

# Aspiration Training Limited

## Focused monitoring visit report

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**Unique reference number:** 57680

**Name of lead inspector:** William Baidoe-Ansah HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 30 August 2012

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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## **FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS**

### **Context and focus of visit**

Aspiration Training (England) Limited (ATEL) was inspected in July 2010 when overall effectiveness and all other key aspects including the contributory grades of equality of opportunity and safeguarding were judged satisfactory. The subject area of health, social care and public services was also graded as satisfactory.

Since the previous inspection, the company has undergone many changes, including a substantial growth in health and social care apprenticeships, much of it related to learners aged 16 to 18. The substantial Train to Gain provision has virtually ceased. Since September 2011, ATEL has started to offer Skills for the Unemployed in large volumes within the Birmingham area, and has invested in new facilities and infrastructure to support the venture.

This monitoring visit focusses on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

### **Themes**

#### **Self-assessment and improvement planning**

**What progress has ATEL made in improving aspects of quality improvement?**

**Reasonable progress**

ATEL has made reasonable progress on all the key areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The company has increased its concentration on performance management and enhanced its management systems and processes to improve the quality of provision. The improved self-assessment process now involves all staff, including administrative staff, in evaluating their area of work against the common inspection framework. The report also makes better use of data and user views to inform judgements. However, the report is still not suitably judgemental or self-critical, as identified in the previous inspection. ATEL's quality development plan (QDP) is sufficiently specific and measurable and is regularly monitored by senior managers and course teams. The QDP includes detailed targets to deal with areas for improvement, which the self-assessment report does not always identify. ATEL systematically seeks out best practice from the sector and engages with a number of other providers to improve its provision.

## Outcomes for learners

### What progress is being made in improving learners' outcomes since the previous inspection?

**Reasonable progress**

Success rates for apprentices have improved since the last inspection and ATEL's own data indicates that success rates for 2011/12 are around the national average. Success rates within the planned end dates have also improved and according to ATEL's internal data are above the average for 2010/11. In 2010/11, success rates for apprenticeships were above the national average and for advanced apprenticeships were below the average.

Male success rates have been significantly lower than female rates in the last two years to 2010/11. According to ATEL's data, the gap in success rates diminished in 2011/12, but remains significant.

The success rates of different ethnic groups are broadly similar. No consistent patterns or gaps are evident. Key skills success rates have improved in the last three years from a very low base and success rates for the technical certificate have improved significantly over the same period. Apprenticeship success rates vary considerably across the different regions.

Seventy five percent of those undertaking employability programmes successfully complete their qualification. However, the proportion entering into employment is well below the company's minimum target of 50%.

## Quality of Provision

### What progress has ATEL made in improving teaching, training and learning?

**Reasonable progress**

ATEL has made reasonable progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning although a significant number of learners still do not benefit from the opportunity to attend group sessions. ATEL's internal observations judge the majority of teaching and learning to be good. Feedback from learners shows that they enjoy their learning and rate their teachers highly. Teachers are observed at least twice every year, and more often if required. Managers observe a comprehensive range of activities including group and individual teaching sessions, assessment and learner reviews. Records of observations do not always justify the grade and do not clearly identify actions to improve teaching further. In joint observations with inspectors, ATEL staff accurately identified the key strengths and areas for improvement but focused too much on teaching and not enough on the quality of learning. The less effective teaching involved a narrow range of teaching strategies and weak planning. Schemes of work and lesson plans did not adequately identify the outcomes to be achieved by learners. All teaching staff have achieved, or are working towards, an introductory qualification in teaching, however too few have a more advanced qualification.

**What progress has ATEL made in improving target setting for learners?** **Reasonable progress**

At the previous inspection, staff gave insufficient attention to negotiating targets with learners and did not extend targets to the wider personal development goals. ATEL has since made reasonable progress in improving target setting for learners. Staff review learners' progress after each training session and assessment visit and agree targets with the learner on the next step in achieving their qualification. Targets are now specific and have clear time scales. Progress against short-term targets is checked at each review meeting. Managers monitor learners' progress weekly and take appropriate action where learners are falling behind. The number of learners who continue beyond their planned completion date has reduced and is now very low. However, staff rarely agree wider personal and development goals during progress reviews. Although they discuss a wide range of work related and personal issues with learners, these do not always result in clear targets to help learners develop further.

**What progress has ATEL made in extending and enhancing pre-employment activities for apprentices?** **Significant progress**

ATEL has made significant progress in improving pre-employment training and support for young apprentices. The company takes great care to ensure that learners are well matched to job roles and understand the demands of their course. Employment opportunities are carefully assessed to ensure that the employer is able to offer a range of experiences and provide a suitable environment for an apprentice to work. Following an initial screening process, staff meet individually with prospective apprentices to ensure that they fully understand the demands of their programme and the type of work they will be required to do. ATEL provides individual coaching and support to prepare learners for their interview and help them to present themselves in the best possible way. Where learners are not fully prepared for the work environment ATEL staff work with them to develop the skills they will need prior to starting their apprenticeship, or if necessary will refer them to an appropriate pre-employment programme.

**Leadership and management**

**What progress has ATEL made in implementing effective strategies to engage with users?** **Reasonable progress**

ATEL have clear strategies for both employer engagement and learner involvement. Both learners and employers are involved in regular questionnaire-based surveys and telephone surveys, which collated into reports, contribute to the quality development plan or result in immediate actions to resolve minor issues. In addition to surveys, learner feedback is gathered from focus groups, workshop evaluations and exit interviews. ATEL is in the early stages of developing a virtual learning environment that will host a learner forum.

Employers are generally positive about the communication they receive from ATEL and confirm that they have sufficient opportunities to evaluate the provision. The employer engagement team provide another rich source for gathering feedback from employers. ATEL has a number of examples of how user feedback is used to improve aspects of the provision and how employers and learners are actively involved in the development of new provision. ATEL is also working closely and responsively with job centres to develop and improve the employability programme.

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