

Aspire Training Team Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 55015

Name of lead inspector: Elaine Rose HMI

Last day of inspection: 11 December 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Unit 11
Central Bournemouth Business Park
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Information about the provider

1. Aspire Training Team Limited (Aspire) is a private learning provider, formally named Tops Day Nursery Training Limited. Aspire is a separate training company of a group of companies trading as Hadland Care Group. Aspire trains learners and employers in 11 nurseries and play clubs and employs 20 staff. It has a training centre on all sites and in its main headquarters in Bournemouth, Dorset.
2. Aspire contracts with the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It provides apprenticeship training in health, public services and care across Dorset, Somerset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Additional funding is provided by the Early Years Development Partnership. A Train to Gain contract is now completing, with seven learners remaining on programme. For 2008/09, 100% of these learners achieved their qualification. A small number of adult care learners in two new homes follow programmes in adult social care but these are self-funded.
3. Ninety-five learners are currently on programme. Forty-two learners are following the advanced apprenticeship framework in children's care, learning and development. Of these 14 are aged 16 to 18 and 28 are aged 19+. Fifty-three learners are following the apprenticeship programme. Of these 38 are aged 16 to 18 and 15 are aged 19+. Ten per cent of learners are male. Below 1% of learners are from minority ethnic groups compared with approximately 8% for the region.
4. The proportion of school leavers gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including maths and English, is higher than the national average. The unemployment rate for the region varies, with rates in Dorset and Hampshire lower than in Somerset, but rates overall are below the national average.
5. Aspire provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Bright Horizons Family Solutions.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	7 learners
Apprenticeships	95 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Grade 1
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	1
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	
Childcare, learning and development	1

Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of Aspire Training Team Ltd is outstanding. Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Aspire has implemented significant improvements since the previous inspection. Learners make excellent progress on their programmes.
7. The quality of provision is outstanding overall. Training and assessment are very effective. Tutors use learning materials successfully to support training, but the provider recognises the need to invest more in developing learning technology. Assessment of learners' work is good. Reviews of learners' progress are thorough and fully involve learners and employers. Targets for learners are challenging.
8. Aspire's response to meeting the needs and interests of learners and employers is outstanding. Its partnership working is effective and benefits learners. Advice, guidance and support for learners are outstanding.
9. Leadership and management are outstanding. Aspire's directors provide inspiring leadership. Directors and managers have high expectations and set challenging targets. The management of training and assessment is outstanding. Staff are well qualified and experienced. They are good role

models and provide good motivation for learners, with high levels of encouragement and support.

10. Arrangements to promote and reinforce understanding of equality of opportunity are good. Aspire has good arrangements for the safeguarding of learners.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Apprentice and advanced apprentice success rates consistently exceed national averages for all learners. Staff track learners' attainment carefully. One hundred per cent of learners achieved their qualification in literacy and numeracy and key skills.
- Standards of work are very high. Learners develop a particularly high level of skills and knowledge for their employment in the childcare sector. Learners complete a range of additional short courses, such as safeguarding and paediatric first aid. Learners have a good knowledge and understanding of children and their development. Portfolios are well organised and presented.
- Learners make very good progress towards achieving their frameworks, with around 80% achieving within their expected time. A significant number of apprentices progress into positions of responsibility within nurseries. Others progress to university, teacher training or midwifery.
- Learners feel very safe. They understand and can apply the policies and procedures for keeping themselves and children safe. Experienced colleagues supervise learners carefully. Learners appreciate the robust security arrangements for access to workplaces.
- Teaching, training and assessment are good and support learning and development well. Learners enjoy their off-the-job training sessions. Trainers provide exceptional levels of support to meet learners' individual needs in key skills tutorials and workshops. However, tutors use their assessment of learners' preferred ways of learning insufficiently in their planning.
- Arrangements to meet the needs of users are outstanding. Staff plan learners' progression routes well. Learners make good progress and gain promotions in their workplaces. A number have progressed into higher education. Many of Aspire's managers are former apprentices. The provision meets the needs of employers who need a well-qualified and highly motivated work force.
- Partnership working is effective and enhances learners' experience. Partnerships are developed with schools and Connexions to support learners in accessing relevant training. Staff attend careers events. They provide nursery visits to interest pupils in training in childcare. Aspire has good relationships with employers, other providers and local authorities and shares good practice and training.
- Advice, guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Learners receive outstanding individual support which enables them to gain their qualifications.

