

Inspection of Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd

Inspection dates: 7 to 10 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd (Aspire) is an independent learning provider based in Rossendale, Lancashire. Aspire was established in 2010, offering apprenticeships and training courses for unemployed adults as a subcontractor partner. In August 2019, Aspire was awarded a contract with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to provide training to unemployed adults. In 2020, it gained an adult education contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to offer adult learning programmes outside of the Merseyside region.

At the time of the inspection, there were 45 adult learners enrolled on programmes. There were 23 learners on the level 2 education support programme, which consists of three level 2 certificates in safeguarding and 'Prevent', mental health first aid and advocacy and understanding behaviour that challenges. There were 22 learners on the level 3 teaching support assistant programme. This includes a level 3 certificate in training and education and a level 3 certificate in special educational needs.

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

Learners enjoy learning in a friendly and supportive environment. They feel valued, and demonstrate respect and tolerance for the views and opinions of others.

Learners speak positively about their learning at Aspire, which has helped them gain confidence and improve their self-esteem. They are enthusiastic about their future career aspirations of working in a school environment.

Learners value greatly the support and encouragement that they receive from their tutors. This helps them gain new knowledge and achieve their qualifications. Learners can use the knowledge they gain in their own lives, such as looking after their own mental well-being.

Learners feel safe and know how to raise any concerns they may have about themselves or their peers. They gain a deep understanding of the importance of safeguarding for the sector they want to work in, including how to recognise the risks associated with radicalisation and extremist views and whom to report them to.

Learners receive useful information about careers and employment in the school sector, which informs them of their potential next steps. Guest speakers from teacher supply agencies attend sessions to inform learners about employment opportunities working in support roles in schools on completion of their course. However, learners do not receive broader impartial careers advice and guidance on progression opportunities, such as higher education or apprenticeships, to help inform them to plan longer-term career goals.

Learners' attendance is high in most lessons; however, learners are not always punctual to lessons.

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

Leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum they offer. They have quickly adapted the curriculum, following the pandemic, to provide higher level qualifications for adults to enter the job market. The level 2 education support programme and the level 3 teaching assistant programme have been developed to meet local workforce shortages in the school education sector. The programmes aim to enable learners to develop the knowledge required to progress into employment in a support role in a school.

Leaders have established effective partnerships with teacher supply agencies and schools in the Liverpool City and Lancashire regions. This enables the majority of learners to gain employment with supply agencies on completion of their programme.

Leaders and managers plan teaching in a logical order so that learners incrementally build their knowledge. Learners develop new knowledge as a result of their courses.

For instance, level 2 learners learn about the strategies they could use with children in order to de-escalate challenging behaviour by demonstrating patience, lowering their voice and moving the child to another room. Level 3 learners learn about the roles and responsibilities in school education. They then move on to inclusive teaching and learning approaches before finally learning about the principles of assessment.

Tutors effectively link knowledge about what learners have learned in their safeguarding, mental health illnesses and challenging behaviours qualifications. This helps learners to retain learning in their short-term memories. Tutors use acronyms to help learners remember key information about mental health advocacy and fundamental British values.

However, level 2 learners do not have enough time in which to sufficiently embed their learning. The content of the three qualifications that learners study requires significantly more teaching time than the few weeks that leaders plan for learning and assessment activities. As a result, and because of the intensity of the course, too many learners do not retain key learning in their long-term memories. Learners who remain on programme fall behind very quickly and subsequently require significant one-to-one support from their tutors and extra time to support them achieve their qualifications.

Learners do not demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the subject they are studying. Assessment is not sufficiently rigorous. In most cases, the work that level 2 learners produce is superficial. This is because learners use the wording from their workbook resources in their answers, which is accepted by the tutors as evidence of their learning before quickly moving on to the next topic. In sessions, tutors do not always use effective techniques to probe deeply enough to check learners' understanding.

Leaders have found it difficult to recruit vocationally experienced staff and have engaged in a 'grow your own' strategy. They provide tutors with suitable training and support to develop their teaching skills. Tutors benefit from a supportive team-teaching approach, with support and guidance from more experienced colleagues. This helps them to develop an understanding of teaching strategies and practices and to use these with their own learners. Leaders provide a range of training for tutors to develop their subject knowledge, such as domestic abuse awareness, understanding and managing anxiety and mental health awareness at work.

However, leaders do not ensure that tutors have or gain the appropriate vocational experience to help them relate knowledge to workplace practice for learners. Leaders have put plans in place to rectify this.

The feedback that tutors provide to learners is inconsistent. Learners on the level 2 programme are provided with effective feedback on their written work. Tutors challenge learners to add more examples or to expand their research to show a deeper understanding of the topic. However, feedback provided to learners on the

level 3 programme is inconsistent. As a result, not all learners know specifically what they need to do to improve their work.

Tutors provide effective support for, and adapt their teaching to meet, the individual needs of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They break down learning into manageable chunks and allow learners to have frequent breaks. This ensures that learners understand what they are being taught and can achieve their qualifications.

Leaders are considerate of the workload and the well-being of their staff. Leaders provide staff with access to mental health champions and on-site support for their well-being, which tutors value. Leaders ensure that there are effective processes in place to manage staff performance. They reward good practice and tackle any areas of underperformance when necessary.

Leaders and managers do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of education that their learners receive. They have not identified all the weaknesses in the quality of education that inspectors found during the inspection. Furthermore, they have not acted on learners' feedback that they struggle to complete their qualifications in the limited amount of time they are given.

Members of the board responsible for governance have relevant experience in education. Senior leaders provide them with a range of useful information that helps them identify any areas of concern. This enables board members to provide the appropriate level of challenge and support to senior leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders place a high priority on keeping learners safe. There are appropriate safeguarding policies in place to ensure staff know how to recognise and raise safeguarding concerns. All staff receive safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and safeguarding officer are appropriately qualified to carry out their role effectively. They keep detailed records of all concerns raised. The DSL liaises with external agencies, such as social services and the police, when needed. They have established effective links with external organisations where learners can be signposted for additional help with mental health concerns and drug and alcohol misuse.

Leaders carry out appropriate pre-employment checks when recruiting staff to ensure they are safe to work with learners.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders should review the level 2 education support programme to ensure that learners have sufficient time to acquire and embed the intended knowledge.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors carry out assessment activities that are rigorous and demonstrate that learners can apply knowledge fluently before moving on to the next topic.
- Leaders should ensure that all learners receive useful feedback on their work so they know what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders should ensure that tutors recruited without the vocational experience of working in an education support role are provided with opportunities to gain experience and expertise so that they can help learners relate knowledge to workplace practices.
- Leaders should ensure learners receive careers advice and guidance beyond information about their next steps to help them plan and achieve their longer-term career goals.

Provider details

Unique reference number	1278600
Address	Link 665 Business Park Todd Hall Road Rossendale BB4 5HU
Contact number	07773 332180
Website	https://aspireeducationacademy.co.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Jason Murphy
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	N/A

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, 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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