and stimulating assignments for their students.
- Managers ensure good progress and achievements for the significant number of students with learning difficulties and those eligible for free school meals.
- Managers and tutors promote themes of equality and diversity well, including British values, and students' understanding is good.
- Effective partnership working, with a wide range of local organisations and agencies, improves the quality of provision for students.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Dv8 Sussex Limited has its main centre in Brighton, with a second centre in Bexhill. During the week of inspection it was moving from old accommodation in Bexhill to new buildings. It runs classroom-based study programmes for students age 16 to 18 in performing arts, digital media, fashion, and events management. Since the previous inspection, Dv8 has significantly increased enrolments of level 3 students, while maintaining its earlier level provision. In 2015/16, managers introduced level 3 provision at Brighton, with new courses in media and live events. Students live in Brighton, Bexhill and surrounding areas. Dv8 has considerable experience in working with young people who have not previously enjoyed or benefited from their educational experiences and many of its students are from challenging backgrounds.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers need to ensure that the recent improvement in overall achievement rates is accelerated and that performance on all courses improves to be consistently good, including for mathematics and English.
- Leaders and managers should prioritise actions to increase the pace of improvement in students' attendance on all courses, including using students' induction more effectively to highlight and explain their expectations for punctuality and high attendance.
- Managers should establish a culture where all teachers are equipped to best manage instances of inappropriate behaviour and lack of students' professional standards in lessons.
- Further raise the standards of teaching, learning and assessment, and improve students' progress, by ensuring that tutors:
 - strike the right balance between good support for students and strengthening their insistence for consistently high expectations of students
 - plan their lessons to address the particular needs and abilities of all students in the lesson
 - apply principles of good classroom practice, such as the clear setting of objectives and target-setting for lessons, and checking on students' understanding and progress
 - benefit from the outcomes of a fully implemented programme of lesson observations, enabling the sharing of good practice and focused professional development.
- Prioritise actions for improvement by better analysing the detailed strengths and weaknesses identified during course reviews and self-assessment, to agree clear themes for good practice and specific areas of weakness.
- Accelerate current plans to increase the work experience opportunities for students, to maximise the number benefiting this academic year.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Although leaders and managers have made improvements since the previous inspection, staff changes mean that planned revisions to procedures and practice are not well-established, and have not led to sufficient improvement to teaching and learning or outcomes for students.
- Managers' actions to improve the quality of provision are not yet sufficiently well-coordinated. They have not made it clear to tutors that the good support provided to students is not an alternative to requiring their good progress and achievement. Too often, students' support needs are used to excuse poor performance, such as in their attendance, and staff's expectations of students are not always sufficiently high.
- The managing director and senior management team have a clear vision for the provision. They are ambitious for students and their success. Although they do not target specific groups of young people for recruitment, they are particularly successful in attracting those facing significant challenges in their personal lives. Managers and staff are committed to supporting these students and helping them to succeed.
- Managers' self-assessment of Dv8's strengths and weaknesses, while broadly identifying the quality of provision, leads to a report which is too detailed and descriptive. As a result, managers have not used the outcomes of self-assessment sufficiently to prioritise key areas for improvement, and do not place sufficient emphasis on students' progress or achievement when evaluating the quality of provision. The resulting quality improvement plan is too detailed, with too few measurable targets or success criteria to help managers make improvements.
- Managers have a sound and suitable programme for observing tutors, and for taking action to improve the quality of lessons, but the first cycle of observation and improvement is not yet complete and its impact cannot be judged.
- Leaders and managers have secured resources and accommodation which are adequate overall. The new premises at Bexhill are spacious, well refurbished to a high specification, located centrally and provide a professional working environment for learning. However, in Brighton, managers and tutors make the best use of a building whose layout and state of repair is less than ideal as a working or learning environment.
- Managers and staff place particular emphasis on the importance of good English and mathematics in enabling students to progress to further study or employment; however, outcomes for students in these subjects, although improving, require further improvement.
- Managers and staff involve students well in shaping provision by, for example, planning approaches to promoting safeguarding or British values or developing the policy and practice on students being allowed limited use of their mobile phones in lessons.
- Partnership working was a strength at the previous inspection and remains so. Managers have highly effective working links with a range of specialist agencies, well used to support students facing challenging and difficult circumstances. Managers' collaborative work with local authority and regional partnerships promotes area-wide provision to help young people remain in learning, and to develop a curriculum at Dv8, matching local

employment opportunities in creative industries. Links with other learning providers and charitable organisations are used well to raise students' aspirations.

