

Inspection of Aldridge Education (trading as Aldridge Adult Learning)

Inspection dates: 8–10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

Aldridge Education (trading as Aldridge Adult Learning, hereby known as AAL) is an independent learning provider based in Portslade, on the outskirts of Brighton and Hove. The provider is part of the Aldridge Education multi-academy trust (MAT), which includes 10 schools and academies located across England.

At the time of the inspection, AAL had 334 adult learners studying a range of accredited and non-accredited adult courses. AAL also had 14 apprentices, all of whom study level 3 teaching assistant standards and are employed within the local area. The provider does not work with any subcontractors.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Many apprentices and learners have had negative experiences of education in the past. At AAL, they thrive in a community of inclusion, support, and careful nurturing. Apprentices and learners are enthusiastic to learn and progress. They attend well. They value the strong culture of peer support and acceptance. For example, learners in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses establish class codes of conduct which reinforce positive behaviour successfully. Learners in Italian quickly become confident to speak in front of their peers without fear of mispronunciation.

Apprentices develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need for their jobs rapidly. They become increasingly confident and competent employees as a result. For example, level 3 teaching assistant apprentices become skilled at supporting young children with challenging behaviours. Adult learners are well prepared for further study and employment. They become better integrated into society because of their studies. For example, learners within ESOL become increasingly fluent and confident to interact with others in their local communities. Almost all learners in access to social science progress successfully to higher education. Learners with additional support needs become more independent, make good progress and remain in education because of the careful support of their teachers.

Many apprentices and learners benefit from opportunities to understand the role of British values in their jobs and lives. Staff support them to understand how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. Apprentices and learners feel safe in learning and know how to make disclosures. Some apprentices and learners are not sufficiently aware of risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, and so are not aware of how to keep safe from these potential threats.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders, managers, and staff are passionate about improving the prospects and well-being of apprentices and learners, and the consequent impact these have on the wider community. They share these aspirations effectively so that apprentices and learners quickly become engaged in their learning, independent and resilient.

Leaders have designed courses carefully to allow learners to progress to higher levels of training and education. They work successfully with external organisations to design courses and programmes that align closely with local and regional need. For example, leaders collaborate with local enterprise partners to identify the need for qualified teaching assistants within the region. They communicate effectively with the local Jobcentre Plus to design employability courses that equip learners with the skills they need to re-enter employment, which many do. Leaders acknowledge the need to further develop links with employers to better inform some adult learning courses. While they have taken steps to resolve this issue, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

Leaders and managers have a reasonable understanding of the quality of teaching. Highly experienced governors support leaders well. For example, they have made effective improvements to apprenticeships so that learners now make good progress and achieve well. Leaders increasingly benefit from the close support of the MAT to enhance teaching; however, these actions have yet to be fully realised. Leaders do not currently monitor the effectiveness of the wider pastoral programme, nor the proportion of students who take part in these activities. As a result, they are unable to fully assess the impact of this area of the curriculum.

Leaders make sure that staff are highly experienced. Many continue to work within their industries and so remain vocationally up to date. Staff use their expertise to support apprentices and learners to develop new and substantial knowledge, skills and behaviours. Almost all staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. For example, they benefit from access to mental health support by a trained counsellor.

Managers and staff have designed highly purposeful courses that support apprentices and learners to develop the knowledge and skills they need. For example, in the level 3 teaching assistant programme, managers and staff have included an additional employability qualification to support apprentices' progression into teaching.

Staff plan the order of teaching sensibly so that apprentices and learners develop initial understanding and skills before moving onto more complex tasks. For example, within access to social sciences, learners become increasingly skilled at using a range of research techniques. Within ESOL, learners develop their reading and vocabulary skills to become able to skim and scan texts for key information.

Staff make sure apprentices and learners are on appropriate courses. They use assessment well to check apprentices' and learners' understanding and to support their development. For example, in level 3 teaching assistant apprenticeships, staff identified and resolved gaps in understanding of effective lesson planning successfully. Staff provide useful feedback that helps apprentices and learners to improve their work. Similarly, in introduction to tai chi, the teacher intervenes to reposition and correct learners' movements skilfully. Staff monitor apprentices and learners closely so that many make good progress and achieve well.

Leaders ensure that all apprentices will receive their planned off-the-job entitlement by the end of their programmes. They check that employers and apprentices understand the requirements for the final assessment. Employers appreciate the impact apprentices' training has on their organisations. Level 3 teaching assistant apprentices successfully use teaching strategies to overcome barriers to learning. For example, apprentices create alternative mathematics lesson resources to meet individual learners' needs. However, leaders and staff do not liaise sufficiently with employers about apprentices' progress or learning. Consequently, employers are unable to fully support apprentices to make as rapid progress as possible.

Managers and staff have effective arrangements in place to identify, monitor and support learners with additional needs, including those with education, health and care plans. They support these learners successfully through individualised programmes of learning so that they make as good progress as their peers.

Staff do not ensure that all apprentices and learners understand their next steps beyond their current workplace or level of training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The suitably qualified safeguarding team, including the governor responsible for this area, use appropriate policies and processes to help keep apprentices and learners safe. They monitor safeguarding concerns closely and intervene effectively.

The safeguarding team communicate effectively with external agencies to stay informed about local and national risk. They check staff are recruited safely. The safeguarding team ensure that staff understand how to identify and disclose concerns.

The safeguarding team ensure that apprentices and learners know how to report concerns should they need to. They work with apprentices and learners to better understand the risks of sexual abuse and harassment successfully.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should improve their monitoring of the pastoral curriculum to understand the impact of this area of provision.
- Leaders should ensure that all employers understand apprentices' progress and learning as well as requirements for the final assessments, so that they can better support apprentices to achieve.
- Leaders should ensure that links with employers are improved to better inform the adult learning curriculum.
- Leaders should make sure that all apprentices and learners understand how to keep themselves safe from potential risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2527747
Address	Chalky Road Portslade Brighton BN41 2WS
Contact number	01273 422632
Website	www.aldridgeadultlearning.com
Principal/CEO	Nick Fenn
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the managing director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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