

Inspection of Area 51 Education Ltd

Inspection dates:

21 to 23 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Information about this provider

Area 51 Education Ltd (Area 51) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It offers non-accredited education programmes to young people aged 19 to 25 with a range of complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Staff at Area 51 teach three distinct programmes of study. These are the Moving On courses aimed at learners who are ready to develop skills in independent living; Go! FE, for learners who need to develop communication and interaction skills; and P19 Creatives, aimed at learners with complex physical disabilities who want to work in media or creative industries.

At the time of the inspection, there were nine learners studying on the Moving On course, 16 learners on Go! FE and four learners on the P19 Creatives course.

Most of the learning takes place in Area 51's main site in north London. The P19 Creatives course is taught online.

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

A high proportion of learners do not receive all the additional therapies they need to support them in their studies. For example, due to staff shortages, learners lack access to occupational and speech and language therapies. Consequently, learners make slow progress in developing their motor and communication skills.

Leaders have not sufficiently reintroduced the full programme of visits in the community that happened prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, most learners have limited opportunities to take part in extra activities such as swimming or trips to the sensory garden. Staff take a few learners to local cafes or play football in the courtyard.

Learners benefit from staff who create a calm and caring learning environment. Staff give effective help to new learners at the start of their course. Learners settle very quickly into their course. Teachers show high levels of respect to learners. Staff do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination. They deal with issues promptly. Most learners are happy and enjoy being in lessons with their peers. Learners' attendance at lessons is high.

Parents and carers value the skills and knowledge learners gain to live healthy lives. For instance, staff help learners to practise walking over gradually longer distances.

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

Leaders have not defined clearly enough in the curriculum they have planned the skills, knowledge and behaviours they intend learners to gain in the long term. Teachers do not consider in sufficient detail how the topics they teach in lessons help learners achieve the outcomes in their education, health and care plans. Teachers do not accurately assess what learners are already capable of when they start their courses. Consequently, they do not teach a curriculum that fully takes account of learners' starting points.

Teachers do not consistently set targets for learners that are challenging or meaningful. In most cases, targets are generic and do not record the specific knowledge or skill a learner needs to gain. Teachers do not evaluate the progress learners make precisely enough. As a result, leaders do not have a sufficient overview of how well learners achieve their learning goals.

The quality of teaching is not consistently good across all subjects. In a few lessons, teachers plan content and use learning materials which are not age-appropriate. For example, teachers rely too heavily on basic cutting and pasting, and painting activities, that do not link to the topics taught.

In online lessons, teachers plan and teach useful information that helps learners understand new subjects. For example, learners practise composing emails by learning about what to write in the subject line first, before choosing the correct

form of greeting suitable for the purpose of the email. Teachers check learners' understanding at appropriate intervals and recap frequently to correct misunderstandings.

Leaders do not ensure that learners, and their parents or carers, have enough timely information about where learners can go to at the end of the course. Parents and carers whom inspectors spoke with said this caused concerns for them about the next steps for their young person.

Staff provide learners with positive examples of how they can regulate their behaviour. They use different coloured signs and symbols with learners to help them express their feelings. When learners feel agitated, staff provide effective additional support to help learners stay calm so that they can take part in lessons. As a result, learners improve their concentration and are able to follow instructions.

Leaders communicate effectively with parents and carers about their young person's education. Learners take home a daily journal which describes usefully what they have studied, what food they have eaten and what physical activity they have undertaken. Parents and carers benefit from this involvement in learners' education.

Leaders provide staff with useful additional training that broadens their knowledge and skills for teaching learners with SEND. Support staff receive training in using hoists appropriately, and in delivering safe, person-centred care. Teachers apply the knowledge they gain in teaching pre-literacy skills effectively. They design visually stimulating resources using pictures and symbols when teaching learners cooking skills.

Leaders have appointed a suitable range of governors to oversee the provision. They have appropriate specialist experience and skills in further education, finance and commerce. Leaders and governors rightly acknowledge that staff vacancies have impacted the quality of provision. They have not acted quickly enough to recruit for key staffing vacancies. Consequently, a few of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection still exist.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have in place a range of appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. They give staff clear guidance on how to provide dignity and care for learners with complex physical and medical needs in a safe way.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the two deputy safeguarding leads are very well qualified and experienced for their roles. Staff understand clearly how to report safeguarding concerns, including low-level incidents and accidents. The DSL monitors closely any ongoing concerns. Governors are well informed about safeguarding cases at quarterly meetings.

Parents and carers consider the learning environment to be safe for young people.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should plan an ambitious curriculum that clearly identifies the knowledge, skills and behaviours they expect learners to gain. They should assess learners' starting points, and review and record learners' progress, so that they achieve their learning goals.
- Leaders should train staff to design suitable learning resources across all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders must ensure that learners receive all the therapies they need to support them in their studies.
- Leaders should plan a range of activities so that learners can widen their interests and talents outside of the main curriculum.

Provider details

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Unique reference number | 139243 |
| Address | 1 Mallard Place Coburg Road London N22 6TS |
| Contact number | 02088817739 |
| Website | www.area51ed.org.uk/ |
| Principal | Nicki Quarterman |
| Provider type | Independent specialist college |
| Date of previous inspection | 11 to 13 October 2016 |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, 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

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sue Hasty, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Joanna Walters | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Mike Finn | His Majesty's Inspector |

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 2022