- Managers and staff promote equality and diversity particularly well, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students. Staff are particularly successful at integrating students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or into lessons, so that they benefit and succeed. Students' knowledge and understanding of equality, diversity and British values are good, preparing them well for life in modern Britain. Managers take prompt and effective action to tackle the small number of instances of bullying that students have reported.

The governance of the provider

- Dv8 is a private training company, partly owned by its managing director. He has recently appointed a non-executive director to provide independent oversight for the senior management team. The non-executive director's initial meetings have focused on sustainability in provision and development of the company, where he has offered beneficial support and challenge. He has a suitable understanding of managers' self-assessment judgements of the quality of provision and the challenges which the organisation faces.
- Senior managers hold regular meetings to review the quality of provision. However, they pay insufficient attention to students' experience on their programmes, their progress, achievement or attendance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers and staff place a high priority on safeguarding students, in developing students' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and in meeting their 'Prevent' duties. Managers are thorough in their checks on staff to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. They provide staff with appropriate training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and keep suitable records of these checks and training.
- Staff and managers take prompt and effective action when safeguarding concerns arise; for example when a student was identified as at risk of radicalisation or when cyber bullying was reported. They have strong links with local safeguarding agencies and use well-established reporting and follow-up procedures to ensure that students receive the support they need.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty are good. Dv8's personal and social development programme pays careful, and effective, attention to developing students' understanding of e-safety, how to keep themselves safe and the risks associated with radicalisation. Staff are careful to monitor students' use of the internet and have suitable systems for preventing access to inappropriate material online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement, as reflected in students' achievements, which also require improvement. Poor attendance by too many students hinders learning and progress overall. Many students, given the proportion of learning that is collaborative, are resentful at how peer absence impacts on their achievement and progress.
- Students respect their tutors for their competence and good industrial experience, and the rapport between them is good, but too much teaching and learning are insufficiently challenging.
- Tutors' expectations of the professional standards that students should achieve are too low. Tutors are supportive and encouraging, but challenge students insufficiently to ensure that they manifest the appropriate professional standards required to succeed in the creative industries. Too many lessons are characterised by low-level distraction, with students chatting off-task and the inappropriate use of mobile phones.
- Many tutors have expert vocational knowledge, but they do not use this to best effect in their planning for learning. For example, tutors do not always inform students what they are expected to learn in lessons, tasks set are not routinely timed to provide a sense of commercial reality, and in too many lessons a small minority of students do not complete tasks set. Too few extension activities are organised for the most able and activities to keep students focused and engaged are insufficient.
- Tutors' assessments do not always provide sufficient detail and actions to help students to make more progress. Tutors' judgements, though encouraging, are often generic and lack detail. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not routinely corrected in coursework or marked work, and as a result students do not develop sufficient basic skills required in the workplace. The teaching and learning of mathematics and English require improvement.
- Tutors ensure that students acquire essential and useful vocational skills in their subjects. Their standards of work are at required levels to enable them to achieve their qualifications. For example, in a music lesson students usefully practised how to equalise, refine and adjust sounds to produce appropriate intonations and in a digital skills lesson, students learned how to develop a storyboard, create stop-motion stills and use industry-standard software to produce short films.
- Students also acquire useful skills in their subject areas that equip them for careers or further study. For example, many students boost their self-confidence and learn how to work effectively within teams.
- Tutors set students stimulating assignments; well-designed and vocationally relevant to students' future aspirations. Arithmetic is often skilfully integrated. For example, in an events management lesson students calculated and analysed the logistics in venue costings and capacities, agents' fees and percentages and what profits can be made through product placements at gigs. Students are keen to develop numerical skills, and vocational tutors help them well with this, though some attainment remains low.
- Tutors and students effectively use information learning technology (ILT) in lessons and students use the Dv8 intranet confidently for home-based study, helping them develop independence in managing their own learning.

