

Lawn Tennis Association

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		6–10 October 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding-1
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is outstanding because:

- Learners make exceptional progress in improving their playing and coaching skills and are very well prepared for their future careers as players or coaches. All advanced sporting apprentices progress into tennis careers or further training and a very high proportion of coaching apprentices progress from intermediate to advanced level, and then to employment as coaches.
- Coaches identify areas for learners' improvement with great precision and set well-planned and challenging developmental tasks and exercises.
- Learners set themselves very challenging goals, in collaboration with their coaches, that ensure they attain the highest standards. Progress towards these targets is carefully reviewed and monitored closely.
- Learners work very hard and very effectively during training sessions as a result of coaches' relentless focus on improving their skills.
- Learners' programmes are very closely tailored to their individual needs. Coaches use their excellent knowledge of learners to identify key areas for improvement and ensure learning activities tackle these well.
- Leaders, managers, coaches and specialist support staff have the highest expectations for learners, resulting in outstanding coaching and support for learners and in the development of excellent training facilities.
- Managers ensure that the apprenticeship programmes develop players and coaches to meet the needs of British tennis outstandingly well.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Provide more detailed feedback on learners' written work that identifies precisely what learners need to do to improve further. Although the general quality of learners' written English is high and most learners achieve at least grade C in GCSE English, trainers should focus on further improving learners' written work to ensure it meets the requirements of higher education or demanding professional employment.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) provides apprenticeships in advanced sporting excellence (AASE) and coaching through a network of independent High Performance Centres (HPCs) and Coach Education Centres (CECs) that are nationally distributed. AASE apprentices must have already reached a high standard in tennis, most benefiting from early coaching at the HPCs until they reach age 16. At this key age in their learning and development around 80 players each year start the two year AASE, having met the demanding entry standard. This entry standard is based on a minimum LTA performance rating achieved by winning matches in approved tournaments. Increasing numbers of learners are undertaking the coaching apprenticeship, with 38 currently on the programme. ▪ Outcomes for learners are outstanding. This reflects learners' rapid development of a broad range of advanced skills, knowledge and behaviours, and the exceptionally high proportion that successfully complete their qualifications and enter employment or higher education. ▪ For the past three years all the AASE apprentices have secured work in British tennis as professional players, coaches or LTA staff, or secured places on higher education courses, in GB or the USA. Most learners on the intermediate apprenticeship in coaching progress to the advanced apprenticeship. A very high proportion of advanced coaching apprentices secure work as coaches. Both apprenticeship programmes play key roles in developing learners to meet the needs of British tennis and, for a minority, to represent the UK at the highest levels. ▪ Learners on the AASE programme rapidly develop very high levels of skill and much improved fitness levels. In addition, they develop much enhanced self-confidence, self-awareness, resilience, media communication skills, self-reliance, emotional intelligence and organisational skills. Learners make very good, and in many cases exceptional, progress in rapidly improving their playing skills and mental resilience, enabling them to win more matches and tournaments. Apprentices are also extremely well prepared to cope with the emotional and organisational demands of competitive tennis at national and international level. ▪ The vast majority of learners on the AASE programme and the majority of coaching learners have already achieved at least GCSE grade C in English and mathematics. A very high proportion of the learners who do need to take functional skills English and mathematics achieve these qualifications. All learners also benefit from good mathematics development, to their benefit in their future careers. The media communications unit for AASE learners, and the carefully assessed practice sessions for coaching learners, very effectively develop oral communication skills. However, an improved focus on developing higher level written communication skills is required in both programmes, to ease learners' passage into higher education and professional careers. 	

