

Aspire Education Academy

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 1278600

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Inspection dates: 10–11 December 2018

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Aspire Sporting Academy Ltd operates as Aspire Education Academy. Since it was established in 2010, the company has offered adult training courses for unemployed adults as a subcontractor. In May 2017, Aspire Education Academy started to offer levy- and co-investment-funded apprenticeships for schools and academies in Greater Manchester.

At the time of this monitoring visit, Aspire Education Academy has 91 apprentices. Seven are enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships and the remainder are registered on apprenticeship frameworks. Most apprentices are studying on level 3 supporting teaching and learning in schools. Of the seven apprentices who are enrolled on standards-based apprenticeships, three are studying on level 3 in lead adult care worker. Four are level 5 operations department manager apprentices. Around 120 learners are on employability courses as part of subcontracting arrangements.

Themes

How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

Reasonable progress

Leaders have a clear ambition to provide high-quality training for individuals who wish to work – mostly as teaching assistants – in schools and academies. They have productive working relationships with individual schools and academies that benefit apprentices greatly. For example, they have ensured that schools' and academies' leaders plan apprentices' study time during their working hours.

Leaders are realistic about the company's capacity to offer effective training. As a result, they are cautious about the number of apprentices that they recruit and train annually. They have invested significantly in systems, such as software and an online portfolio. These systems have enabled all staff to have and use up-to-date

information about apprentices' training and progress effectively. Leaders and managers use these online resources to frequently and accurately monitor apprentices' progress and intervene quickly if an apprentice falls behind with their work. As a result, most apprentices make the progress expected of them.

Managers have frequent meetings with the schools' and academies' managers to discuss in detail individual apprentices' progress and development. This ensures that staff from the schools and academies and tutors support apprentices effectively. They agree additional activities that enable apprentices to develop further their knowledge and skills, for example working with and supporting pupils with dyslexia.

Leaders and managers have implemented successfully a curriculum that meets the apprenticeship requirements. The curriculum includes an appropriate range of on- and off-the-job training and additional specific courses offered by schools and academies. These include courses such as safeguarding pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, as leaders rightly identify, the records of off-the-job training activities are not consistently reliable. Consequently, leaders cannot ensure that all apprentices benefit from high-quality off-the-job activities.

Leaders and managers rightly recognise that not all tutors review and record apprentices' progress and development in sufficient detail. As a result, a minority of apprentices and their employers are not clear about the skills and behaviours that apprentices develop. Managers' improvement actions are very recent and have not yet had a measurable effect.

Managers acknowledge that the information they use to identify and plan staff development is not accurate enough. Managers do not evaluate sufficiently the impact of tutors' practices on apprentices' development when observing tutors' teaching. This means that managers' findings are not always reliable enough to inform staff development activities.

Leaders and managers have appropriate oversight of the provision and apprentices' progress towards completion of their apprenticeship and their destinations. They are rightly proud of the high proportion of apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship and are in employment.

What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices? Reasonable progress

Apprentices enjoy their programmes. They are proud to develop the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to work in schools and academies. Many are justifiably delighted to acquire the skills to be teaching assistants. Most apprentices can explain how their new skills help them in their job roles, for example coaching

pupils to improve their reading and writing. They have become more confident in using their skills, such as discussing different teaching techniques with teachers.

Tutors' effective planning of off-the-job training helps apprentices to be valuable employees. For example, apprentices learn to coach pupils who need additional support skilfully and help them to complete their learning tasks.

Tutors identify accurately apprentices' starting points – particularly any additional learning needs – to plan their teaching activities. For example, they provide apprentices who have dyslexia with suitable coloured overlays to support their learning.

In sessions, tutors plan activities carefully to ensure that all apprentices develop skills they can apply in the workplace. For example, they discuss practices in different schools and academies, how different they are and the possible reasons for these differences. In lessons, tutors encourage apprentices who are less confident to take part in discussions.

Not all apprentices produce the high standard of work of which they are capable. This is because tutors do not consistently provide apprentices with useful and detailed feedback on their written work. Consequently, not all apprentices know how to improve their work. As a result, the standard of a small minority of apprentices' written work is not good enough.

Tutors offer apprentices effective advice and guidance about their options after completing their programmes. They offer good support for apprentices who decide to continue their studies to a higher level.

Most apprentices have good skills in using English and mathematics as needed in their job roles as teaching assistants. Apprentices receive effective support from tutors to improve their mathematical skills.

Tutors do not consistently identify apprentices' spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. Consequently, apprentices' good development of English skills is hindered as apprentices repeat their mistakes.

How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress

Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and duties in keeping apprentices safe, including from the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation. This has led to the development and implementation of detailed and effective policies to reduce risks to apprentices. Leaders and managers undertake suitable checks before employing staff. They check their backgrounds and conduct enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks.

The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) is trained to an appropriate level. He has established a very close working relationship with Bury safeguarding board. Procedures for reporting incidents are clear. The DSO maintains a detailed record of safeguarding concerns and follow-up actions.

All staff have completed appropriate safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty training. As a result, they are confident in promoting and discussing safeguarding matters with apprentices, for example the safeguarding of vulnerable pupils.

When reviewing apprentices' progress, tutors check apprentices' knowledge of online safety, such as when using social media. For example, apprentices have changed their profiles on social media because of their training.

Apprentices receive additional safeguarding training from their schools and academies. This has contributed well to apprentices' good understanding of safeguarding matters. They understand their responsibility for keeping pupils in their workplace safe. Apprentices have a good understanding of unwanted attention that pupils may experience, including the risk of cyber bullying. In these cases, apprentices know the correct actions that they should take.

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