Those with additional learning needs are given extra time with their assessor. All learners have at least three hours of planned independent study time away from their work with children.

- Leadership is outstanding. Leaders provide clear direction to managers and staff. They communicate the vision and strategy for the company clearly to all staff. Targets for learners and staff are challenging. Managers are highly enthusiastic and staff morale is particularly high. They make good role models for learners.
- Provision is well managed. Aspire plans its training and assessment flexibly and carefully for the benefit of learners and employers. Aspire manages its resources effectively and provides outstanding value for money. The number of staff to learners is high and staff are able to give ample time to supporting learners' needs.
- Action to improve the quality of outcomes and provision is outstanding. The self-assessment process is highly inclusive and effective. It leads to clear action plans for improvement. Aspire uses accurate data. The reports produced enable Aspire to monitor performance closely. All aspects of training have improved since the previous inspection.
- Arrangements to promote and reinforce equality of opportunity are good. Aspire provides good social and educational inclusion, providing outstanding support for learners with disadvantaged backgrounds. It attracts high numbers of males to the industry. However, the number of apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds is low.

What does Aspire need to do to improve further?

- Improve the assessment of learners' preferred ways of learning and use this analysis more effectively in planning training sessions.
- Further develop the company website and the use of learning technology in the organisation.
- Promote further the understanding of the impact of the user-involvement strategy and involve learners, employers and partners more in understanding the importance of their role in contributing to the decisions that lead to continuous improvement of provision.
- Continue to improve the promotion of learning opportunities in childcare to non-traditional groups.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being able to approach staff at any time
- open and friendly staff
- the good organisation of the programme

- the way the work is broken into small chunks so it can be understood easily
- the way numeracy key skills is made to be fun
- the small groups for the technical certificate sessions
- the good, immediately available support
- the respect trainers and assessors have for learners' opinions
- clear written feedback in reviews
- the debates for equality and diversity.

What learners would like to see improved:

- access to computers at headquarters
- more books on theorists.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the strong leadership in partnerships that focus on widening participation
- the good organisation
- the thorough induction into the workplace for learners
- the enthusiastic trainers, who make learning enjoyable
- the effective planning to provide opportunities for assessment
- the steps taken to assess and provide for learners' individual learning needs
- the support provided for learners
- the prompt and good response to suggestions.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no improvements suggested.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 1

11. Since the previous inspection, Aspire has improved the quality of all aspects of its provision. Learners' outcomes have improved and are outstanding, significantly above national averages. Aspire has ambitious targets and sound strategies to improve the provision further. Aspire uses its resources efficiently and provides outstanding value for money.
12. The company provides good training and development for all tutors and assessors.
13. Training is good. Aspire has redesigned its programmes in response to learner feedback. The new training model meets the needs of learners and employers. Induction has improved and is effective. The assessment of learners' needs and their progress is outstanding.
14. The settings are of a particularly high standard, with many purpose-built for childcare. Advice, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. The ethos of the company promotes good social and educational inclusion.
15. Self-assessment is outstanding. Aspire has effective processes for monitoring performance and improving the quality of provision. Aspire makes good use of data, including the close monitoring of the enrolment and progress of learners from different groups. Aspire collects learners' and employers' views systematically and analyses responses thoroughly. The self-assessment process is inclusive of all staff. Staff are highly motivated and respond enthusiastically to targets in well-considered action plans. These are monitored and updated regularly.
16. The main strengths and areas of improvement in the report match those identified by inspectors. The previous report for 2008/09 was over-descriptive and some aspects were not graded. An update, provided at the time of inspection, more clearly grades every aspect of Aspire's performance against each aspect of the Common Inspection Framework.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

