

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd

Report following a monitoring visit to a 'requires improvement' provider

Unique reference number:	1278600
Name of lead inspector:	Helen Whelan, His Majesty's Inspector
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Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd was inspected in March 2023. At that time, inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of the provision to require improvement.

The focus of this monitoring visit was to evaluate the progress that leaders and managers have made in resolving the main areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd (Aspire) is an independent learning provider based in Rossendale, Lancashire. At the time of the visit, there were 66 adult learners in learning. There were 18 learners on a level 1 programme. This consists of qualifications in safeguarding, well-being, occupational studies and preparing to work in schools. There were 26 learners on a level 2 education support programme, which consists of certificates in safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty and understanding behaviour that challenges. There were 20 learners on a level 3 certificate in special educational needs. Training is offered face to face in Liverpool or online.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in reviewing the level 2 education support programme to ensure that learners have sufficient time to acquire and embed the intended knowledge?

Significant progress

Following the previous inspection, leaders swiftly reviewed and revised the level 2 education support curriculum. This now consists of two rather than three qualifications and is twice the length of the previous course. Leaders ensure that learners are not overwhelmed by the amount of course content and that they have enough time to embed the intended knowledge. This course provides learners with the time to assimilate and then reflect on their new knowledge and skills.

Leaders have adapted the content of the course to ensure that learners gain the knowledge and skills they need to provide effective support for children in schools. Tutors use a range of relevant activities to help learners to apply their learning to new contexts. Learners take part in reflection time at the start of each lesson to consider what they have learned. They ask questions to clarify their learning and to improve on or extend their knowledge.

Leaders consult effectively with their partner agencies and schools, as well as governors and independent sector experts, about the curriculums. They use their

feedback to plan curriculums to meet learners' and employers' needs. Leaders have developed a curriculum at level 1 for those learners not yet ready to study the level 2 course. They have developed the level 3 curriculum for learners who need higher-level training.

Tutors recognise the benefits for learners of having more time to learn, reflect and apply their learning. They ensure that the increased time helps learners to learn more and remember more. Leaders look closely at how learners are progressing over the course. All learners from the first cohort of the new course completed and achieved their qualification. The course prepares learners well for employment in the sector.

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that tutors carry out rigorous assessment activities and provide learners with useful feedback on their work so they know what they need to do to improve?

Significant progress

Tutors use a variety of assessment tools to check learners' understanding. They use low-stakes quizzes to quickly gain an oversight of how well learners grasp new topics. They set end-of-unit tests to make sure that learners can remember what they have learned over time. Learners routinely ask and answer questions in class to consolidate what they know. They develop their confidence, as they recognise how much they are learning and developing.

Learners benefit from timely, detailed and developmental feedback. Tutors make sure learners know what they have done well and what, precisely, they need to do to improve the quality of their work. When their work meets the required standard, learners receive feedback about how it could be even better. Tutors provide feedback on more than just assignment content. Learners benefit from guidance about their use of language, spelling and grammar and assignment structure. Tutors set learners tasks on their online learning platform linked to areas for improvement with their use of English. Learners appreciate the feedback and use it to improve their written work. They routinely produce work of a high standard.

Tutors provide additional feedback on learners' broader skills development. They consider the effectiveness of learners' communication skills, problem-solving and public speaking. They highlight to learners the education-specific knowledge they need. They provide additional guidance and feedback on equality, diversity and inclusion, fundamental British values and the importance of safeguarding.

Leaders systematically check on the quality of tutors' feedback to ensure that it is of a sufficiently high standard. They ensure that tutors provide learners with additional tuition if they struggle with any aspect of their learning or fall behind. Tutors work effectively with learners to clarify misconceptions and fill any gaps in their learning.

How much progress have leaders made in providing tutors with opportunities to gain experience and expertise so that they can help learners relate knowledge to workplace practices?

Significant progress

As part of their new continuing professional development (CPD) strategy, leaders assign tutors a minimum of 60 hours each year to undertake relevant CPD. This includes teaching, learning and assessment, mandatory training and vocational updating.

Tutors gain meaningful vocational experience through 10 'back to the floor' days, where they shadow or volunteer as teaching assistants. Tutors benefit significantly from this. They reflect thoughtfully on the strategies they have used in the classroom. They discuss how to adapt their communication skills, use incentives such as collecting stars and child-centred diffusion strategies. Tutors appreciate finding out about different school settings, key stages and supporting learners with needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. They gain an understanding of ways to support children with their reading and how to use phonics. This means tutors can refer to up-to-date and real-life examples in their teaching.

Leaders have made changes to how they recruit new tutors. They specify that applicants should ideally have experience of working in an educational setting. They ask standard questions about these experiences to ascertain their suitability for the role. Leaders ensure that tutors are vocational experts or have had recent and relevant professional development.

Leaders maintain their focus on the importance of teaching, learning and assessment. Since the previous inspection, tutors have benefitted from training to improve the quality of feedback they give to learners. They provide formative feedback that ensures learners' subsequent work improves over time. Tutors undertake a range of training on how to teach online. They make effective use of online tools in lessons. They use the chat function to check that learners can recall points and place learners in breakout groups to discuss issues around special educational needs education and to reflect on their practice. Learners have an extremely positive attitude towards their learning and engage positively in lessons.

How much progress have leaders made in providing learners with careers advice and guidance beyond information about their next steps to help them plan their longer-term career goals?

Significant progress

Leaders have made significant changes to how they provide learners with careers advice and guidance. Learners receive broader impartial careers advice and guidance on progression opportunities such as higher education or apprenticeships. This helps to inform them about their potential longer-term career goals.

Leaders ensure that conversations about careers form a key part of learners' experiences at Aspire. This includes before, during and after learners complete their course. Learner engagement officers provide learners with support in seeking employment or accessing additional training. They communicate with them about their next steps at regular intervals. Learners appreciate this support and guidance. Learners are keen to pursue a role as teaching assistants or as teachers and know what they need to do to progress.

Leaders have developed a strong partnership with the National Careers Service (NCS), which offers learners impartial careers advice and guidance. Leaders arrange for representatives from the NCS to attend face-to-face and online lessons. Learners, particularly those who have not been in work for a long time, benefit greatly in terms of writing an effective CV and practising their interview skills. NCS and Aspire staff support learners to identify the transferable skills they acquire on the course and how they may move on to other areas, such as youth work, care or mental health support.

Leaders have maintained effective partnerships with supply agencies and schools in Liverpool, Lancashire and further afield. They invite employers in to lessons to discuss the different roles they can offer learners and how they can register to work in a support role in schools. Last year, over two thirds of learners gained employment or progressed to further education. Learners say that they would not have been successful without the new knowledge and skills they have gained from their course.

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