

Archway Academy

Independent Learning Provider

Inspection dates

27–30 June 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			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders do not have robust systems for collating information to enable them to be sufficiently self-critical about all aspects of the 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Leaders and managers do not use data well enough to set and monitor progress against performance targets for the organisation.
- Leaders have made slow progress in resolving the areas for improvement from the previous inspection.
- The standard of tutors' written feedback and the targets for improvement set in lessons and during reviews with learners are not precise enough to help them to improve their work and to achieve their full potential.
- Learners have only a superficial understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- The governance arrangements do not yet provide sufficient challenge and independent scrutiny of leaders' and managers' actions to raise standards and performance.
- Too few tutors are sufficiently demanding of learners to ensure that they make good and sustained progress.
- Tutors do not use the results of learners' initial assessment and education, health and care plans sufficiently well to plan learning that meets all learners' individual education and training needs.
- Too few learners benefit from meaningful work experience.
- The proportion of learners who successfully achieve their qualifications is too low and too many learners leave the programme early.
- Learners' attendance in lessons is not good enough.

The provider has the following strengths

- Learners make good progress in improving their English and mathematical skills.
- Learners are respectful of each other, and tutors promote equality and diversity well in learning sessions.
- Leaders and managers have responded well to the skills development and education needs of the local community; they have developed a curriculum that is highly responsive to local priorities.
- A majority of learners develop good attitudes to learning and they improve their personal and social skills considerably.
- The tutors are helpful, supportive and caring; they provide a good range of personal support to learners whose personal issues have been barriers to learning.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Archway Academy is an independent learning provider based in Birmingham, West Midlands. The academy opened in 2004 and offers study programmes for learners aged 16 to 19 in a range of vocational subjects, so that they gain the confidence to make the transition successfully to further study or gain employment in the local area.
- Most learners study at entry level or level 1 vocational courses in subjects such as bricklaying, carpentry, painting and decorating, hospitality and art. The vast majority of learners attending Archway Academy are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Most have low prior educational attainment and many receive support from academy staff to overcome a range of personal and/or social issues. Most learners attend from the local Birmingham area.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Implement a robust system for bringing together, recording and critically evaluating a range of information, so that senior leaders and the proprietor can improve the quality of the 16 to 19 training provision by setting specific, measurable performance indicators for the organisation.
- Implement a rigorous system of governance that provides sufficient external challenge and scrutiny and holds leaders and managers to account for rapid improvement in the quality of the provision.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through more-effective planning for learning, using information from initial assessment and education, health and care plans to design individualised plans that meet all learners' specific education and training needs; plans should include the development of skills that will enable all learners to progress into further learning and employment.
- Improve the standard of tutors' feedback and the targets for improvement set in lessons and during reviews, so that learners have precise steps to help them to improve their work and to achieve their full potential.
- Ensure that, when learners start at the academy, they all have a detailed learning plan that sets out precisely the sequence and structure of their programme, including their vocational skills development, English and mathematics targets and the timing of their work experience or participation in work-related learning activities.
- Improve the attendance of learners significantly through strict adherence to the academy's attendance policy, ensuring that tutors robustly challenge those learners whose attendance falls below agreed levels.
- Ensure that more learners have the opportunity to do external work experience to prepare them more fully for their transition into future employment.
- Develop learners' understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism beyond current levels so that they are more aware of how these risks may present themselves in their daily lives.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and managers make insufficient use of available data to identify and benchmark trends in performance for all groups of learners, including their performance based on gender and ethnicity. Leaders have recently implemented a new data collection system to monitor and report on learners' progress and performance. However, the range of routine data reports produced by managers is insufficiently evaluative to provide leaders with timely and accurate information to support effective scrutiny and oversight.
- As identified at the previous inspection, managers' appraisal of staff makes insufficient use of the outcomes of observations of teaching, learning and assessment and the results of quality audits to inform accurately staff development plans and improve the quality of education and training. Many staff appraisals and records of management meetings are very brief, or incomplete. Leaders and managers do not set sufficiently specific, measurable performance targets for staff to improve, nor do they plan effective strategies to ensure that outcomes for all learners are consistently high. Although leaders and managers provide many opportunities for staff development, teaching staff are unable to identify readily improvements in their practice resulting from such training.
- Senior leaders and managers are aware of a number of strengths and weaknesses in the provision. However, in their most recent self-assessment report managers were overgenerous in their evaluation of the quality of provision. For example, while leaders and managers routinely carry out observations of all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, they did not accurately identify important weaknesses found by inspectors. Similarly, improvement plans resulting from the self-assessment process do not include clear and specific milestones to enable the identification of the impact of managers' actions.
- The proprietor provides strong strategic leadership that effectively targets the provision to meet the needs of disadvantaged and disengaged learners. Senior leaders and managers actively promote an inclusive culture. They openly welcome learners with few prior qualifications, poor experiences at school and significant barriers to learning as a result of complex emotional and behavioural support needs. The training centre is located in an area of socio-economic deprivation and provides a carefully considered range of vocational programmes for disadvantaged groups, many of whom have experienced continuously, or recently disrupted education.
- Senior leaders and managers are ambitious for learners and place a high priority on their social inclusion. They recognise the importance of young people achieving relevant qualifications that support their educational and career ambitions. Since the previous inspection, the proprietor has invested in newly refurbished premises and improved information communication technology (ICT) resources to support learning.
- Senior leaders and managers have successfully managed an extensive restructuring of the company while bringing about a number of important improvements, such as increasing the proportion of learners who successfully achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at the first attempt. They have also narrowed the gaps in the performance between different groups of learners. Learners with complex emotional and behavioural support needs now make at least the same progress as other learners.

