

Academy Transformation Trust

Further Education

Independent training provider

Inspection dates

24–27 November 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	Good
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	First inspection

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers do not use data effectively to monitor learners' and apprentices' progress and they do not have a clear record of their leaving destinations.
- Too many learning sessions fail to stretch and challenge learners and apprentices to reach their full potential.
- Learners and apprentices do not develop their English and mathematics skills systematically in classroom and workplace sessions.
- Not all elements of the study programme have been implemented effectively.
- Targets set for learners and apprentices are not always clear, precise and demanding for the most able.
- Assessment practice does not always provide learners and apprentices with a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers respond well to local community needs by providing highly relevant learning programmes for people in the former north Nottinghamshire coalfields.
- Leaders, managers and staff have developed an inclusive and respectful ethos that allows learners and apprentices to learn in a safe, supportive environment.
- Learners and apprentices develop good vocational, employability and personal skills that meet local employer and community needs well.
- Learners and apprentices receive good care and support that enable them to overcome their barriers to learning and build their confidence.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Academy Transformation Trust Further Education (ATT) is part of a national multi-academy trust with 10 primary schools and nine secondary schools across the country. ATT was created from the academy conversion of two Nottinghamshire local authority maintained schools (Sutton Centre Community College and Dukeries College). ATT has Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contracts that commenced on 1 January 2013. The bulk of ATT provision is concentrated in the former north Nottinghamshire coalfields where unemployment is above the national average.
- Around 574 learners and apprentices study with ATT and its subcontractors. One hundred and fifty are intermediate and advanced apprentices, of whom 133 are aged 19+. Eighty three learners are aged 16 to 19 and are on study programmes. Approximately 341 are on adult learning programmes, including employability programmes. Seventy five apprentices are on subcontracted provision, mainly in business studies, customer care, management and hairdressing. Nearly half are advanced apprentices. Thirty two learners study with a subcontractor, 19 are on adult learning programmes and 13 are on study programmes.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all relevant data are collected so that directors, managers and staff can analyse outcomes for learners and apprentices, compare performance, monitor progress and progression throughout the whole learning journey and on exit.
- Ensure that all elements of the study programme are implemented effectively so that the number of learners that progress into apprenticeships, further education or employment is understood well and is improved.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that learners and apprentices benefit from more good or outstanding learning sessions and that assessment practice clearly identifies and leads to improvement in learners' and apprentices' understanding and work.
- Ensure that all tutors and assessors use initial assessment to set individualised, clear, precise and demanding targets so that all learners and apprentices achieve their full potential.
- Ensure that the promotion of English and mathematics is integral to all learning and assessment and that all tutors and assessors identify spelling and grammatical errors so that learners and apprentices can develop these skills to prepare them well for their next steps.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Although the inspection team observed some good and outstanding sessions, too many sessions observed during the inspection required improvement and assessment practices were judged to be inconsistent. The recently revised system for observing learning sessions provides leaders and managers with a clearer understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in classrooms and workplaces. Tutors and assessors are aware of how they can improve, and management of underperformance is clearly linked to action planning with relevant support, training and development.
- The use of data to produce reports for directors, managers and staff requires improvement. Although data are collected they are not used well to provide all staff with effective analysis of performance and monitoring of progress. For example, managers monitor the performance of different groups of learners and apprentices but do not review the success of actions taken.
- Arrangements to develop apprentices' and learners' English and mathematics skills require improvement. English and mathematics are developed well in some areas but are not always introduced quickly enough to help learners and apprentices develop these skills throughout their programmes. Spelling and grammatical errors are not always corrected.
- ATT's self-assessment process is thorough and suitably inclusive of the views of apprentices, learners and subcontractors. ATT's self-assessment report is repetitive but is an honest and accurate reflection of the provision; the inspection team agreed with the vast majority of its judgements and findings. The quality improvement plan is used well to monitor improvement actions but is not yet having sufficient impact across all aspects of the provision.
- The subcontracted provision is managed well. Success rates for the subcontracted provision are similar to those of the provider. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of subcontracted provision are sound. Learners' and apprentices' views are gained from regular forums and questionnaires. The self-assessment reports produced by subcontractors are used well to inform the overall self-assessment report but vary in quality.
- ATT works particularly well from its academy campus sites to engage with local communities, charities, voluntary bodies and a broad range of businesses to develop its curriculum offer. It has a good grasp of the training needs of local people and communities and is proactive in promoting courses through participation at local events. For example, photographs of old mining communities are used to attract people to a local market stall where courses are promoted, products produced by learners are sold and local people are given practical demonstrations by learners of nail and face art and glitter tattoos. Directors have regular engagement with local employers and attend Nottingham and Derby Local Enterprise Partnership meetings. As a result, links with local industry and business are strong.
- The governance of the provider
 - ATT has a strong board of directors with relevant skills and expertise that include representation from its two partner academies, local business and higher education. The board's strategic plan outlines clearly its objectives, key performance indicators, mission, culture and ethos and is understood well by staff and learners. Although the board receive data and information relating to performance and quality of the provision, this is not comprehensive enough to allow full oversight of the provision.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective
 - Appropriate recruitment checks are made on potential employees and a detailed record of all staff is held centrally. The designated safeguarding officer, directors, managers and staff are appropriately trained in the prevention of extremism. Apprentices and learners have a good understanding of how to report concerns they may have through their understanding of anti-harassment and bullying policies and procedures. Learners' and apprentices' understanding of the Prevent Duty is inconsistent. A range of useful in-house resources to support the promotion of British values has been developed. These are being introduced in learning sessions but it is too early to judge their impact.
 - Health and safety workplace monitoring is robust. Individual risk assessments are undertaken by an independent specialist company for all work placements. Apprentices and learners learn in a safe environment and have a good awareness of safe working practices.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Too many teaching, learning and assessment sessions require improvement. Consequently, a significant minority do not make good progress and are unable to complete their programmes within agreed timescales.
- Tutors and assessors are generally well qualified and highly supportive. They are particularly effective in identifying and providing support for learners with complex needs, medical conditions and helping individuals overcome barriers to learning or gaining a job. However, they do not always have high expectations of their learners and apprentices and as a result they do not provide adequate stretch or challenge in learning and assessment sessions.
- Learners enjoy their learning and are keen to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enhance their opportunities to find a job or develop personal and social skills. In the better sessions, learners are interested, interact well and are responsive to probing questions. For example, in sessions for learners studying teaching and learning support, informative and sensitive debates are held by tutors when discussing child abuse cases and identifying potential issues in the workplace. However, not all sessions are well paced, engaging and stimulating, particularly for the most able. Learners and apprentices in subcontracted provision enjoy learning and appreciate the personal and employability skills they develop.
- Assessment practice requires improvement. Tutors and assessors do not systematically assess work in good time and do not always provide detailed feedback to help learners and apprentices improve and make good progress. Tutors and assessors do not consistently check and mark learners' and apprentices' work to improve spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- The standard of work in English and mathematics requires improvement. Learners and apprentices make slow progress in improving their functional English and mathematics skills. Adult learners and younger learners on study programmes develop their English and mathematics skills too slowly. For example, in vocational sessions too often basic technical words are spelt incorrectly and opportunities to develop mathematical skills are missed. Learners on employability programmes make better progress in improving their English and mathematical skills and understand the importance of these skills in gaining sustainable employment.
- Target setting requires improvement. Targets are not always clear and concise and do not identify skills and knowledge development. Although employers are highly supportive they do not always attend reviews and are not aware of what learners and apprentices need to do to make good progress.
- Good independent information, advice and guidance are available to all learners and apprentices through a specialist adviser. Tutors use their occupational experience well to provide effective advice and guidance to help learners and apprentices progress to higher levels of study or into employment.
- Learners and apprentices have a well developed understanding of equality and diversity from tutors and assessors. They have a good understanding of what to do if they have personal concerns. Their understanding of radicalisation and extremism is inconsistent as is the awareness of British values.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

