

Asphaleia

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 58385

Name of lead inspector: Nicholas Crombie HMI

Last day of inspection: 14 October 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Asphaleia holds a contract with the Young People's Learning Agency for a Foundation Learning programme and with the Skills Funding Agency for a European Social Fund (ESF) programme targeting young people aged 14 to 16 and 16 to 19 at risk of being not in employment, education or training (NEET).
2. Asphaleia was last inspected in March 2009. It has since become a sole contractor for Foundation Learning, having previously been the lead member of an Entry to Employment consortium. Asphaleia's Foundation Learning contract is for 241 learners annually. This provision accounts for around one third of its activity.
3. Currently, 66 part-time learners aged 16 to 19 are following the Foundation Learning programme, 28 of whom are male, 57 of White British ethnicity and 16 have a declared disability. Only two learners are on the ESF-funded programme for over 16 year olds. The Foundation Learning programme is delivered in four locations in Sussex, including Worthing where Asphaleia has its head office. The company provides a range of other support services to young people.
4. The population of West Sussex is approximately 800,000. The proportion of the population qualified to level 2 is 67%, one percentage point higher than nationally, and those with no qualifications is 8%, three percentage points below the national average. Approximately 6% of the population is from a minority ethnic group. The proportion of pupils attaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics in West Sussex in 2010/11 was 63% compared to 62% nationally. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are NEET in West Sussex is currently 6% on average.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Provision for young learners:	
Foundation Learning	237 part-time learners

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Preparation for life and work	3

Overall effectiveness

5. Asphaleia's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Learners' achievements are satisfactory overall, including the rate at which they achieve qualifications and their progression into employment, apprenticeships, further education and training. The standard of their work is satisfactory and learners develop useful personal and employability skills. Learners feel safe during their learning programme. Their attendance has improved significantly over the past year, although it has dipped in the past month.
6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Inspectors observed some good-quality lessons in which learners were enjoying and participating well in their learning. Tutors increasingly use newly-developed interactive learning technology to support teaching and learning. Initial assessment is comprehensive but does not sufficiently inform individual programme agreements or planning for learning. Progress reviews lack detail. Target setting is imprecise.
7. Partnership arrangements are good, and some directly ensure that learners receive particularly good confidential guidance and support on personal, social and health-related matters. Project workers provide good support to help learners overcome specific personal and social barriers.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Asphaleia's values of open access, inclusion, fair treatment for all and personalised support are demonstrably reflected in staff practice. An extensive and ambitious range of

improvement actions is beginning to promote improvement. Data are not used well, including analysis of data on the relative performance of different learners or between each centre.

9. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The arrangements for the promotion and practice of equality and diversity are satisfactory overall, but there has been no annual equality and diversity training for staff.
10. The collection and use of learners' views are satisfactory. Self-assessment is satisfactory but the whole process is not sufficiently structured by the Common Inspection Framework. Value for money is satisfactory.

Main findings

- Learners' progression into employment, apprenticeships, further education and training is low but has improved over the year. In the contract year 2010/11 the progression rate rose from 29% to 42%, while the proportion whose destination remains unknown has reduced to 28%.
- Learners entered for accredited qualifications achieve well. Enrolments on information and communication technology functional skills courses are low. Insufficient vocationally-related qualifications are currently available to learners, but Asphaleia's plans to offer apprenticeships are well advanced.
- The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners gain in verbal confidence, develop personal and work-related skills, including team working. Learners feel safe during their learning programme.
- Monthly attendance rates have improved significantly since the last inspection. Since January 2011 they rose from 50% to around 70% in June and August. However, attendance fell to 47% in September and was also low during inspection.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best sessions, tutors plan sessions well to include varied learning activities which challenge, motivate and interest learners. Tutors use newly-developed interactive learning technology well in two of four centres to provide a greater depth and range of teaching and learning. Some teaching observed was at an inappropriately high level and did not take sufficient account of the varying levels of ability or prior knowledge of the learner group. Asphaleia's system for observing and evaluating teaching and learning is satisfactory.
- Initial assessment is comprehensive but does not sufficiently inform individual programme agreements or planning for learning. Programme agreements do not always contain sufficient details identified during initial assessment. Progress reviews lack detail. Target setting is imprecise. Some learners do not know how far they have progressed, how identified barriers can be overcome or what they need to do to improve.
- Partnership arrangements are good. They include strong links with community health representatives to anticipate and address health issues. Learners receive particularly good confidential guidance and support on personal, social and health-related matters. Asphaleia has made productive partnerships with

strategic bodies, the youth offending service, a charity providing apprenticeships, local schools and social services.