Despite these recent improvements, this is not yet leading to good provision and outcomes for all learners.

- Managers have successfully introduced the promotion and reinforcement of British values within all training pathways; most learners have a good understanding of life in modern Britain. Tutors successfully include topics such as equality and diversity and respect and tolerance well in most lessons. However, too few learners have a well-developed understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism or know how to protect themselves from such dangers.
- Following a significant decline in the numbers of learners completing their programmes and gaining their qualifications during 2015/16, senior managers introduced weekly caseload and learner performance review meetings to help them to drive up quality and standards. As a result of this increased management oversight and scrutiny, outcomes for learners have improved in the six months prior to this inspection. Most learners now make the progress expected of them.
- Senior leaders and managers work effectively to plan training that meets regional and local education and skills priorities. The study programmes provided enable learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to successfully re-engage and participate in education and to gain relevant vocational skills to support their progression to employment. The provider has been successful very recently in gaining a contract to offer apprenticeships.
- Senior managers and leaders make appropriate use of the results of surveys and other feedback collected from learners, parents and carers, and staff to identify areas of strength and weakness. Leaders and managers are swift to respond to suggestions for improvement and to any complaints.

The governance of the provider

- Governance requires improvement to be effective. Currently there is no external, independent scrutiny of the management of the provision. The proprietor has sole oversight of the provision and responsibility for providing support and challenge to senior leaders and managers.
- The proprietor has a detailed knowledge of individual learners' barriers to learning and their standards of behaviour. Leaders and managers provide the proprietor with regular reports on attendance, retention and success rates. However, the proprietor and senior leaders do not analyse and use the available data to monitor the effectiveness of the provision in meeting the needs of all learners. The proprietor and senior leaders have agreed action plans to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners. However, these plans contain insufficiently specific and measurable improvement targets to support the accurate and precise evaluation of the effectiveness of planned actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietor and senior leaders provide effective leadership across the provision to ensure the safety of learners.
- Staff regularly receive training to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of

safeguarding principles and procedures. Leaders and managers ensure that any identified safeguarding concerns are taken seriously and investigated appropriately. However, written records are not comprehensive enough, and consequently leaders and managers cannot easily demonstrate the effectiveness of their actions. Senior leaders do not analyse safeguarding reports adequately to identify trends over time.

- Learners have a basic understanding of safeguarding topics, including staying safe online. Learners feel safe. They demonstrate safe working practices in vocational workshops and while on placement, and they know how to raise any concerns they may have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The proportion of learners who achieve their vocational learning goals is too low.
- Too few tutors routinely challenge their learners to ensure that they make good and sustained progress in the development of their vocational and technical skills. A minority of learners do not attend their lessons regularly and, as a result, these learners make slow progress towards their educational targets.
- In a minority of cases, tutors do not place sufficient importance on improving learners' written English skills or correcting learners' mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar. As a result, learners do not always develop quickly enough the essential skills that they need for employment or to support their progression to further education.
- Tutors do not record learners' progress effectively. Tutors do not use the information gathered in the early stages of assessment to set sufficiently challenging targets for learners. Targets often lack precision. Many are too general and do not sufficiently challenge learners to develop quickly the skills that they need for employment, such as good attendance and time-keeping skills.
- Tutors provide good and frequent verbal feedback to learners. This motivates them to practise and apply what they have learned. However, the quality of written feedback tutors provide to learners is insufficiently developmental. It does not identify precisely what learners have done well and what they need to do to improve their work and to develop their skills further.
- The majority of tutors plan lessons well, teach skilfully and use a good range of resources, including technology, to sustain and develop learners' interest. As a result, most learners enjoy their learning, are well motivated and make the progress expected of them. However, a minority of tutors do not plan sufficiently to meet learners' individual needs. Tasks are frequently set at one level, resulting in less able learners struggling to keep up, while the most able complete tasks early. As a result, not all learners make progress to their potential.
- In the majority of lessons, regular assessment enables tutors to evaluate accurately the progress that their learners are making. A minority of tutors do not use assessment strategies effectively, for example questioning techniques, to ensure that learners understand new concepts, develop higher-order skills or assess accurately their own progress in the lesson.
- Vocational tutors use their industry knowledge and experience well to plan effective learning activities in lessons. As a result, learners develop the technical skills they need for work. For example, learners on carpentry courses use a range of tools safely to cut

timber to size and make stools, tabletops for chess and spice racks to a good standard. Learners on bricklaying courses work safely with bricks and mortar and skilfully build walls that are straight and level. In classroom sessions, tutors rely too heavily on the completion of written handouts and activities that do not challenge or engage all learners.