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The vast majority of learners successfully complete their apprenticeship and progress into higher education or a range of employment roles in British tennis as a result of outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
- Coaching sessions are intense, with coaches and learners working extremely hard to fine-tune techniques and tactics. Learners train frequently and work hard in gymnasiums, reaching high levels of fitness. They demonstrate the commitment and passion for their sport that are expected at the high levels they aspire to achieve.
- Learners develop very high-level skills, thanks to coaches who astutely identify which aspect of a learner's game to focus on for improvement. Coaches explain very clearly what learners need to improve and provide very precise adaptations to positioning or technique that result in significant improvements to the accuracy and consistency of learners' shots. For example, a coach told a small group of learners to work on holding their position closer to the baseline whilst helping them to develop their ability to visualise themselves as the more dominant player. This significantly improved their attacking game.
- Coaches ensure that learners develop a broad range of excellent skills to support their performance as players or as coaches. Most learn how to organise their time well as they balance the competing demands of full-time education, a rigorous training regime and considerable travel to training and competitions. Coaches and support staff work closely with the schools and colleges that learners attend to ensure they are able to meet these commitments. They provide the excellent training and support that build learners' resilience to the pressures of their lifestyle.
- Coaches have exceptionally high expectations of their learners. They are fully aware that learners should be the elite players of the future and expect them to train and perform to the highest standards. As a result, learners develop outstanding technical, tactical and personal skills that prepare them extremely well for life as a player or professional coach. For example, one coach recognised that a learner's lack of power was losing him too many points. The coach implemented a new programme of strengthening and conditioning, along with nutritional changes to gain weight. By monitoring improvements in the speed of serves, shots, agility around the court and performance in competitions, the learner and coach could see the positive impact of the adapted programme.
- Learners are extremely well supported in making improvements by the excellent resources they use in centres. Learners have access to exceptional indoor facilities that ensure they train on tournament-standard courts throughout the year.
- Coaches have an uncompromising focus on how each learner, as a player, compares to other players, and the learners, as a result, consistently strive to improve their ranking. Learners work closely with coaches to set themselves challenging tactical, technical, mental and physical targets. Learners make very good progress by relentlessly meeting existing, and then setting new, more challenging, targets.
- Coaches are excellent role models for learners. They use their experience of being, or having trained, the best British players. Support staff and coaches with expertise in sports psychology, strength and conditioning, and physiotherapy, devise excellent programmes that minimise the risk of learners missing training and competitions because of injuries. The very high ratio of staff to students ensures programmes are tailored to provide the highly personalised skills development that elite players require.
- Learners make very good use of their time when travelling, when at home or whilst attending a competition, to study by using a very good virtual learning environment (VLE). Apprentices make excellent use of the VLE to submit written work, receive feedback from coaches, use a good range of resources and monitor their own progress.

- Apprentices are extremely well motivated. They recognise that the programme increases their chances of securing scholarships and places at the most prestigious universities and, ultimately, of becoming an elite player. Therefore, they learn from coaches the tactics, techniques and practice regimes that will ensure they fulfil their potential. Most learners make exceptionally good improvements and rise rapidly up the national or international rankings.
- Coaches know their learners extremely well since a large majority have already coached them as junior players. They are acutely aware of their needs and set activities, training programmes and competition schedules that meet these well. Coaches ensure learners compete against players of significantly higher ranking; learners use these opportunities well to hone their skills and become better players.
- Coaches provide excellent match reports following learners' performance in tournaments. These are full of precise guidance, later incorporated into training plans. Coaches' written feedback on the work learners submit in their portfolios provides evidence of learners meeting the standards required, but does not consistently provide praise or sufficiently detailed feedback on particular strengths in the learners' work.
- Learners develop high levels of verbal communication skills as a result of their coaches' carefully planned training. Coaches develop well the mathematics that learners will use in future employment, for example in analysis of shot accuracy, performance and match evaluation and professional tour budgeting. Most learners have already achieved a grade A* to C in GCSE English and mathematics, but areas for further improvement in their written English are not sufficiently examined or routinely tackled by coaches.
- Coaches provide excellent information, advice and guidance to learners and parents before learners start the apprenticeship. These ensure that learners are fully aware of the high levels of commitment they will need to complete the programme. Ex-apprentices frequently visit centres to inspire learners and provide them with invaluable information about the opportunities open to them after the apprenticeship. For example, Britain's third-rated men's player dropped into a centre whilst travelling to an international tournament to provide encouragement and to inspire learners.
- Apprentices benefit from the 'Fair Play' values that the LTA energetically promotes. Through these, learners understand and develop respect for each other and for the rules of the sport. For example, learners training with non-English-speaking players work hard to adjust the complexity of their language to include them in discussions and encourage them to participate. Early in their apprenticeship, learners demonstrate they can promote equality and diversity through tennis well. For example, learners explain how to avoid bullying and discrimination on court and on social media. Coaches are exceptionally good at identifying learners' barriers to learning and helping learners overcome these by, for example, providing financial and emotional support and ensuring learners with mobility difficulties are provided with adjustments that allow them to succeed at the highest level. Learners who attended a recent training camp in Spain gained a greater understanding of cultural differences and training methods by working with players and coaches from other cultures.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Senior LTA leaders and all staff at the LTA and training centres have exceptionally high expectations of learners. These expectations result in excellent training, outstanding coaching in exceptionally high quality facilities, and the enthusiastic pursuit of continual improvement in the teaching, learning and assessment of apprentices.
- The apprenticeships in sporting excellence and coaching form a key part of the LTA's programmes designed to develop the players and coaches of the future. The advanced apprenticeship in sporting excellence is seamlessly integrated within the coaching programmes delivered to learners with potential to play and win at the highest levels of tennis. To develop