- Project workers provide good support to help learners overcome specific personal and social barriers. Particularly effective use is made of learning support to improve motivation, literacy, numeracy and language skills. An externally-funded therapeutic support project worker provides effective one-to-one support.
- Leadership and management of the provision are satisfactory. All aspects of practical delivery are based on Asphaleia's principles of open accessibility, inclusion, fairness and personalised support. Staff strongly support and practise the organisation's values.
- An extensive and ambitious range of improvement actions has been identified based on a thorough assessment of what Asphaleia does well and what it needs to do better. Some actions have already promoted improvements in attendance. Data are not available in sufficient range or used systematically for monitoring purposes.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. Asphaleia meets all statutory legal requirements. Relevant policies and procedures are written as clearly contextualised, practical guidance for staff. Staff have a very good understanding of safeguarding issues and practice. Referral arrangements to external agencies are effective and prompt. Asphaleia has no formal internal system to monitor individual learners referred to an external agency.
- The arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory. Asphaleia successfully practises an intrinsically inclusive and supportive approach for learners based on respect, fairness and open access. However, there has been no formal, annual equality and diversity training for staff. Data on the relative performance of different ethnic groups or learners' achievement between centres have not been analysed.

What does Asphaleia need to do to improve further?

- Systematically monitor and use data on the impact of current and planned improvement actions to ensure that a higher proportion of learners attend regularly and progress into employment, apprenticeships, further education and training.
- Ensure consistently higher quality teaching and learning through more frequent formal lesson observations, sharing good practice between staff, and improving the range of teaching techniques used in class.
- Ensure that the detail gathered during initial assessment fully informs individual learning agreements so that learning can be fully individualised.
- Make sure that target setting is more precise so that learners can make better progress through agreeing very specific, measurable and incremental targets and use these to measure and review their progress.
- Align future self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes against the Common Inspection Framework in order to provide a clearer evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement.

- Introduce an annual programme of formal training in equality and diversity so that all staff are fully aware of basic and current practice. Ensure that all tutors and project staff have sufficient expertise to broaden learners' understanding of equality of opportunity during reviews and within the curriculum.
- Closely monitor and analyse the rates of enrolment, achievement and progression in order to identify any underperformance by different learner groups and between centres.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the help provided to improve their maths skills
- staff who are always there to support them
- approachable staff who are not judgemental and understand them well
- being given responsibility to lead projects and working in teams
- doing work which is good fun, and different from being in school.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more opportunity to turn down short courses which they don't see as relevant
- being able to use a more modern version of Microsoft Office
- the chance to gain a literacy qualification at Haywards Heath.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

11. Asphaleia's capacity to improve is satisfactory. It has made adequate progress since its previous inspection in 2009 in improving the rate of learners' achievement and their progress into education, training or employment. The attendance rate, while fluctuating recently, has improved progressively over the past year. Senior managers have identified a wide and ambitious range of appropriate improvement actions. Although many of these actions are still work in progress, some have already had a positive impact on improving the programme and learners' experience of it. The system for observing teaching and learning is sound, although individual observations are too infrequent. Good partnership arrangements have been developed which help to support learners. Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

12. Learners who take qualifications achieve high success rates, notably in functional skills and aspects such as sexual health, basic food hygiene and skills for employability. Few learners enrol on information and communication technology functional skills courses. Progression rates to employment, training or further education are low, but they have improved significantly from 29% in 2010/11 to 42% during the current contract year.
13. Learners achieve a satisfactory standard of work overall. They develop in confidence and increase their personal, social and employability skills. They learn and apply team-working and project-leading skills. The standard of their written work in classes is satisfactory. Learners' involvement in, and enthusiasm for, learning was particularly good in sessions where the learners saw the immediate relevance of the task in hand. Most learners made thoughtful contributions to discussions in the lessons observed by inspectors.
14. The average monthly attendance rate has improved since the last inspection. During the inspection, learners' attendance was low and punctuality was very poor in two of the sessions observed.
15. Learners feel safe. They understand and appreciate the very well-planned and thorough arrangements to risk assess their activities. Asphaleia is meticulous in ensuring that procedures relating to parent or carer consent forms are followed.
16. Asphaleia has a sound focus on the importance of learners developing healthy lifestyles. Learners' involvement in the wider community is satisfactory. Over the past year around 10% of learners have engaged in voluntary activities such as working with a local disability charity, in a community garden and a local respite care centre.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons, tutors involve learners well through a good variety of activities and meet individual learners' needs. Session plans and schemes of work are thorough and have been thoughtfully prepared. The use of information and learning technology to enrich teaching and learning during lessons is well established in two of the four centres. Weaker sessions demonstrate an insufficient range of activity, diversity of teaching techniques or variety of resources. In two lessons observed, the teaching was set at an inappropriately high level for the learners concerned and did not take sufficient account of the varying levels of ability or prior knowledge of the learner group.
18. The system for observing and evaluating teaching and learning is satisfactory in its breadth and approach, but only one lesson observation is carried out per tutor each year. The link between the outcomes of observation and tutors' skills development is not sufficiently strong.
19. The initial assessment of literacy and numeracy is comprehensive. However, these findings and those of a comprehensive assessment of each learner's potential personal and social barriers to learning are not used well to construct individual learning agreements or to plan individual learning. The targets set within learning agreements are imprecise.
20. Asphaleia's system for monitoring learners' progress is not working well. Progress reviews lack detail, are not sufficiently personalised and do not include challenging targets. Tutors enter information into individual learning plans using a virtual learning centre covering learners' basic progress and achievements, but this information is not used by project workers who undertake subsequent reviews. Learners are not given copies of the review documents. Some reviews have not taken place at the planned frequency.
21. Asphaleia's Foundation Learning programme meets learners' needs and interests satisfactorily. The range of courses available at three of the four centres is satisfactory, but there is no literacy provision at one centre. There are currently insufficient opportunities for learners to gain vocational qualifications, but plans are well advanced to offer apprenticeships. Staff are very experienced in working with learners with a range of barriers to learning and bring this experience to bear well in their dealings with learners. Where appropriate, project workers are effective in supporting learners to develop their interests through encouraging enrichment activities such as taking driving lessons, volunteering and horse riding.
22. Partnership arrangements are good. They include strong links with community health representatives to anticipate and address health issues. Learners receive particularly good confidential guidance and support on personal, social, housing and health-related matters. Productive partnerships have been developed with West Sussex strategic bodies to ensure that learning and skills provision across the area is complementary and well planned. Links are strong with the youth

