

Asphaleia Limited

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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:

- Employability training

Description of the provider

1. Asphaleia, a company limited by guarantee, is the main contract holder of an Entry to Employment (E2E) consortia funded by Sussex learning and skills council (LSC). Currently 65 learners follow the programme of which 30 attend literacy and numeracy and life skills training at Asphaleia's premises. The remaining 35 follow programmes in personal and social development, short introductory vocational courses and level 1 NVQ programmes at two local general further education colleges which act as subcontractors to Asphaleia. Asphaleia's main administration office is in Worthing. The programme started in August 2008.
2. Additionally, Asphaleia holds training contracts with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the European Social Fund, neither of which is in scope for this inspection. The company is also a private foster care agency and provides other support services, such as accommodation, to young people.
3. The population of West Sussex is approximately 776,300. A higher proportion of the population are qualified to level 2 than nationally, or across the south east as a whole. The proportion claiming job-seekers allowance in West Sussex is similar to the rest of the south east but lower than the national average. Approximately 6% of the population are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs including mathematics and English in 2008 is 51.5% compared with 47.6% nationally. The proportion of young people aged 16–18 not engaged in employment or training is currently 7.5% in Worthing, higher than West Sussex at 5.4%. The proportion of looked-after children aged 17 who continue engagement in education training and employment to the age of 19 in West Sussex is around the national average.

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: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Employability training	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory as is the quality of provision. Leadership and management, and equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory Grade 3

5. Asphaleia has a satisfactory capacity to improve. In the seven months for which data is available, rates of progression into employment, further education or training are satisfactory. The company places an appropriate emphasis on improving progression and learners' achievement of learning objectives. It has invested in resources and accommodation to create a satisfactory learning environment. Its strategic partnerships offer good vocational learning to learners. The company adequately focuses on monitoring performance but its quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. Senior managers do not have sufficient pertinent information to include in self-assessment reporting or evaluate provision effectively.
6. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Asphaleia sufficiently includes learner and staff views in the process and has plans to expand involvement to sub contractors and local employers. The self-assessment report, the company's first as a main provider of E2E, is honest and self-critical. It contains most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified at inspection. However, it is too descriptive and does not focus sufficiently on the features that are of significant impact on learners. The company is good at responding to day-to-day issues and planning improvement but the quality improvement plan contains too many varied and insufficiently specific actions.

Key strengths

- Responsive provision to meet local needs
- Particularly good personal support
- Particularly good strategic planning

Key areas for improvement

- Low attendance
- Insufficient planning to meet individual needs
- Incomplete quality improvement arrangements

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Most learners develop a good range of social and personal skills, despite facing significant barriers to learning or gaining employment at the start of the programme. They learn to work collaboratively and productively with others. The programme improves learners' confidence and re-establishes their trust in the learning process.
8. Progression rates to employment, further education or training are satisfactory. Currently the progression rate is 52%. Of these, 64% progressed into full-time education, 28% into employment and 8% on to other training programmes. Learners' achievement of key objectives is also satisfactory. Leavers achieved all the agreed objectives in their individual learning plan. Learners attain satisfactory literacy, numeracy and life skills, although the achievement of additional skills for life qualifications is low.
9. Attendance rates are low. Attendance at learning sessions was below 50% during inspection and had been consistently low over the previous three months. Many learners have improved their time-keeping skills but some arrive late to sessions. The company has identified attendance as a key area for improvement in their self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Many aspects identified at inspection are contained in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The training centre is well decorated and offers a safe and positive learning environment for E2E learners. Staff treat learners as adults and encourage them to respect each other. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. Furniture and equipment are of good quality and learners have good access to computers and to internet-based learning. Initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy levels is adequate. Tutors adequately monitor learners' progress. In the better learning sessions tutors use a range of well paced learning activities. Learners understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. Tutors use questioning techniques and whole-class activities effectively to stimulate discussion, check understanding and to consolidate learning. Weaker sessions rely too much on worksheets and handouts and lack sufficient pace and variety of activity to sustain learners' interest and to meet the range of abilities within groups. Tutors do not share planned aims and learning outcomes effectively with learners in some lessons.
11. Planning to meet individual needs is not sufficient, which is recognised in Asphaleia's self-assessment report. Tutors do not use the outcomes of initial

assessment sufficiently in planning individual learning. Most key learning objectives and learning and support sections of the E2E programme agreement are the same for all learners and do not reflect individual needs. Some learners' progress reviews contain realistic and achievable short term targets but others are weak, focusing on activities rather than skills development. Project workers do not receive sufficiently detailed information from tutors to be able to plan learners' nextsteps in learning. Most session plans are for groups and are often generic.