- Most learners make expected progress in the development of mathematical skills. Vocational tutors integrate functional mathematics well in carpentry lessons. For example, learners measure timber accurately when cutting joints. Learners on bricklaying courses carefully measure the gap between bricks when constructing walls, while learners in hospitality accurately measure and weigh ingredients.
- Most tutors develop learners' technical language well. For example, carpentry and construction learners develop the industry-specific, technical terms that they need for progression to employment.
- Information, advice and guidance are good. Effective careers advice and guidance ensure that learners are on the appropriate programme suited to their needs and interests and most learners have a good understanding of the career opportunities available to them. Staff ensure that learners, including those with complex and challenging behaviours, receive good pastoral support and guidance throughout their study programme. As a result, the majority of learners successfully progress to further education or training at the next level of learning or into employment.
- Learners feel safe and work safely in practical lessons. They know how to report any concerns they may have. Tutors very successfully promote an ethos of inclusion, and, as a result, learners and staff members treat each other with a high level of respect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Attendance is not consistently good across all study programmes and the rate of improvement is too slow. Attendance is too low for a minority of learners and, as a result, they do not benefit from the learning planned for them.
- Learning targets set for learners by tutors are insufficiently focused and do not provide the small, specific steps to encourage learners to make more-rapid progress and develop fully the personal and social skills required to support their independence.
- A significant majority of learners have not completed work-experience placements. As a result, too few learners have the opportunity to practise or develop further the vocational skills they have learned while attending the academy within a work-related setting.
- Learners do not have a sufficiently good understanding of the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. As a result, learners are not aware of how such dangers are relevant to their own personal circumstances and how to keep themselves safe from them.
- A large majority of learners develop quickly their confidence and self-esteem. They are motivated to learn. Most learners successfully improve their English and mathematics skills. These skills form a natural part of vocational sessions and link effectively to the learners' development of important life, and employability skills, such as communication and team-working.
- Learners contribute openly and respectfully to classroom discussions. They recognise the importance of fundamental values such as tolerance and respect. Learners value the very

small, group learning sessions, and the sensitivity and care shown by supportive tutors in helping them overcome a range of anxieties and concerns that may inhibit their participation in learning.

- Tutors carefully promote to learners the importance of good time-keeping and its value in employment; however, punctuality is poor for a small minority of learners.
- Learners value greatly the varied enrichment activities provided to extend their understanding of life in modern Britain. These activities include: visits to museums, for example, to understand the role of influential women in society; trips to go-karting circuits; and visits to university fairs, trade shows and events promoting apprenticeships. Learners receive helpful careers guidance during planned one-to-one review sessions, which helps them to make informed choices about further learning opportunities and employment options available to them.
- Learners receive good support from tutors to develop their employability skills. They quickly gain skills and confidence in completing application forms accurately. They are also well prepared for interviews, with tutors offering 'mock interviews' prior to their attending job interviews with prospective employers.
- Learners know how to keep themselves safe and how to contribute to life in a democratic society. For example, in tutorial sessions eligible learners were encouraged to register to vote in recent parliamentary elections and received information on different political parties.
- Learners know whom to contact with any safeguarding concerns, and they feel confident that any such concerns would be dealt with appropriately.
- Staff respond swiftly to any reported incidents of bullying, using restorative practices to reduce the rare occurrences where learners demonstrate inappropriate behaviours to one another.
- Learners' conduct in the centre is very positive, and learners are polite and respectful to staff, peers and visitors.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Achievement rates in 2015/16 saw a significant decline in the proportion of learners who successfully achieved their qualifications. However, managers' strategies to improve retention have contributed significantly to much-improved in-year achievement. Data for the current year indicates a significant improvement in the proportion of learners now making at least expected levels of progress. However, in-year performance is still too low when compared to similar providers.
- Most learners who are refugees or children looked after do not achieve their qualifications because they are moved out of the locality and do not complete their programmes, something which is beyond the control of the provider.
- Most learners make good progress towards achieving their English, mathematics and vocational qualifications. First-time pass rates for learners on English and mathematics courses are above those of similar providers. As a result, learners are well equipped to progress on to further study or to seek employment. Learners on level 1 courses in hospitality achieve particularly well.

- Learners produce work of an appropriate standard for the qualifications they are studying through an effective range of practical and classroom-based activities. For example, in mathematics lessons, learners develop skills in measuring and estimating that they can apply in vocational areas such as brickwork, while hospitality learners are able to make lunches for staff, students and visitors.
- The progress made by learners who have complex needs and challenging behaviours has improved as a result of staff providing good levels of individual support. Progress for these learners is now in line with other groups attending the academy.
- Staff support learners well to progress on to further education, apprenticeships or employment. The majority of learners move on to further study and learning at a higher level, and a few progress on to apprenticeships.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50442
Type of provider	Independent Learning Provider
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	89
Principal/CEO	Jim Ryan
Telephone number	0121 772 7772
Website	www.archwayacademy.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	38	3	2	–	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	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 and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	n/a							

Information about this inspection

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

Steve Lambert, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gerard McGrath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector
Rob Mottram	Ofsted Inspector

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