

asphaleia training

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

8–11 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
Study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Recent reductions in resources have resulted in a curriculum which does not offer learners a wide enough range of opportunities.
- The standards of teaching and learning are not good enough and managers have yet to have sufficient impact on improving tutor performance.
- Staff do not use the information gathered about learners at the start of training effectively to plan a bespoke learning programme or plan lessons sufficiently well.
- Learners do not have sufficient opportunities to develop essential employability skills.
- While a high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications, not enough achieve at the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Attendance in lessons is not good enough at two of the centres and requires improvement to aid better learning and learners' rate of progress.
- Tutors do not set sufficiently helpful targets that maximise the development of learners' personal, social and employability skills.

The provider has the following strengths

- The leader of asphaleia, its managers and staff share a particularly strong commitment to supporting the many learners with complex personal lives or previously disrupted education.
- Many learners who stay to the end of the programme progress to further education.
- asphaleia staff and specialist partners support learners well, especially those with poor previous educational attainment and difficult personal circumstances.
- Effective partnership arrangements ensure that asphaleia learners receive the advice, guidance and support they need to remain on programmes.
- Most learners develop greater confidence in their own ability and many progress to further training.

Full report

Information about the provider

- asphaleia is a registered charity and a limited company. Its head office is in Worthing and learners attend one of three learning centres. The Uxbridge and Maidstone centres specialise in improving English skills for unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Worthing centre mainly supports vulnerable local young people living in care or foster homes or those who have experienced systematic or recently disrupted education.
- The study programme is designed to accept learners throughout the year to develop their mathematics and English skills and to support them to gain confidence in learning so that they are able to make a positive transition into further training or work. The learning programmes are of relatively short duration and the qualifications on offer range from pre-entry level through to level 2 in English and pre-entry level to level 1 in mathematics.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Managers need to assess more accurately the standards of teaching, learning and assessment and introduce effective measures to improve individual tutor performance so that all lessons are at least good and so learners benefit from well-planned learning that takes full account of their individual learning needs and ambitions.
- Managers should improve the quality of resources in mathematics across all centres to ensure that learners can study at the most appropriate level for their needs, based on their initial assessment or GCSE grades.
- To ensure that all learners make the progress of which they are capable, tutors and support staff must make better use of information gathered on individual learners' starting points and progress throughout the programme when planning lessons and reviewing progress.
- Managers should broaden the curriculum to include well-planned vocational and employability training that meets each learner's needs and future plans.
- Tutors and support staff should set learners clear, specific targets and action points throughout the programme, and frequently review these to ensure that learners successfully develop their personal, social and employability skills.
- Managers should implement effective quality assurance arrangements to ensure that all learners experience high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the leader and managers have significantly reduced the breadth of provision, either because contracts with other providers have been lost, or because of reductions in directly funded learner numbers. As a result, the curriculum does not now fully meet all learners' needs. For example, while mathematics and English are the main qualifications offered to learners, they have too few opportunities to develop vocational and employability skills through these lessons or alternative sessions. Programmes are of a relatively short duration, but no arrangements are in place for learners to benefit from work experience or placements.
- Managers have not achieved a key recommendation from the previous inspection – to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning observations. During inspection, managers were generally able to assess the standards of teaching and learning in lessons; however, methods for feeding back areas for improvement to staff, and the management of tutor performance are ineffective.
- Managers recently introduced 'hubs' to improve the sharing of information and ideas among key staff. As a result, monitoring of learners' progress and retention and success rates have improved. However, quality assurance arrangements require improvement. Managers have recognised the decline in the standards of teaching, learning and assessment but have failed to identify many of the weaknesses highlighted at inspection or to bring about improvement.
- The leader, managers and staff maintain a strong determination to target and improve the lives of disadvantaged learners. Learners are very well supported through a wide range of particularly effective partnership arrangements and services. Managers and staff at asphaleia are highly regarded by learner referral agencies because of the valuable and effective specialist support they offer to learners who present themselves with multiple barriers to learning, and the way many learners make the successful transition towards a better future.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - The managing director and a small team of managers have oversight of and closely scrutinise the performance of asphaleia training. However, as recognised by the managing director and managers, since the previous inspection the senior management team have not successfully challenged the decline in the standards of education and training and the range of courses available to learners.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Safeguarding arrangements are robust and learners at risk receive timely and effective support. Staff training in safeguarding is comprehensive and routinely reinforced through updates and conferences. All staff are appropriately checked and are vigilant in recognising early signs of learners' potential withdrawal from courses and/or losing interest in learning. Learners value highly the care and dedication they receive from staff and the safe and harmonious learning environments.
 - Managers have taken a good range of steps to promote the 'Prevent' agenda and meet their duties under counter-terrorism legislation. All staff have a good understanding of ways to identify and refer those who are at immediate risk of radicalisation or engagement in extremist activity.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Learners studying at the Uxbridge and Maidstone centres are newly arrived unaccompanied asylum seekers, many of whom have very low-level English skills and very mixed standards of education in their home country. Most of the learners at the Worthing Centre have complex personal needs and have often had disrupted education, resulting in low levels of attainment. Learners enrol on programmes with flexible start and end dates and have the opportunity to study for English and mathematics functional skills qualifications, mainly at entry level. A significant minority of learners also study an information, communications and technology (ICT) functional skills qualification.
- Too many tutors limit their teaching to meeting basic qualification requirements. They do not have high enough expectations of their learners, or challenge the most-able learners sufficiently. Tutors have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning faced by each learner, but they do not always plan sufficiently varied lessons to take account of these barriers. As a result, a minority of learners do not make sufficiently good progress in class and occasionally lose interest. In Worthing, tutors are not sufficiently skilled at dealing with low-level classroom disruptions.

