

Aspiration Training [England] Ltd

Inspection date

3 August 2007

Inspection number

30809

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	6
Key areas for improvement.....	6
Main findings	7
Achievement and standards	7
Quality of provision.....	7
Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	8
What learners like about Aspiration Training.....	11
What learners think Aspiration Training could improve	11
Learners' achievements	12

Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health, public services & care.

Description of the provider

1. Aspiration Training (England) Limited is based in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire and was established in April 2007. Before this, the company had been the regional arm of Aspiration Training Ltd which has centres in both England and Wales.
2. Aspiration Training employs 19 staff including 12 assessors, two recruitment officers and a basic skills tutor. Aspiration Training recruits learners, mostly through their employers, from a broad mix of urban and rural settings all over the West Midlands.
3. Aspiration Training provides apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and a workforce development programme for Care and Children's Care Learning and Development (CCLD) for young people and adults at levels 2, 3 and 4. Aspiration Training funds its training provision through contracts with Hereford, Worcestershire and Shropshire and Birmingham and Solihull LSCs and also offers some commercial programmes.
4. Currently 260 learners are in training with 169 learners undertaking early years programmes. Of these 53 are advanced apprentices, 29 are apprentices and 87 are working towards NVQ at levels 2, 3 and 4. All learners are employed across a range of settings including private day nurseries, infant schools, family centres and some are childminders. A total of 91 learners are undertaking Health and Social Care programmes; of these 14 are advanced apprentices, seven apprentices and 70 are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. All learners are employed across a range of settings including, nursing homes, care homes and domiciliary care agencies.
5. Most early years learners attend workshops at Aspiration Training, their employer's premises or a community venue which provide the background knowledge for their qualifications. Care programme learners complete self-study workbooks during private study. Assessors regularly visit learners in the workplace to provide training and assessment, and to review progress. Learners requiring additional basic skills support have access to a basic skills tutor.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

Sector subject area

• Health, Public Services & Care.	Satisfactory: Grade 3
--	------------------------------

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards, the quality of the provision and leadership and management are satisfactory. Provision in Health, public services and care is also satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is inadequate.
7. The inspection team judged the self-assessment process to be appropriately inclusive of the views of staff, learners and employers. The relevant development plan includes specific actions to bring about improvements. The self-assessment report was somewhat descriptive; but thorough. Many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during the inspection were accurately identified in the most recent report.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Aspiration Training has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Aspiration Training has not been inspected previously. The provider has a positive culture of continuous improvement and has implemented a range of initiatives to improve the provision. Learners' success rates have increased significantly across all programmes and are now good for Train to Gain programmes. The provider responds rapidly to make improvements when issues are identified. Formal quality improvement arrangements however, are insufficiently developed.

Key strengths

- High success rates on Train to Gain programmes.
- Very effective support for learners.
- Good co-ordination of training.
- Good development of staff.
- Good quality improvement initiatives to enhance learner progress.

Key areas for improvement

- Poor use of target-setting for apprentices.
- Inadequate specialist learning resources.
- Weak assessment practice.
- Underdeveloped quality improvement arrangements.
- Insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. Achievements and standards are satisfactory overall. Success rates for NVQ only programmes have risen and are now good. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. In the 11 months before the inspection, success rates have increased to 80% for Level 2 programmes and 88% for Level 3 programmes.
10. Success rates for the apprenticeship programmes, in early years and care programmes, at Level 2 and Level 3 have also improved in the three years before inspection. Apprentice success rates have improved from 12% in 2004-05 to 49% in 2005/06. In the last 12 month period before inspection, success rates have increased further to 71% for apprentices and from 27% to 78% for advanced apprentices.
11. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory. Learners speak enthusiastically about their work and their desire to obtain relevant qualifications.
12. Learners develop appropriate practical skills and many have altered their practice with children and other service users as a result of their training. Employers are very supportive of learners and encourage them to attend their lessons and to complete their qualification.
13. Attendance at workshops is satisfactory. Learners attend regularly and gain knowledge to support their technical certificate and the requirements for knowledge and understanding relevant to their NVQs.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Support for learners is good. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Staff are readily accessible and committed to helping learners. Staff are approachable and very supportive. Learners on Train to Gain programmes, many of whom are returning to learning after many years, are well supported and coached to develop their study skills.
15. Learners with considerable personal and social problems are very effectively supported. Learners who are at risk of leaving training are encouraged to remain on their courses. Assessors maintain communication with learners who are absent from work for extended periods and help them return to training.
16. Saturday workshops are organised for early years learners who are unable to attend the planned sessions. Many learners are paid for the study and assessment which they undertake in their own time. Arrangements for literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory as are arrangements for information advice and guidance.