17. Outcomes for learners are outstanding overall. Success rates for apprentices are exceptionally good and consistently exceed national averages. Eighty-four percent of learners achieved their framework in 2007/08 and 81% in 2008/09. Success rates for advanced apprenticeships are outstanding, with success rates rising from 79% in 2007/08 to 96% in 2008/09. Learners aged over 19 are particularly successful at both level 2 and 3. Achievement of key skills is outstanding.

18. Learners make very good progress towards attaining their learning goals. At level 2, approximately 80% of apprentices and 77% of advanced apprentices achieve within the expected time. After completing their level 3 qualifications some learners progress to university, teacher training and midwifery. The provider supports staff to obtain higher-level qualifications such as NVQ level 4 or a degree in early childhood studies.
19. Learners enjoy improving their literacy and numeracy skills. All 40 learners achieved their national certificate in 2008/09. One apprentice, who previously found literacy challenging, has written a book for the children to show how superheroes can avoid aggressive play and conform to behaviour rules. Learners complete a range of additional short courses, such as safeguarding and paediatric first aid.
20. Standards of work are exceptionally high. The key skills, technical certificate and NVQ aspects of the framework are well organised. Learners develop a deep understanding of the theory of childcare and development. Evidence of knowledge is of a good standard and well presented. Learners develop particularly high levels of skill. A significant number of apprentices progress into employment within the nurseries, with some learners promoted to positions of responsibility. Several learners have progressed to roles as assessors and trainers.
21. Learners feel very safe. They understand the policies for keeping themselves and the children safe and healthy. Security arrangements for premises are robust. Experienced staff supervise learners carefully. Learners contribute well to the community by involving the children in fund raising and in activities such as singing for patients in hospitals and care homes.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

22. The quality of provision is outstanding overall. Teaching, training and assessment are very effective and support learning and development of skills well. Training arrangements are flexible to meet learner and employer needs. Individual learning support is provided in the learners' setting for those who cannot attend training at the company headquarters, to enable them to complete their written assignments. Good target setting in reviews motivates learners. Employers have particularly close knowledge of learners' progress and give exceptional levels of support in partnership with assessors.
23. Learners and employers value highly assessors' knowledge and professional expertise. Assessor visits to the workplace are frequent and regular. Trainers assess assignments promptly and accurately and write constructive comments with guidance on how to improve. Assessors carry out effective observations of learners' skills frequently and record progress in detail. Learners use evidence from previous courses and other parts of the framework efficiently in the NVQ.

24. Trainers provide exceptional levels of support in key skills learning sessions. They build on initial assessments of skills and knowledge to meet the individual needs of learners. Learners enjoy group training sessions and develop greater understanding of how children grow and develop. However, trainers use assessments of learners' preferred ways of learning insufficiently in their planning.
25. Arrangements to meet the needs of learners and employers are outstanding. Aspire plans progression routes well. Learners with few qualifications from school progress well and gain promotion in their workplaces. A number have progressed into higher education. Many of Aspire's managers are former apprentices. The provision meets the needs of employers who need a well-qualified and highly motivated workforce. Staff consider employers' needs when learners are away from their setting to undertake training at Aspire headquarters. They negotiate training sessions in advance with the employer.
26. Partnership working is good and supports the needs of learners. Partnerships are established with schools and Connexions to support learners in accessing relevant training. Staff attend school information and advice events to inform pupils of training and careers in childcare. School pupils attend nurseries to assist them to make informed choices.
27. Aspire has good relationships with employers, other providers and local authorities to share good practice and training. For example, Aspire staff regularly meet with members of their local cluster group to access wider training opportunities offered through the early years partnership.
28. Advice, guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Learners receive outstanding individual support which enables them to work through childcare-related written tasks and gain their qualifications. Those with additional learning needs are given extra time with their assessor. All learners have at least three hours of planned independent study time away from their work with children. Trainers support learners exceptionally well with key skills tasks which are linked closely to working with children. Aspire staff access advice from housing and health agencies on behalf of learners. Learners have access to confidential counselling.

