Nisai Virtual Academy Ltd

Independent specialist college

Inspection dates	14–16 November 2017

Overall effectiveness			**Good**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Good**	Provision for students with high needs	**Good**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Good**		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Good**		
Outcomes for students	**Good**		

Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Leaders and managers have successfully achieved their vision to provide online learning to students who otherwise would be unable to participate in education.

- Senior leaders have very effectively created a culture in which they and staff have high aspirations for their students.

- Leaders and managers provide a safe and supportive learning environment in which students, who have previously been unable to attend school, are able to take qualifications and improve their life chances.

- Managers and teachers have developed highly individualised programmes to meet the needs of students with complex reasons for finding it difficult to learn in conventional classrooms.

- Teachers, who are highly skilled and experienced, provide a calm and positive learning environment for students.

- Teachers, using online learning strategies, help students to become less anxious about their studies, and to take responsibility for their own learning.

- Leaders and managers do not share their insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation well enough to ensure that all managers understand the improvements that they need to make.

- Students' attendance and punctuality require improvement.

Full report

Information about the provider

■ Nisai Virtual Academy (NVA) provides online, individualised learning programmes from foundation courses to GCSEs and A levels. Many of the students have been unable to attend school or college for health reasons or because of a specific learning difficulty and/or disability. Students come from a wide geographical area and attend lessons that are taught online.

■ NVA provides education in collaboration with schools and local authorities. NVA started to cater for students with complex high needs, funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, in 2016 but did not have students on programme until October 2017.

■ At the time of the inspection there were five students, all with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, on study programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

■ Leaders should share their plans for improvement more effectively with managers so that they collectively understand the main strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, how they are being improved and the progress being made.

■ Ensure that teachers regularly set and record targets for students that refer to the personal and social skills they need, including for those students with education, health and care plans, so that students make rapid progress in developing their skills.

■ Improve students' attendance and punctuality so that they benefit from regular learning opportunities. Ensure that students catch up on missed lessons quickly so that they are able to build on prior learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good

- Leaders and managers have successfully established their vision of providing high-quality online learning so that students can learn from their homes. They have created a safe and supportive learning environment to enable students who have complex needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who have been unable to attend school or college, to achieve qualifications and improve their life chances.

- Leaders and managers have high expectations of staff and students. They have designed a curriculum with a wide range of courses and subjects at varying levels of learning that caters well for students' different starting points and aspirations.

- Managers and teachers have designed creative resources, and make effective use of teaching styles that enable students to access learning in the way that suits them best. For example, all lessons are recorded so that students who are unable to attend can follow the lesson online at a later date.

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides good progression routes for students, including to apprenticeships, traineeships and access to higher education courses. They work effectively with local employers and with eight local authorities to develop courses to meet local and regional skills needs.

- Teachers take part in an extensive and relevant staff development programme. They access good internal training, as well as that provided by awarding bodies and other external organisations. Leaders support staff well to improve their professional knowledge and skills.

- Managers have ensured that students receive good-quality careers advice and guidance. They have provided student support advisers with high-quality training. The advisers use this well to provide impartial advice to enable students, their parents and carers, to make informed choices about their next steps.

- Leaders and managers have put robust arrangements in place to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, they have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. However, following observations, observers do not routinely provide teachers with sufficient detail about what they need to do to improve. As a result, this slows improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.

- Leaders and managers understand the main strengths and areas of weakness in the organisation and the improvements they are making in their own areas of responsibility. Senior leaders do not, however, share their improvement plans or the monitoring of improvements sufficiently well. As a result, managers do not know how well they contribute to the improvement of the organisation or the progress being made, so that they can contribute further.

The governance of the provider

- At the time of the inspection there were no governance arrangements in place. Leaders have plans to establish a board of governors to improve the scrutiny of their work.

- A team of consultants, with highly relevant experience in the education sector, provides

support and challenge for the chief executive officer. However, there is insufficient challenge and support for senior leaders in evaluating their specific areas of responsibility, such as for students with high needs.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders and managers have implemented robust policies and procedures to keep students safe, including a detailed single central register. Recruitment processes are rigorous; all staff are checked to ensure that they are safe to work with children and vulnerable adults.

- Staff receive high-quality training, including in relation to the 'Prevent' duty, prior to commencing employment and through frequent updates. The designated safeguarding lead has received appropriate training for the role. Teachers have a good understanding of the signs of abuse and know how to report any concerns about students.

- Leaders and managers have ensured that systems supporting online learning are secure and protect students well. Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

- Staff carry out detailed risk assessments for work placement activities and for individual students who will be on work placements.

| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |

- Teachers provide high-quality lessons through online learning which students access remotely, usually from their homes. This enables students who have a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities to learn within a familiar environment and reduces their anxiety. As a result, students with ill-health or other barriers to leaving home can participate in learning and gain relevant qualifications.

- Teachers gather detailed information on the skills and knowledge that students have when they start their course. They use this information well to teach lessons which interest and challenge students. As a result, the majority of students make good progress in their lessons.

- Small group sizes enable teachers to know their students well and to adapt their lessons to meet their needs. Teachers ensure that the lessons are of an appropriate length to allow students to focus fully on their learning without the distractions of a conventional classroom setting. As a result, students enjoy their learning, participate well in lessons and develop their knowledge and skills.