- Initial assessment of learners' English and mathematics skills is thorough, but tutors do not use the information sufficiently well to plan learning. Too many tutors teach as if all the learners in the class are at the same level and fail to plan lessons that effectively target learners' needs. The small number of learners with recognised additional learning needs receive effective in-class support from volunteers and learning support assistants. Staff inappropriately place a few learners on courses that are below their assessed needs or GCSE grades.
- Tutors do not agree sufficiently effective and challenging individual targets with learners. Where targets are set, too often they only focus on meeting examination dates. Few targets relate to improving personal, social or employability skills that will prepare learners to progress to their next steps. In the few cases where tutors set personal targets, they tend to be too general, with actions like 'improve attendance'.
- Many English lessons are for learners for whom English is a second language; tutors effectively engage learners' interests through current, interesting topics linked to good learning resources. These lessons not only improve learners' skills in English but also improve their understanding of life in modern Britain. All learners benefit from the small numbers in lessons that allow tutors to offer effective individual coaching.
- Mathematics teaching requires improvement, as tutors are not sufficiently qualified or confident in the subject. Too often, learners lose interest as tutors do not relate the subject to learners' everyday lives, their interests or their future employment plans.
- Tutors and support workers provide particularly effective pastoral support and use this well to improve learner attendance, retention and progress. They effectively support learners in dealing with the challenges they face as they make the transition into adulthood and further training with other providers. Learners benefit greatly from the close relationship they build with their support workers who quickly develop learners' trust and a willingness to learn and succeed.
- Tutors assess learning well in English classes for learners where English is a second language. Tutors provide good immediate oral feedback to learners while praising their efforts. In one lesson, a tutor carefully and systematically ensured that all learners benefited from detailed feedback, encouraging them to ask questions and help each other to correct any errors. However, the assessment of learners' understanding requires improvement overall. In less effective lessons, tutors give too much attention to learners who are most vocal. Feedback to learners about how to improve their work is not always effective in clarifying what they need to do to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

- The personal development, behaviour and welfare of learners require improvement. Learners are not developing good employment skills through well-planned lessons or work related activities. Learners only have limited opportunities to develop team working, presentation and problem-solving skills, or to experience the world of work through placements, volunteering or work experience.
- Learners' attendance at Uxbridge is very high, whereas in-year attendance at Maidstone and Worthing requires improvement. Although tutors generally challenge lateness, learners' punctuality to lessons across all centres requires improvement.
- Most learners develop their personal and social skills well and many recognise the positive impact asphaleia has on their lives. However, the lack of effective targets to monitor progress in the development of these skills means that learners do not always recognise how far they have travelled or fully benefit from developing these skills further.
- Unaccompanied asylum seekers attending the Uxbridge and Maidstone centres have high aspirations and take their learning very seriously. They fully understand the opportunities that education can give them and, with carefully planned support, they seize the chance to progress and make a better life. Most Worthing learners grew up in this country but have experienced disrupted schooling and/or unstable home lives, and the transition into developing a positive learning culture takes longer. A small number of these learners engage in low-level disruption that can have a negative impact on others in the class. Formal arrangements to limit disruptions outside of lessons are managed effectively and most result in a positive change of attitude.
- Most learners with difficult personal lives make good progress in developing positive attitudes and behaviours. Many learners quickly gain confidence in their own abilities for the first time and start to take pride in their work. Staff support them well to identify their next steps and many apply for, and successfully gain, places at local colleges. Staff support learners to overcome many of their individual personal difficulties, engage positively with learning and stay on programme.

- Staff quickly tackle any inappropriate behaviour from learners and effectively support them to develop positive relationships based on respect for their peers. Learners quickly consider the learning centres as places where they are safe and relatively free from the traumas of their past and/or personal lives. They know who to talk to if they have any problems or if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing, including mental health and sexual exploitation.

Outcomes for learners

requires improvement

- Most learners have multiple barriers to learning. Of the current learners, three quarters have no prior educational attainment and over two thirds reside in care or foster homes.
- Opportunities for learners to gain additional vocational qualifications linked to their future aims, if known, are particularly limited. However, at the time of the inspection managers were developing a range of employability courses to start in 2016.
- Learners for whom English is a second language make good progress given their starting points. Most of these learners are enthusiastic and they quickly develop sufficient language skills to progress to higher levels of study. However, for other learners, tutors fail to extend learning beyond lessons and for too many learners the pace of progress is too slow.
- Based on 2014/15 provider data, the number of learners achieving their main qualifications in English and/or mathematics has improved and is high, relative to most learners' starting points. Managers' strategies to improve retention have contributed significantly to improved success rates.
- Success rates are particularly high for learners taking pre-entry English courses, but success rates in functional skills mathematics entry level 2 and level 1 are low for the few learners enrolled on these courses.
- Learners enrolling on study programmes do so in the firm belief that improving their mathematics and English skills is key to their future success. For the majority, their prior learning experience has been disrupted and they have little confidence in their ability to learn. However, with effective support many learners quickly develop a positive approach to learning and make progress. They consider their experience at asphaleia to be a key turning point in their lives and the majority of those who stay to the end of the programme progress on to further education.
- Variations in success rates by different identifiable ethnic learner groups are minimal. However, male learners achieve better than female learners, particularly male asylum seekers on English courses.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16–18
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	202
Managing Director	Laura Thorpe
Website address	http://Asphaleia.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	68	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	0							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Richard Beaumont, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dave Baber	Ofsted Inspector
Tricia Collis	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the development manager as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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