- Tutors promote themes of equality and diversity well in lessons and students have a good understanding and appreciation for different cultures and practices. They also have a very good understanding of British values and the 'Prevent' duty as they occur in their studies. Through productive discussions, students consider lives and experiences of others. For example, students learn about changing attitudes to racism since the 1950s; a music group discussed the implications for musicians of the recent bombings in Paris and the effects of radicalisation on young people; and a media group became more aware about the under-representation of black musicians at the 'Brit Awards'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Dv8, with dedicated and caring managers and other staff, champions an inclusive curriculum, supporting its students well, many of whom have learning difficulties and mental health issues. However, despite some strengths, personal development, behaviour and welfare are not yet good overall.
- Students' attendance is low, and has not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection. It ranges from excellent to poor, varying too much between, and within, courses. Managers have not set aspirational targets for attendance and the support offered to students to improve attendance, while improving retention significantly, has had too little impact overall.
- Tutors insufficiently emphasise good attendance and punctuality with their students, too often allowing students' social and emotional circumstances to excuse poor attendance or lateness. Neither is high in the priorities of too many students, who do not often recall their coverage during induction.
- Students are not always reminded by their tutors about minimum standards of behaviour in lessons and managers and tutors have not stopped the low-level disruption by students in lessons, noted at the previous inspection.
- The planning and delivery of students' external work placements require further improvement. More students are participating, but too many students are still awaiting advice and guidance and formal information about their work placements this academic year.
- Students' development of English and mathematics skills requires improvement and too many make slow progress. Tutors often integrate mathematical skills well with students' vocational subjects, but do not always make full use of opportunities in written work to correct spelling and grammar, impairing students' progress with English.
- Most students improve their confidence and abilities whilst with Dv8, often developing sound vocational skills and progressing to further studies. They develop good ILT skills and use these well in their studies.
- Students benefit from good initial advice and guidance, well matched to their previous educational experiences, which have often been traumatic. Students describe their induction as supportive and recall the themes of mutual respect and how to report cyber bullying, for example.
- All students have productive weekly personal and social development lessons, where thoughtfully planned activities provide opportunities to discuss topical issues relevant to

their lives in modern Britain.

- Students with complex needs are supported very well, increase their confidence and are successful. For example, a recent student at Bexhill, who began studies as a homeless person, estranged from her family, is successfully employed and will visit Dv8 later this year to speak to students at the Dv8 careers fair.
- Tutors use walls, corridors and notice boards well to help promote safeguarding, healthy eating and British values. One notice board is dedicated to mathematics and English and used very effectively to promote resilient attitudes to learning mathematics, using cartoons, quotations from famous mathematicians and encouragement from fellow students to support those struggling to achieve.
- Managers and staff work successfully to improve the development of work-related skills for their students. Tutors use a range of good activities to promote their development, including a 'work experience week', an internal programme to prepare them for employment and the 'job club', although the latter is poorly attended. Managers and tutors successfully seek partnerships with local employers to extend work experience, such as the Theatre Royal Brighton and the Brighton Museums.
- The work-related programme provides effective opportunities for the significant number of students not yet ready for work experience. They develop work skills and self-confidence through supported and independent activities, such as the recent attendance by two female students at a news workshop, organised through Sussex University, for women considering a career as television presenters.
- Students feel safe and can explain what they would do if they had any safeguarding concerns. They are encouraged by tutors to debate British values and topical political issues in lessons. They have a good understanding of how extremism and radicalisation might impact upon them in their lives and in their communities.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for students required improvement at the previous inspection. The number of students who stayed on their courses and achieved their qualification was too variable. Since then, with increased student numbers, the overall proportion successfully completing their study programmes has improved, but remains too low, and there remains too much variation in achievement across courses.
- Students' achievements in 2015/16 were good in music and fashion, especially in fashion, but have declined over three years in live events and media. Achievement was high in 2015/16 for the relatively small number of level 3 students.
- In 2015/16 overall students' pass rates improved significantly. Pass rates were often high; for example, 90% in music and 100% in fashion. They fell in live events and promotion, and in media, overall, but still remained relatively high.
- Students' retention during the current academic year, at the time of inspection, is good, at 95%.
- Managers have ensured that any significant achievement gaps between students have been successfully addressed. Students with learning difficulties, of whom there are many at Dv8, usually achieve well in their studies and overall, better than students with no

identified additional needs. Students eligible for free school meals also achieve well, and better than their peers.

- Students' achievements in English and mathematics require improvement. While there is good rate of improvement in functional skills mathematics over the last three years, with around two thirds of students being successful, in English achievements are low. Just over a quarter of students taking GCSE English and mathematics positively improved their performance by at least one grade, but the achievement of high grades for both subjects is very low.
- Students' progression to further studies, either within Dv8 or to further education colleges, is good. In particular, the percentage progressing to higher level further education courses elsewhere, after completing their studies at Dv8 in 2015/16, is around 40%. Progression is particularly positive given the, often poor, level of previous achievement, and challenging backgrounds, of many students.

Provider details

Unique reference number	59191
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	148
Principal/CEO	Dan Wallman
Telephone number	01273 550432
Website	www.dv8sussex.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	34	0	81	0	42	2	0	0
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	-							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of curriculum and quality, 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

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Laurence Took	Ofsted Inspector
Ray Walker	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Young	Ofsted Inspector

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