offending service, a charity providing apprenticeships, local schools and social services.

23. Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive appropriate guidance on entering the programme. The induction booklet is attractively presented in simple language. Staff know the learners well and are demonstrably interested in their well-being. Support on personal matters is good. An externally-funded therapeutic support project worker provides effective one-to-one support.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

24. Asphaleia's values of open access, inclusion, fair treatment for all and personalised support guide and shape all aspects of programme delivery and staff practice. All its policies are contextualised by these values and much specific guidance has been written in order to provide staff with clear examples of how the values can be delivered in practice.
25. Senior managers have identified a very wide-ranging and challenging set of improvement actions based on a thorough assessment of Asphaleia's strengths and areas for development. A high proportion of these actions are work in progress, but two in particular have already promoted improvement. The rise in the attendance rate is the result of a well-thought-through improvement strategy. The good development of shared online media resources to extend the range of teaching and learning is an effective response to specific areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. These online resources are used with increasing effectiveness.
26. Data are not used either routinely or systematically to monitor and analyse the performance and quality of all aspects of the provision.
27. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Asphaleia meets all its statutory legal requirements. Relevant policies and procedures are written as clearly contextualised, practical guidance for staff. Annual training has been effective. Staff have a very good understanding of safeguarding issues and practice. Learners' understanding is sound, although not sufficiently reinforced during reviews. Incident logging and reporting are very thorough. Referrals to external agencies have been prompt. Asphaleia does not have a risk-based system which enables staff to monitor the ongoing well-being and progress of a learner who has also been referred to an external agency.
28. The arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are satisfactory. Asphaleia successfully practises an intrinsically inclusive and supportive approach for learners based on respect, fairness and open access. Over the year, the proportion of learners from a minority ethnic background is three percentage points above the West Sussex area. The gender profile and backgrounds of Asphaleia staff reflect those of the learners. Some staff were formerly learners and provide good role models for learners. However, there has been no annual equality and diversity training for any staff. Project workers are not sufficiently aware of how best to develop learners' understanding during reviews. Data on the relative performance of different ethnic groups or learners'

achievement between centres are available but have not been analysed. While there are no significant differences in performance between different learner groups, there are some clear differences between the performance of the centres.

29. Asphaleia has adequate arrangements to gather the views of its learners to support and promote improvement. The outcomes of questionnaires are collated but there is no clear link between the views expressed and subsequent improvement actions.
30. Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors, and the grades awarded were largely accurate. However, the self-assessment report is too long and descriptive and not sufficiently structured against the Common Inspection Framework. The quality improvement plan contains related improvement actions but does not contain specific and measurable targets. Not all staff were involved in an exercise to assess strengths and areas for improvement.
31. Asphaleia provides satisfactory value for money. Learners' rate of achievement on accredited courses is high and their progress to employment, education or training is improving. Users' views are collected and collated. Overall resources, including the use of premises, are satisfactory and the new virtual learning environment is increasingly being used effectively.

Information about the inspection

32. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment reports and quality improvement plan, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
33. Inspectors visited each of Asphaleia's training locations, used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Asphaleia

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	16-18 Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	66	66
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
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?	2	
Leadership and management	3	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	-	
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?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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