17. There is good co-ordination of training. Employers and assessors work well together and communicate effectively. Learners generally make good progress and are offered a wide range of experiences relevant to their qualification requirements. Some social care employers adjust staff schedules and job roles to ensure appropriate assessment opportunities.
18. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. All learners complete an induction programme covering aspects of equal opportunities and health and safety relevant to their work.
19. Learners on early years programmes regularly attend off-the-job training. The learners enjoy these sessions and staff use a range of strategies to promote learning. Adequate schemes of work and lesson plans are in place. Learners on adult care programmes receive very effective coaching in their workplace.
20. The delivery and assessment of key skills is satisfactory. Key skills are appropriately integrated with vocational learning. Learners find these relevant activities motivating and are able to make appropriate links with their work. For example, early years apprentices improve their understanding of ratios by considering the adult to child ratios in their workplaces.
21. Specialist teaching resources are inadequate. This area for improvement was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners on care programmes make good use of the textbook and range of appropriate workbooks provided to support their study.
22. The use of information and learning technology (ILT) is underdeveloped. Learners do not use ILT to carry out internet research, or access their electronic portfolios. The content of some materials provided by assessors has not been reviewed and does not refer to recent relevant legislation. Materials for early years learners contain insufficient reference to the Every Child Matters agenda.
23. Assessment practice is weak. Learners work is inadequately monitored; in some cases written work is insufficient for evidence requirements and inaccuracies in learners work are unchallenged.
24. Practice by assessors is inconsistent. Standardisation meetings had not been held in the three months before this inspection. Learners on care programmes do not receive written feedback following assessment by observation and do not have the opportunity to reflect on their learning and practice.
25. Target-setting for apprentices is poor. This area for improvement was recognised in the self-assessment report. Targets are not always understood by apprentices. Action plans are not rigorously followed up. The same targets appear in consecutive reviews with no record of reasons for non-completion, or additional support arrangements. Individual learning plans are not updated to show the outcomes of formal reviews.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

-
26. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Aspiration Training provides good staff training for its staff. Informal training takes place in fortnightly curriculum team meetings, which team managers use well to focus on different aspects of the provision. Managers have devised a schedule of appropriate topics to discuss. All assessors are undertaking, or have, an initial teacher qualification. Aspiration Training has a well-established appraisal system, which accurately identifies staff training needs and sets appropriate targets for completion. Staff are well supported in their professional and personal development.
27. Aspiration Training has made good use of quality improvement in initiatives to enhance learner progress. Over the past two years the provider has designed and refined a new model for training apprentices. Tutors use workshops to deliver under-pinning knowledge for the technical certificate and key skills in the early stages of the programme, matching the sessions well to the delivery of NVQs in the workplace. Success rates for apprenticeship programmes have increased significantly. Managers use regular team meetings well to find new ways of addressing ongoing concerns. For example, the childcare team has developed a 'motivation contract', which focuses on very short term target-setting for learners at risk of leaving. An employer booklet has been produced to answer some frequently asked questions. The company introduced an e-portfolio in health and social care, which had some shortcomings. It is in the process of launching a new system that addresses the weaknesses identified.
28. The provider uses management information adequately. The managing director uses data well to inform management discussions. Team managers, and their teams, use weekly reports on learners' progress to respond to individual learner needs. However, data is not used sufficiently to inform curriculum planning.
29. The formal quality assurance arrangements are underdeveloped and do not contribute sufficiently to improvement in the quality of provision. The current arrangements do not cover all parts of the provision. Few observations of the teaching on care programmes have yet been carried out. Managers do not analyse the outcomes of observations of teaching and learning to improve the quality of provision. Similarly, team managers do not sufficiently use feedback from surveys to inform improvements in the quality of provision in curriculum areas. Good practice is well shared within curriculum teams, but is not well shared across curriculum teams.
30. Internal verification strategies and sampling plans are satisfactory. However, the weak assessment practice was not identified before the inspection.
31. The self-assessment is inclusive and thorough. Staff involvement is good and judgements are informed by the views of learners and employers. Managers support their judgements with appropriate evidence use of statistical data. The self-assessment report is appropriately linked to a relevant action plan, which managers monitor closely.
32. Equality of opportunity is inadequate. Aspiration Training does not promote or reinforce equality of opportunity sufficiently. Its equality and diversity policy fails to draw out the implications of relevant legislation, is not supported by an appropriate implementation plan and does not include adequate monitoring arrangements. Aspiration Training has not held formal staff training in equality and diversity for 18 months. Aspiration Training does not monitor employers' commitment to equality of opportunity sufficiently.

33. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Equal opportunities is adequately introduced in induction, but is not sufficiently reinforced in reviews. Aspiration Training does not take positive action to promote its programmes to under-represented groups. The participation of minority ethnic learners has increased in the last year from 7.7% in 2005/06 to 13.5% in the current year, but is still below the providers' target of 16%. The proportion of male learners is low, at only 6%. Success rates of minority ethnic learners were significantly lower than other learners in 2005/06.
34. Aspiration Training generally responds well to the needs of under-represented groups on its programmes. Together with the Birmingham Early Years Partnership, it is working with a group of childminders from an inner-city part of Birmingham. Aspiration Training has been sensitive to the learners' cultural and religious backgrounds in designing and delivering the course. Of the 13 learners on the course to date, three have achieved and the remaining 10 are progressing well towards their NVQ qualification.

What learners like:

- Enjoyable learning workshops.
- Friendly assessors.
- Increasing confidence.
- Useful one-to-one support visits.
- Encouraging learning environment.
- Looking forward to getting a qualification.

What learners think could improve:

- No improvements were identified.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes** managed by the provider 2004 year to 2006 year.

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**	
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall						
		timely						
	04-05	overall						
		timely						
	05-06	overall		48	46		27	
		timely		50	32		20	
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	2	0	47	0	32	
		timely	2	0	24	0	16	
	04-05	overall	51	14	51	12	39	
		timely	75	5	29	5	22	
	05-06	overall	57	60		50		
		timely	38	21		18		

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'