

Inspection of Aspire-Igen Group Ltd

Inspection dates:

15 to 18 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Education programmes for young people

Requires improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

Aspire-Igen provides education programmes for young people across West Yorkshire and Humberside, including learners who have high needs. It has centres in Bradford, Leeds, Wakefield, Dewsbury and Hull, with most of the provision based in Bradford. Leaders work with two subcontractors in Hull and Bradford. At the time of the inspection, there were 608 learners on programmes from entry level to level 3, including 40 learners with high needs. Half of all learners are on health and social care and child development programmes, most of whom are studying at level 3. The remainder are on programmes in construction, motor vehicle, public services, hair and beauty, learning support, administration, hospitality and catering, English for speakers of other languages and information and communication technology. Aspire-Igen aims to help learners to progress to apprenticeships, employment or further learning.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners, many of whom face a range of significant challenges, including mental health difficulties, benefit from effective pastoral support from tutors. Tutors are vigilant to signs of concern and make themselves available to discuss concerns and issues. Learners understand the importance of mental well-being and are confident to speak with tutors about the issues that they face.

Tutors on too many programmes do not support learners to develop essential skills for employment such as attending their programmes and being punctual. Too few learners attend regularly enough, and many are often late.

Staff provide learners with frequent and locally relevant careers advice and guidance. They support learners with applications that help them to progress towards their next steps, including into specialised careers such as plumbing. Most learners progress to higher-level courses, employment or apprenticeships.

Learners feel safe. They know to whom they should report concerns and are confident that issues will be dealt with promptly, including bullying. Tutors provide learners with helpful information and advice regarding sexual harm, harassment and consent. Learners have a good understanding of what unacceptable behaviour is and know how to report any if they experience it.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a clear overview of their provision and have taken action to make improvements in the quality of education and learners' attendance. However, these have not had a significant enough impact on ensuring a consistently good quality of education across delivery sites. Attendance on directly delivered courses continues to be too low.

Learners on level 2 health and social care programmes experience poorly planned sessions and too much teaching that is not of a high enough standard. As a result, learners on these programmes do not have a good enough understanding of the subjects they are studying, which hinders their progress.

Learners on most other programmes benefit from a curriculum that tutors plan and deliver in a logical order so that learners can progressively develop their skills and become more fluent in what they do. In construction, learners start by learning how to work safely and how to use basic hand tools before they begin to develop their practical skills in the workshop.

Too many learners who enrol late onto programmes do not acquire the basic knowledge that they need at the start of their programme. Tutors provide additional sessions for learners to catch up, but attendance at these sessions is too low. As a result, many learners do not have a sufficient grasp of the basic knowledge and skills that they need before moving on to more complex topics.

Learners on most programmes benefit from teaching by well-qualified and experienced vocational, English and mathematics tutors who use their subject knowledge and skills effectively. For example, in GCSE English, tutors use mnemonics to help learners remember how to analyse text. A few learners on English programmes, particularly at the Hull and Wakefield centres, do not benefit from effective online teaching, which is provided due to a lack of sufficient staff to enable face-to-face teaching to take place.

Tutors on most programmes use a range of assessment methods to check learners' understanding effectively. For example, in child development, tutors use good questioning techniques to check learners' understanding and to help them to recall the principles of observation in a childcare environment.

Too many learners do not make the progress in mathematics and English that they are capable of due to poor attendance. Learners who do attend their lessons make expected or better progress.

Learners who already have the required level of qualification in English do not benefit from effective support to improve their skills further. These learners do not receive feedback on spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors that they make in their vocational assignments. As a result, they continue to make these errors.

Tutors on too many programmes, including construction, have not planned work experience for learners well enough. Learners do not benefit from gaining this experience to help prepare them for employment.

Staff ensure that learners with high needs receive effective support in line with their education, health and care plans. For example, learners with autism spectrum disorder and dyslexia benefit from a learning support tutor who provides additional classroom support. Tutors and support staff have a comprehensive understanding of learners' needs and adapt their teaching accordingly. However, too many learners with high needs do not make the progress that they could due to poor attendance.

Too many tutors do not support learners well enough to understand the importance of fundamental British values. Many learners cannot articulate their understanding of how these values relate to their lives. However, tutors at subcontractors provide effective development and reinforcement of the importance of British values. They introduce regular discussions into sessions, such as the role of the government and the right to vote in a democracy.

Leaders and managers support most staff well with their workloads and well-being. Where staff are struggling, managers have been quick to provide protected time for them to plan and catch up. However, in a few areas where there is a shortage of staff due to recruitment issues, staff feel under pressure to cover lessons.

Managers ensure that learning centres provide an inclusive environment for staff and students, including for female teachers and learners working in male-dominated

areas. Learners are respectful and tolerant of their peers and staff. They work with peers from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures and show respect towards them.

Too many tutors do not support learners well enough to understand local risks, including the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Consequently, learners are not fully aware of the potential risks in the communities where they live.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers have put in place clear and helpful policies and procedures that they use effectively to keep learners safe. They follow up concerns appropriately and liaise well with support organisations, including for learners with mental health concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead and deputies, who work across all centres, are appropriately qualified and experienced in their roles. They collect useful safeguarding information and updates on local risks from external sources, including local authorities and the regional Department for Education 'Prevent' coordinator, that is passed on to staff and learners to keep them informed.

Managers ensure that policies to identify poor attendance are followed by all centres. This means that they are assured that learners are not at risk due to unplanned absences.

Leaders carry out rigorous background checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with learners. Staff benefit from useful annual safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training that enables them to gain a good understanding of how to identify signs of abuse and radicalisation.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Improve learners' attendance and punctuality on directly delivered courses.
- Improve the consistency of the quality of education across all centres to ensure that all learners receive consistently good teaching.
- Ensure that tutors improve the planning and teaching of level 2 health and social care programmes.
- Provide effective support to learners to improve their writing skills.
- Ensure that learners joining programmes late in the year catch up successfully.
- Plan work experience and work-related learning to enable all learners to get a good understanding of the world of work.
- Provide better teaching and support to enable learners to gain an understanding of British values and how these values apply to their lives.

- Ensure that learners are fully aware of the risks in their communities, including the risk of radicalisation.

Provider details

Unique reference number	51025
Address	21-27 Cheapside Bradford BD1 4HR
Contact number	0330 111 0035
Website	www.theopportunitycentre.com
CEO	Caroline Harrison
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 January 2016
Main subcontractors	Motive8 Quality Personal Development

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of quality, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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