- Teachers give very positive and constructive verbal feedback to students in lessons and encourage them to share their ideas with other students. Consequently, students improve their self-esteem and develop confidence in their ability to learn. Teachers provide students with very detailed feedback on their work, which ensures that they are clear about what they need to do to improve further, or how to gain higher grades.

- Teachers develop students' mathematics and English skills well in lessons. For example, in geography students learn to work to scale using maps, and to calculate population statistics based on research data. Teachers consistently check on students' spelling and

punctuation during lessons and in students' written work. They encourage students to use relevant technical terms and develop students' vocabulary well. For example, students in psychology understood activation synthesis and random activation, while in English lessons students learned about the use of metaphors.

■ Teachers are well qualified and use their subject knowledge skilfully to teach interesting lessons which improve students' knowledge and understanding. They provide very good individualised support during lessons to ensure that students participate fully in learning. Teachers use private conversations effectively during online lessons to enable less-confident or anxious students to communicate with them confidentially, before contributing to a class discussion. As a result, students develop the confidence to ask and respond to questions in lessons before they share their ideas with the group.

■ Teachers use tutorial lessons well to set and monitor targets for students related to the subjects they are studying, to support them with their work and to discuss any issues that may affect their learning. Teachers develop very good relationships with students' parents. Teachers keep parents well informed of students' progress through regular telephone conversations and termly reports. Parents make good use of an online parent portal to understand the progress that students make, including their attendance at, and engagement in, lessons.

■ In a small minority of lessons teachers do not provide students with sufficiently interesting tasks or good visual stimulation. As a result, at times students do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare   Good

■ Students with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who have previously found it difficult to attend school or college, develop their confidence and self-esteem in a safe learning environment. They enjoy learning online and take pride in their work.

■ Students develop very good professional relationships with their teachers. They enjoy being able to communicate confidentially with teachers during lessons to express their views or concerns safely. As a result, teachers have a good understanding of how students are feeling and are able to respond well to each student's needs and provide them with appropriate support.

■ Students' behaviour is good. Leaders, managers and teachers promote a culture of respect and tolerance within the learning environment. Teachers deal with the very few behaviour issues swiftly and effectively and ensure that they do not disrupt learning.

■ Well-qualified staff provide useful impartial careers advice and guidance. They use weekly pastoral lessons well to provide students with relevant information, advice and guidance on their next steps. A careers area on the student portal provides students with additional information. A well-being area has a broad range of resources to help students to understand topics such as personal health, British values and how to keep themselves safe. Students use these well to broaden their understanding of these issues.

■ Students feel safe in the NVA learning environment and know how to report any concerns. They understand how to keep themselves safe online and are confident in using the highly secure educational systems. For example, staff and students are only able to communicate internally within the organisation on the NVA systems. Students feel safe,

and are safe, from bullying and abuse.

- Staff provide students with relevant work experience placements early in their course. They select work placements that meet students' interests and are relevant to their future career plans. At the time of inspection staff had planned placements and students were aware of when they were attending their work experience. Staff have developed good relationships with employers to ensure that they support students effectively through their placements. However, it is too early to measure the impact of this.

- Students develop good working relationships with their teachers and other students within their lessons where they communicate with 'text chat'. They support each other well; for example, they praise each other for good work and express sympathy if a peer is feeling unwell in a lesson. Teachers routinely praise the support students provide to each other in lessons.

- Students' attendance and punctuality require improvement. Many students have specific challenges, such as ill-health or anxiety, that make regular attendance difficult. Teachers encourage students to improve their punctuality. Students who are more than 10 minutes late, or who miss lessons, are required to log into recordings of lessons to catch up with their work. Teachers do not routinely receive information about students' attendance at these sessions and so are not always sure that students have caught up with missed work prior to the next lesson.

- Teachers do not help students to set targets that support them to improve their personal and social skills. For example, teachers do not encourage students, particularly those with low confidence, to develop their speaking skills well enough during lessons.

Outcomes for students   Good

- At the time of the inspection no students had taken examinations and the five students with high needs on study programmes had recently started their courses.

- Students make good progress in lessons and improve in confidence and self-esteem, which enables them to participate positively in their learning. In particular, students with autism or those with anxiety make good progress and benefit from online learning.

- Students' work meets the requirements of the qualifications and is of a good standard. Students complete their assignments on time and they achieve the challenging academic targets set for them in lessons.

- Students develop skills appropriate to further study and their chosen careers. For example, students improve their essay writing skills well and are encouraged to support and work collaboratively with others in their class. Students, who have recently commenced their programmes, were clear about their future career goals and were working effectively towards meeting them. For example, they had been involved in selecting their work experience placements.

Provider details

Unique reference number	141311
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of students	16–18
Approximate number of all students over the previous full contract year	0
Principal/CEO	Dhruv Patel
Telephone number	020 8424 8475
Website	www.nisai.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	
Total number of students (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0

Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	0	0	0	0	0	0

Number of traineeships	16–19	19+	Total
	0	0	0

Number of students aged 14 to 16	0
Number of students for whom the provider receives high-needs funding	5
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 academy director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. 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

Lynda Brown, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Penny Mathers	Ofsted Inspector

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