12. The programme adequately meets the needs and interests of learners. Provision is very inclusive and responsive to local community needs. The programme is designed well to cater for a wide range of aims and widen participation for learners currently not engaged in education, employment or training. Literacy, numeracy and life skills teaching at Asphaleia is complemented well by partnership arrangements with local colleges to provide a greater choice of learning and progression opportunities. Staff make good use of local facilities to enable learners to try out new skills. The company runs useful programmes to prepare learners for the E2E provision. Enrichment is satisfactory. Learners enjoy an adequate programme of outings that widen their experience and understanding of life. Asphaleia has developed its capacity to offer a range of work experience placements. However, it is too early to judge its impact as few learners currently have such placements.

13. Advice, guidance and support are good. Learners receive particularly good personal support. A good mentoring scheme provides support to learners in danger of dropping out or being excluded because of behavioural problems. Staff telephone absent learners to encourage them to attend although this action has not yet led to significant improvement in attendance. Learners receive good support while making the transition to college courses and after they have left the programme. Staff are skilled at finding solutions which enable learners to maintain contact with the programme during times of crisis and to subsequently return. Asphaleia has good links with the Connexions service and other appropriate external agencies for support on aspects such as advice and guidance, counselling, substance misuse, housing and other personal issues.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Inspectors agreed with most judgements on leadership and management identified by Asphaleia in its most recent self-assessment report but awarded a lower grade.

15. Strategic planning is particularly good. The E2E business plan links well to the company's strategic direction for its training. It includes a good evaluation of the

skills for life needs of the local community. Company workers' views are taken into account during business planning. The company is making good progress to achieve the key targets it has set itself.

16. The planning and implementation of Asphaleia's E2E programme alongside its current portfolio of training and services is well considered and links closely to the company's mission. Asphaleia has a great deal of expertise gained over a decade of working with, and providing services for, disadvantaged and disaffected young people in a variety of different projects. The company has a productive working relationship with Connexions. The partnership arrangements with colleges are new but are positive and provide good vocational opportunities for learners. The company has good infrastructure to expand work-placement opportunities but it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Communication with employers is good. Senior managers are involved in key strategy initiatives for those aged 14–19 in West Sussex
17. Staff are adequately qualified and experienced. All tutors are qualified teachers. Some tutors have specific literacy teaching qualifications and one has a qualification in teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL). However, none currently have numeracy teaching qualifications. The need for these is identified in the self-assessment report and the company has plans to resolve it. All staff have good experience of mentoring young people with barriers to learning. Appraisal and staff development are satisfactory. Staff receive appropriate support to develop their skills to benefit the company and learners. Some staff have progressed within the company to managerial positions. Training courses for staff are subsidised by the company. Resources, including information and communications technology, are satisfactory.
18. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Equality of opportunity policies and procedures are adequate. Social inclusion is good. Promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum is satisfactory. The promotion of Every Child Matters themes is satisfactory. Procedures for safeguarding meet current government requirements. The company has detailed child protection policies, including risk assessments for all stake holders. Training to meet skills for life needs is satisfactory and the company is improving how they meet the needs of young people locally. Managers implement the company's complaint procedures systematically and well to resolve disputes and issues. Mentoring arrangements are skilful, supportive and effectively engage a range of learners with barriers to learning and employment. Asphaleia's main building is adequately accessible. The company collates information on the participation in learning of different cultural groups and by gender. However, no information exists about the achievement of different cultural groups. The company has the capacity to easily provide this information.
19. Quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. The programme has recently started and the provision is adequate to meet the needs of learners. The company has a number of well established processes which it has used historically to monitor the services they provide. Arrangements to monitor

subcontractors are in place but it is too early to judge their effectiveness. Teaching and learning observations take place but are not used sufficiently by senior managers to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning.

20. The self-assessment report is the company's first and was completed early in the first year of the programme. It describes many of the features of the provision accurately but is not sufficiently evaluative. Actions in the accompanying quality improvement plan are not sufficiently prioritised. The company monitors the success and progress of learners carefully every month but does not set suitable targets to help it improve progression rates further.

What learners like:

- 'It helps me to trust people and work as a team'
- 'I'm more confident about meeting new people'
- 'The English and mathematics'
- 'I like the small groups and the good location'

What learners think could improve:

- Activities offered (provide more)
- The lunch breaks (not long enough)
- Introducing a discount card to for learners for travel

Learners' achievements

Outcomes on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes managed by the provider/college 2008 to 2009

Year	Number of leavers in the year	Achieved objectives rate* (%)	Progression rate** (%)
2008/09 7 months	48	52	52

Note: 2008/09 data is part year only and is representative of the three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* These are key objectives identified for each learner following an E2E programme

** Progression is measured in terms learners' movement to further education, education and employment, during or at the end of their training period.

Note: E2E 'achieved objective' and 'progression' rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the college/provider before inspection.