

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number:	1278600
Name of lead inspector:	Alex Lang, Her Majesty's Inspector
Inspection dates:	17–18 August 2021
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Aspire Education Academy Unit 6a Link Business Centre Todd Hall Road Haslingden Rossendale Lancashire BB4 5HU

Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From March 2019, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of adult learning provision which began to be funded from August 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Monitoring visits' and 'Monitoring visits to providers that are newly directly publicly funded'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd (Aspire) operates as Aspire Education Academy. Since it was established in 2010, the company has offered adult training courses for unemployed adults as a subcontractor. In 2017 it began to offer apprenticeships but gave up the contract in June 2019 and no longer provides these programmes. In August 2019, Aspire gained a contract with Liverpool City Region to provide adult education to unemployed adults.

Aspire provides courses for adults returning to and entering the workplace. It specialises in providing training to help adults get jobs as teaching assistants in schools. At the time of the visit, there were 11 learners on courses such as level 1 assisting sport and physical activity and level 2 mental health first aid, safeguarding and understanding challenging behaviour. Aspire is based in Rossendale, Lancashire and all current learners are located in Liverpool.

Aspire has continued to deliver training courses throughout the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, wherever possible. The impact of COVID-19 has been taken into account in the findings and progress judgements below.

Themes

How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose? **Significant progress**

Leaders have established a clear strategic direction for the organisation that meets the needs of employers, learners and the local region. Their decisions are well informed by using research information from unemployment statistics, government guidance and local labour market information and feedback from employers and recruitment agencies. They completed pilot courses to test out the curriculum and ensure it meets the needs of local employers and recruitment agencies. Leaders are focused on providing courses in their specialist areas and have no plans to diversify. They are increasing learner recruitment slowly to ensure strong outcomes and high-quality provision.

Leaders have established very effective working relationships with partner organisations. They work closely with referral agencies, including housing trusts and Jobcentre Plus (JCP), who are rightly complimentary about the training that learners receive. Leaders continue to build strong partnerships with schools and recruitment agencies that benefit learners by offering interviews and advice on working in the school sector.

Leaders invest significantly in the communities they work with. They ensure that all necessary resources are in place to deliver high-quality courses. They have recently invested in IT equipment to support disadvantaged learners unable to access computers. They ensure that all new courses remain in the local area, so learners can easily attend.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. They continually focus on improvement and have a skilled and highly competent quality team in place who rapidly implements change. Leaders carefully monitor the progress of all learners and provide support swiftly so that learners who fall behind can catch up quickly.

Governors are highly experienced and provide leaders with strong challenge that affects change. They know the organisation very well. Managers receive excellent support from specialist governors in individual half-day sessions. For example, the leadership and safeguarding governor provides training sessions focused on managers' developmental areas.

How much progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals? **Significant progress**

Tutors design and teach a highly effective curriculum in an order that rapidly develops learners' skills and knowledge. The curriculum is sequenced to build skills learners can use in schools, for example learners develop understanding about motivating young people. Leaders have worked with schools and recruitment agencies to develop the programme. This ensures that requirements specific to schools are included, such as the assisting sport and physical activity course for primary schools. The courses complement each other and develop understanding further. For example, learners develop an understanding of mental health before moving on to the challenging behaviours course. Learners swiftly develop their confidence, competence, teamwork and communication skills in addition to building their self-esteem.

Managers use integrity when recruiting learners. Recruitment staff are well trained and experienced in the sector. They interview every applicant and refer on applicants that cannot benefit from the programme. Learners can clearly explain why they

chose to do the programme. They already feel better prepared to work in the school sector because of what they have learned.

Tutors quickly identify additional learning support needs. They adapt the courses to meet learners' needs. Tutors are well trained to support different needs and disabilities. For example, they provide adapted resources and change their teaching and assessment methods for learners with dyslexia.

Learners develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours that will move them closer to the job market. They demonstrate they are ready for work. They turn up early for their sessions, with completed homework. They reflect on the feedback they receive, addressing the points for improvement and correcting their mistakes.

Learners benefit from comprehensive careers advice and guidance throughout their programme. They are well prepared for their next steps. Learners update their CVs, have preparation interviews and complete job applications. Tutors provide a wealth of detail on the different vocational areas available, other courses and job vacancies. Learners are aware of the opportunities this programme opens for them and talk excitedly about their future choices.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Significant progress

Senior leaders and governors provide strong guidance and support to ensure that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place. They are supported by a well-qualified and highly experienced designated safeguarding lead who, in turn, is supported by a team of safeguarding champions.

The safeguarding team has established excellent links with safeguarding and 'Prevent' agencies across the country. These agencies provide support and local intelligence on important issues, such as county lines and the prevalence of knife crime. This is shared appropriately with staff and learners. Learners demonstrate a very good understanding of local threats relating to 'Prevent'. They can apply this new learning to their personal circumstances and their future workplaces.

The culture of safeguarding at Aspire is well established. Learners feel safe and know the safeguarding team well. The safeguarding team is innovative and dedicated to supporting and following up safeguarding concerns. For example, it is piloting a reporting system to reach learners involved with exploitation and domestic violence.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021