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Mrs Pauline Smith
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Dear Mrs Smith

Short inspection of Azure Charitable Enterprises

Following the short inspection on 6 March 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in June 2014.

This provider continues to be good.

Leaders and managers have established a clear strategy that contributes to the core mission of Azure Charitable Enterprises (Azure). They promote a culture of improving the lives of people who have a learning difficulty and/or disability. The learning programme has a high profile within the charity, even though it constitutes only a very small part of its work. Learners attend a vocational programme that focuses on developing their independence, and their social and employment skills. The environment is welcoming, and learners are respectful of staff, visitors and each other.

You and your staff continue to provide learners with high-quality training. Learners make good progress and achieve their personal goals and qualifications. You have maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection and made good progress in addressing areas for improvement.

Since the last inspection, leaders have strengthened the monitoring of the quality of the vocational programme, and they take swift action to address any areas of underperformance. They have increased staff and management capacity to ensure that it is ample for the scale of the provision. They ensure that physical resources are more than adequate for the current number of learners, and increase staffing further if more learners are recruited. Leaders have recently clarified individual areas of responsibility and have provided effective training for staff to ensure that they make good use of the specialist accommodation and facilities available. Consequently, learners benefit from participating in a wide range of practical work-

related activities that help them to develop the skills that they require to achieve their long-term goals.

Leaders and managers provide valuable work-placement training for learners which is responsive to their individual goals and helps learners to gain an understanding of the world of work. Much of this is within the Azure community such as in the cafe, garden centre and nursery. As learners move towards completion of their programme, employees of the charity support them well to take on more demanding tasks in a wide range of settings. For instance, learners help on landscaping projects in the local area that enable them to develop independent living skills and the confidence and resilience to work successfully with a wide range of people.

Leaders and managers ensure that the vocational programme meets the needs of all learners. Learners develop their personal and social skills well through the study of topics such as overcoming communication and language barriers, personal hygiene, personal finance, looking for work and working as a team. Learners consolidate their existing skills and make good progress in developing the competencies that they need for a successful adult life.

In most lessons, tutors and learning-support staff work effectively together to ensure that learners achieve their objectives. They provide support in an unobtrusive manner and provide useful prompts to encourage learners to develop greater independent learning and problem-solving skills. However, in a few theory lessons, the support that learners receive is not consistently helpful or clearly linked to their learning goals.

Leaders and managers have given a higher priority to the development of learners' functional skills. Learners consolidate their skills well and develop their communication, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to a higher level. However, they do not develop their written English skills as well as they could. This weakness was identified at the last inspection and has not yet been addressed successfully.

Safeguarding is effective.

You and your managers ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective, and you take appropriate actions to safeguard learners. Leaders have implemented a 'Prevent' duty action plan after conducting a risk assessment. Staff use safeguarding procedures well, and share information effectively and thoroughly. Incidents are rare due to the vigilance of staff. Learners are safe and demonstrate effective safe working practices during practical and work placement activities.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding procedures, including the safe recruitment of staff, are fit for purpose. The safeguarding lead is exceptionally well trained, qualified and experienced, contributes to local safeguarding initiatives, and provides safeguarding training in partnership with the local authority and the

safeguarding adults board. The safeguarding training that staff receive enables them to understand well the complex safeguarding issues involved in keeping vulnerable learners safe.

Learners feel safe at the organisation and know how to stay safe in their daily lives. For instance, they can describe how to stay safe when out on bicycle rides and when at the gym. They know how to stay safe around strangers, including when using social media online. Staff ensure that learners develop their understanding of the risks relating to radicalisation and extremism during induction.