apprentices' skills, coaches set demanding but achievable targets for each learner to improve ratings and ranking through winning increasing numbers of tournaments.

- All coaches are licensed by the LTA, undergo rigorous training and comprehensive continued professional development, and receive frequent feedback on their coaching performance. Coaches meet frequently to share ideas on coaching practice and such meetings are particularly effective at bringing about improvements to training. They also use part of a very effective VLE that managers have designed for assessors and coaches to record and share excellent examples and the latest good practice in coaching.
- Members of the apprenticeship management team monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment closely. They provide coaches with verbal feedback, following observations of their work, helping to plan and shape the coaches' development. However, a minority of the feedback managers give to coaches is too brief and does not fully evaluate how much apprentices have learned.
- Managers use a thorough annual cycle of self-assessment that accurately captures the views of all staff, learners and employers. Managers are aware of the high quality of the provision, but also recognise all key areas for further improvement. They frequently review and monitor progress against key targets and milestones for improvement. For example, during 2013/14, managers recognised the need to rapidly develop and broaden use of a high quality VLE to give remote access to all course materials and assessments. This was achieved for new learners in September 2014.
- Managers have developed excellent working relationship with SkillsActive, the sector skills council for sport, and frequently contribute to the review and development of programmes, to ensure they continue to meet the needs of British tennis. Managers also ensure that opportunities for learners to gain additional tennis-specific skills and experiences are provided. These include training in competition organisation, stringing, umpiring, and attendance at coaching forums and tennis conferences. These courses and opportunities broaden learners' experience and making learners more capable and more employable.
- Managers and staff ensure welcoming and safe learning environments and all learners receive training in equality, diversity and inclusion, during very effective induction training and at regional training days. Learners take part enthusiastically in discussions and learn how to improve equality and diversity by considering situations that they may encounter.
- The proportions of male and female learners are representative of senior British tennis, where about a third of players are female. Work to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of learners is part of the broader LTA work on increasing participation in tennis. LTA leaders have worked hard to increase the proportion of younger players of British minority ethnic heritage, and of females, in preparation for improving the numbers who become apprentices in the next few years.
- The safeguarding of all learners is good. Senior managers ensure that young people can learn in a safe, supportive environment. Managers use a robust system for ensuring all coaches and specialist support staff are appropriately checked before they are employed to work with learners. The HPCs, and other accredited centres where coaching learners may be employed, are required to take the same thorough approach to staff recruiting. LTA managers check that this requirement is met during an annual review process. All coaches and staff who work with young people are well trained in safeguarding. LTA staff also carefully monitor any potential safeguarding concerns at all of the centres and maintain appropriate up-to-date records. Centre directors and welfare officers ensure that all learners feel well supported and safe throughout their programmes. Excellent liaison between schools and colleges where AASE learners undertake academic studies ensures that learners are not put under excessive pressure.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Lawn Tennis Association

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Outcomes for learners	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Sport	1

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16–18							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	239							
Principal/CEO	Mr M Downey							
Date of previous inspection	November 2008							
Website address	www.lta.org.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	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18		19+	
	10	5	172	12	-		-	
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	None							

Contextual information

The LTA provides apprenticeships in sporting excellence and coaching through close partnerships with a nationally distributed network of HPCs and CECs. These centres have to meet a wide range of criteria in order to be accredited, and undergo annual review processes to confirm all requirements are being met. Selection for the AASE apprenticeship requires learners to have achieved an LTA rating, achieved through winning matches and tournaments. Coaching apprentices are required to have successfully completed a level 1 coaching course.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Mark Shackleton HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the higher education manager as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the past three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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