Leadership and management

Grade 1

29. Leadership and management of Aspire are outstanding. Very strong leadership of the company sets a clear direction for growth and clear targets for staff. Aspire directors communicate the company vision to all staff. Strategic objectives and targets respond well to the skills agenda. A newsletter explains strategic actions and their impact. Staff are involved fully in a timetable of well-structured meetings.
30. Directors and managers monitor performance closely and ensure that the priorities of the organisation are met. They promote high standards and provide

good role models. A number of senior managers completed their apprenticeships with the company. Learners and staff say the positive and supportive culture encourages them to perform beyond their expectations.

31. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and meet government requirements. Aspire makes good use of risk assessment for new learners requiring Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. An appropriate central record of all staff is maintained and updated. Contact details of all apprentices are available. All relevant staff have an enhanced CRB check. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training to level 2.
32. Awareness of responsibilities in ensuring health and safety is particularly high across the organisation. Recent policies increase safety for children. For example, staff lock all mobile telephones away. However, Aspire does not provide training for learners in the safe use of the internet.
33. Arrangements to promote equality and diversity are good. Aspire provides outstanding support for learners with disadvantaged backgrounds. Aspire gives the ABCD award to staff and learners to recognise their 'action beyond the call of duty'. For example, staff supported learners from Traveller families, driving them to and from their childcare settings to help them achieve their apprenticeship. Aspire paid for driving lessons to help these vulnerable young people in their future employment.
34. Aspire provides good training in equality and diversity for all staff. Aspire reviews and updates its policies and procedures effectively. These are clearly stated in handbooks for staff and learners. Aspire provided a full-day conference for all staff to reinforce understanding of equality and diversity. Arrangements to eliminate bullying and harassment are robust. Learners have confidence in Aspire to provide a safe and supportive environment.
35. Learners have good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and the wider aspects of diversity. Aspire learners celebrate a range of religious and cultural festivals. Targets are challenging, for example, increasing the recruitment of males. At 10%, the proportion of males is significantly above the average for the childcare industry. However, the number of apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds is low.
36. Aspire engages very effectively with learners, employers and partners and meets their needs well. Many employers train with Aspire. It has a very successful contract with Bright Horizons providing key skills and technical certificate training for their staff. Communications are highly effective and relationships are particularly good.
37. Aspire knows its users well and is flexible and supportive in its response to any requests or concerns. Staff work closely with colleges, schools and Connexions in order to recruit learners to its programmes. Aspire works closely in partnership with a range of organisations to improve the quality of the learners' experience.

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38. Aspire takes very effective action to improve the quality of provision. At the previous inspection, outcomes and the quality of provision were judged to be good. They are now outstanding. The self-assessment process is highly effective and informs clear improvement plans. The observation process is effective. Aspire provides its tutors with constructive verbal and written reports. Staff conduct thorough audits of all paperwork. Close analysis of feedback enables staff to improve the quality of provision. However, not all employers recognise the impact of their involvement in the improvement process.
39. The company uses its resources exceptionally well to provide good value for money. Financial management is good, with close monitoring of budgets. Aspire provides high quality learning environments and materials, though staff recognise the need to increase the use of ILT in training.

Information about the inspection

40. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's training director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of Aspire's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
41. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the college. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from the programmes in health, public services and care.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Aspire Training Team

Learning types: 14–16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16–18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14–16	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	95				95
Overall effectiveness	1				1
Capacity to improve	1				
Outcomes for learners	1				1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1				
How well do learners progress?	1				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>					
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1				
Quality of provision	1				1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	1				
Leadership and management	1				1
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	1				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	1				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	1				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1				

*where applicable to the type of provision

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