Inspection findings

- Leaders, managers and staff provide learners with helpful information at the start of their programme. Learners, with their parents or carers and social workers, attend an interview to make sure that the programme is right for them. Although most learners plan careers in horticulture or agriculture, Azure also caters for a wide range of other careers, and managers ensure that learners attend at least one taster day and an induction in other vocational areas such as catering. Tutors conduct useful early assessments that identify learners' education, support and care needs. They take careful account of learners' personal aspirations and previous personal achievements. Learners complete a helpful progress review after six weeks to evaluate the suitability of the programme and the units chosen. Managers plan this well and ensure that learners quickly adapt to life within the Azure community. Pass rates on the vocational programme are high.
- Staff at the provider and from other organisations, such as the local authority, ensure that all learners benefit from a wide range of careers education that helps them to make personal choices for adulthood. Staff recognise that not all learners plan careers in horticulture, and therefore they ensure that learners benefit from the experience of, and information about, retail, catering, farming, administration and uniformed services. Visiting speakers and Azure employees, many of whom have disabilities, provide positive role models and encourage learners to see that they can achieve ambitious careers. Most learners progress to higher levels of study at local providers or supported work placements.
- Leaders have implemented successfully new initiatives to monitor and share information about learners' progress. Highly individualised daily logs record the development of learners' personal and social skills, such as preparing basic healthy food, purchasing items from local shops and travelling more independently. Staff use these logs well during individual reviews to ensure that learners make rapid progress towards their personal goals and ambitions. Families receive monthly reports about their son's or daughter's progress. These help them to be more involved in discussions during reviews of education, health and care plans. Learners understand their own progress, and they demonstrate this well through the design of individual posters that illustrate the achievement of their weekly personal targets. Learners regularly update the posters so that they can track their progress towards long-term goals. This contributes to ensuring that they make very good progress towards achieving their personal aspirations.

- Learners make good progress in practical horticulture and ICT lessons. Tutors and learning support staff prepare learners well for assessments by monitoring the development of learners' technical skills effectively and responding appropriately by reducing the level of support provided over time. Tutors ensure that learners regularly practise their technical skills and, as a result, learners demonstrate good practical gardening skills such as planting and sowing seeds in trays. Learners use their ICT skills well; for example, they demonstrated skills in file storage, page formatting and changing image design when producing a newspaper about recent adverse weather.
- Tutors use activities to develop learners' mathematics skills effectively in most subjects; consequently, learners develop these skills well. For example, tutors encourage learners to use estimation and multiplication skills to decide on the number of seeds required to plant a full tray of vegetables. Tutors encourage learners to calculate the maximum word count for sections within their newspaper articles.
- Learners develop their technical language well, as it is a key focus in practical lessons. They learn the names of horticultural equipment and plant and vegetable varieties. Tutors skilfully plan and deliver sequential learning that builds on learners' skills and develops their knowledge of how to use tools safely and care for a range of plants and vegetables. Learners use these skills well in practical activities in the garden centre and nursery greenhouse.
- Learners develop effective everyday living skills. Tutors plan and deliver learning that helps learners to practise regularly and consolidate the skills that they need for a successful adult life. For example, during cookery lessons, tutors involve learners in decision-making about recipe quantities and help learners to understand that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Learners are motivated to learn, happy and keen to succeed.
- Learners practise and improve their communication skills well through participating in a range of community events, group activities and discussion forums. They have academic targets to help them to develop their writing and communication skills. However, tutors and learning support staff do not consistently support learners to improve their written English skills. Learners receive positive feedback on their work but, in too many instances, this does not identify clearly what they need to do to improve their work further. Consequently, learners do not develop quickly enough the written skills necessary for adulthood.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- tutors and learning support staff work consistently well together in theory lessons to ensure that all learners receive support that is helpful in enabling them to develop their independent learning skills
- staff provide consistently effective support to help learners to improve their written English skills.

I am copying this letter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Mace-Akroyd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors were assisted by the training manager as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's self-assessment report and improvement plan, and the previous inspection report. They held meetings with a range of managers and staff. Inspectors scrutinised learners' work, and visited sessions to collect information about learners' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They spoke to learners and reviewed key documents.