

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Archway Academy
Date of visit: 8 July 2009

Context

Archway Academy Limited (Archway) is a private education and training organisation based in Bordesley, East Birmingham. It has contracted with Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) since February 2004 for the provision of Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes for learners from the local community. The executive director is supported by a deputy director who is also the head of department.

Archway recently gained independent school status for its work with disaffected pupils across the region, which constitutes most of its work. Archway employs 40 staff, six of whom are directly involved in training and assessment on the E2E programme. The provider was inspected in February 2008 when all aspects of the provision were judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

How much progress has Archway made in improving learners' outcomes?	Insufficient progress
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Archway has made little progress in improving outcomes for learners. Overall learner success rates dipped slightly from 75% in 2006/07 to 67% in 2007/08. Learner progression into further education improved slightly in 2007/08, but progression into employment declined slightly. The percentage of unknown destinations is similar to that in the previous inspection. Learners' achievement of their key learning objectives has improved significantly, from 50% in 2006/07 to 75% in 2007/08. Learners continue to produce good standards of work, particularly on the arts and crafts programme. The city centre library is currently exhibiting some of their work.

How much progress has Archway made in improving learners' attendance?	Reasonable progress
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Archway has made reasonable progress in improving attendance. At the previous inspection, attendance was low at 74%. In the current year to date, attendance is 85%. Staff monitor learners' attendance closely at weekly team meetings and

managers receive monthly attendance reports. Staff contact learners swiftly by phone if they fail to attend. Individual reviews with learners now have a greater focus on attendance and punctuality. Staff reinforce the importance of attendance at every opportunity. Learners are encouraged to arrive early with the offer of free tea if they reach the academy before 9.00 o'clock.

Quality of provision

How much progress has Archway made in extending work-placement opportunities for learners?	Reasonable progress
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Archway has made reasonable progress in extending learners' access to work-placements. At the previous inspection, only one learner had an internal work-placement. Archway has recently appointed a placement officer who has regular individual meetings with learners, and supports aspects of the curriculum related to employment. The officer has also usefully drawn together key learning materials into a single work-placement portfolio for learners. Archway effectively monitors learners' progress in completing the portfolio. The officer has also built up a database of 40 employers to provide learners with a good range of placement opportunities. Archway has set itself a target of 30% for the proportion of learners attending a work-placement. To date, 36% of learners have attended an interview for a placement and just under half have been successful.

Leadership and management

How much progress has the provider made in analysing and using data to improve the quality of provision?	Reasonable progress
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Since the previous inspection, Archway has invested in a new management information system that is able to produce a wealth of learner data. Archway now monitors learners' achievements and progress according to their gender, ethnicity and disability more closely. Data from the new system are accurate and reliable. Managers use the data well to support the self-assessment process. The E2E team uses data well to analyse recruitment patterns and to keep Connexions informed of under-representation from particular groups. However, Archway is in the early stages of fully using the new system. Key staff have yet to receive further training on producing a richer range of reports. At the moment, managers are not able to monitor work-placements or attendance by ethnicity or gender.

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How much progress has been made in improving the rigour and accuracy of the self-assessment report?	Insufficient progress
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At the previous inspection, the self-assessment report was found to be insufficiently comprehensive and evaluative. Inspectors judged that it did not sufficiently identify areas for improvement. The current self-assessment is more detailed and makes better use of available data and of learners' views to reach judgements. However, in an attempt to harmonise the E2E self-assessment report with that of the independent school, the report is based on the independent school's self-evaluation framework, which does not sufficiently capture judgements required by the common inspection framework. For instance, the self-assessment report does not include a grade for equality of opportunity or for capacity to improve. The report evaluates guidance and support well, but does not grade it. Key sections of the report contain far too many strengths and weaknesses, with many strengths no more than normal practice. The new report covers *Every Child Matters* themes particularly well. Archway has an adequate post-inspection action plan and quality improvement plan but these plans are not well cross-referenced to the self-assessment report. Archway also has a very effective Skills for Life improvement plan, which is beginning to integrate literacy and numeracy across the organisation. It is sufficiently detailed, specific, timely and measurable.