

Inspection of Nacro

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 June 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Education programmes for young people | Good |
| Apprenticeships | Good |
| Provision for learners with high needs | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Information about this provider

Nacro is a social justice charity based in England and Wales, established in 1966 from the previous National Association of Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies. It is a large national training provider with 14 of its own training centres, the largest of these is Totton College located in Southampton. Nacro also works in partnership with four subcontractors.

At the time of inspection, there were 1,183 learners on a range of courses. This included 157 learners studying level 1 construction skills, and 82 learners studying level 1 diploma in automotive maintenance. There were also 52 apprentices in learning across 9 apprenticeships. The largest of these were on level 2 hair professional with 16 apprentices, and 9 apprentices studying on level 3 early years educator apprenticeship. There were 305 learners with high needs in learning, studying a range of discreet and vocational courses.

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

Many learners and apprentices improve their attendance during their studies. Before starting on their courses, they had often missed learning or been out of education for some time. Staff set high expectations and have a strong focus on improving learners' and apprentices' attendance. Teachers quickly intervene when learners and apprentices do not attend classes. However, despite these efforts in a few cases younger learners' attendance is not yet consistently high.

Staff support apprentices to develop their professional behaviours and attitudes. Younger apprentices mature and become role models in their workplace. They learn time management skills to balance work, life and study responsibilities. Apprentices become motivated to achieve their qualifications and earn recognition as respected professionals.

Leaders and teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the character and bolstering the confidence of learners and apprentices. Learners with high needs take part in activities outside of their immediate peer groups. This allows them to grow their friendship groups and practise good behaviour with new people. As a result, many learners with high needs overcome their anxieties and become more resilient.

Learners benefit from working with their teachers as well as specialist staff, including learning support assistants, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists. Staff work together to support learners' physical and emotional development. Learning support assistants connect the work of therapeutic and academic teams, helping learners to achieve the targets set in their education, health and care plans (EHC plan).

Staff work closely with learners and apprentices to help them develop positive attitudes towards their training. Many learners start with significant barriers. Staff support them to enjoy and value their studies, including subjects like English and mathematics where many learners had previously had negative experiences.

Most learners and apprentices have a secure understanding of extremist behaviour and radicalisation. Teachers ensure they can identify the signs that could indicate an individual has been radicalised, such as changes in behaviour and isolating themselves. Teachers also help learners with high needs to understand societal risks, including stranger danger. However, too few younger learners and apprentices are aware of the potential risks posed in their local areas, such as knife crime and the steps they would take to keep themselves safe.

Staff ensure learners and apprentices feel safe and know how to contact staff if they have any issues or concerns. They are confident that staff will address any issues effectively.

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

Leaders develop ambitious curriculums to prepare learners and apprentices with the skills they need to succeed in both their work and personal lives. In the skills for life course, leaders have implemented a curriculum specifically designed to support learners with high needs. This curriculum helps learners develop the skills they need for adulthood in line with their EHC plan. The course culminates in a final year focused on ensuring learners are ready for their next steps, whether in further education, employment, or independent living.

Teachers have developed coherent curriculums to help learners and apprentices build their knowledge progressively. In the level 2 hair professional apprenticeship, the curriculum is well structured and logically ordered. Teachers start with teaching communication skills, teaching techniques for understanding client needs and using visual aids. It then prepares learners for shampooing, conditioning, and treatment services. The curriculum then progresses to the basics of hair and skin, including tests, hair characteristics, and the hair growth cycle, and ends with an introduction to colouring treatments. This structure helps apprentices make swift progress in their studies.

Teachers and technicians are industry experts and, in most cases, they are qualified teachers. Those who are not qualified are supported to gain teaching qualifications. They apply their expertise by teaching learners current industry techniques and ensure they master specialist terminology and vocabulary. For instance, on the level 1 certificate in construction skills, learners confidently use professional and technical vocabulary, like plumbing points, English and Dutch bonds, and queen closer, in their lessons. They can adjust the complexity of their language based on their customers, demonstrating their understanding and application of technical terminology.

Teachers use a range of questioning techniques skilfully to check learners' and apprentices' understanding and tackle any misconceptions. In mathematics, teachers invite learners to explain their thinking and question their approach to solve mathematical problems. This allows teachers to identify any areas that have been misunderstood and then tailor teaching to address these. As a result, learners grasp more complex learning successfully.

In most cases, teachers provide ample opportunities for learners and apprentices to practise what they have learned. This helps them to develop fluency and consistency in their new knowledge and skills. Learners and apprentices find this helpful and are able to retain new learning in their long-term memory.

Teachers support learners to produce work that not only meets but often exceeds their level of study. Over time, the complexity and precision of their work improves. Most learners become self-critical and gain an understanding of how to continually enhance the quality of their work.

Too few learners on courses for learners with high needs take part in work experience. While some learners often benefit from valuable work experience, not all learners with high needs currently have access to these opportunities. Leaders have identified this as an area for improvement and are developing plans to improve this. They are investing in resources to provide work related activities, including installing an industrial kitchen to support the development of work skills. It is too early to see the impact of this.

Leaders and teachers provide most learners with careers, information, advice, and guidance to make informed decisions about their careers. They teach the skills needed for seeking employment, such as CV preparation, writing job applications, and interview techniques. Most learners understand the pathways available to them on to further education or employment. However, there is a need to better integrate careers advice throughout the apprenticeship curriculums to ensure all apprentices benefit equally from this support.

Staff ensure employers are actively involved in apprentices' progress reviews. These reviews effectively coordinate on- and off-the-job training, allowing apprentices to practise classroom learning in the workplace. This results in apprentices quickly developing skills employers value.

Teachers prepare most learners and apprentices well for their next steps. Young learners typically move on successfully to their chosen paths in education or employment. Apprentices acquire valuable knowledge, skills, and behaviours that enhance their workplace readiness, with many earning promotions either during or after completing their apprenticeships.

Leaders have effective systems to manage and monitor the quality of education. They regularly assess the quality of teaching and provide training to help teachers enhance the learning experience. Although some quality processes are new, they have already positively impacted on the quality of teaching that learners receive, with leaders responding quickly to identified improvement areas.

Leaders and managers effectively manage and monitor subcontractors' performance through regular meetings, lesson visits, and other quality assurance activities. This allows them to understand the strengths and areas for improvement within subcontracted learning. When performance falls below the required standard, leaders act quickly, often removing subcontractors who fail to meet key performance criteria.

Leaders have implemented effective arrangements to scrutinise the quality of education through a dedicated education committee that reports to the main board. Members of the education committee are highly experienced in education and hold the education directorate to high standards. They have a clear understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and areas for improvement in education quality. The committee actively visits centres, meets with teachers and learners, and provides both support and challenge to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure learners' and apprentices' attendance continues to improve until it is high.
- Ensure apprentices receive feedback on written work that helps them improve the quality of their work.
- Ensure all learners have a clear understanding of local risks.
- Ensure all younger learners with high needs are provided with meaningful work experience.

Provider details

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| Unique reference number | 50170 |
| Address | Edmund House 5th Floor, 12-22 Newhall Street Birmingham B3 3EW |
| Contact number | 03001231889 |
| Website | www.nacro.org.uk |
| Principal, CEO or equivalent | Elise Temple |
| Provider type | Independent learning provider |
| Date of previous inspection | 4 to 7 March 2019 |
| Main subcontractors | Pinehurst education Tran4m Youth education project SSG |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal and director of education and skills, 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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