- Learners and apprentices are enthusiastic in their approach to studying and take pride in their work. The standard of work is high in classroom-based vocational and employability programmes though less so in functional skills English and mathematics. The vast majority of learners have improved their self-confidence significantly since commencing their course and now feel self-assured.
- Apprentices develop very good employability and occupational technical skills that match industry standards well, including particularly good underpinning knowledge which they use effectively in the workplace. They demonstrate high levels of professional competence and relate well to a wide variety of customers in an assured manner.
- Learners on vocational courses develop skills in the classroom and workplace that prepare them well for employment. For example, learners on the supporting teaching and learning in schools programme learn valuable support skills that they apply well during work experience with younger children that often leads to paid employment.

- The attendance of adult learners on English and Mathematics courses is low. However, behaviour and punctuality of learners and apprentices is generally good. They learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect, have a good awareness of the diverse society in which they live and value the opportunities that this creates. They feel safe and are fully aware of how to raise concerns if they are being harassed or bullied. In a few sessions, learners develop a good understanding of the values that underpin British society. However, the risks associated with radicalisation, particularly the dangers of right wing extremism, are not clearly understood by many learners and apprentices.
- Learners' and apprentices' individual needs are well understood by staff who give sensitive support that leads to improved stability, particularly for learners who are low in confidence or self-esteem.
- The majority of learners and apprentices use the information they receive on future career options and pathways well. For example, study programme learners undertaking the construction course use work experience to determine the skills they wish to specialise in and meet with the independent, impartial professional careers adviser when making their choice.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- Success rates for apprentices completing their programmes within agreed timescales have improved but remain low. Current learners are making improved progress and most become advanced apprentices on completion of their intermediate apprenticeship. The large majority remain in employment on completion of their apprenticeship.
- Learners on 16 to 19 study programmes learn useful vocational and employability skills. Current learners are making at least the progress expected of them. The number who progress to apprenticeships, further education or employment is not clear.
- Data provided by ATT indicates a decline in success rates for adult learners. Most adult learners have significant barriers to learning at the start of their courses and are supported well by tutors to achieve. As a consequence, their confidence is improved and they gain useful vocational and personal skills. Current learners are making at least the progress that is expected.
- Learners on employability programmes develop good English and mathematical skills. However, English and mathematics qualification success rates require improvement. The integration of English and mathematics in learning sessions is inconsistent. Learners and apprentices are not encouraged to improve their GCSE grades.
- ATT does monitor the destinations of learners and apprentices on leaving their programmes but this is not done comprehensively, particularly for study programme learners, learners leaving employability programmes and English and mathematics programmes. The success of different groups is monitored but this does not lead to action planning to monitor progress in reducing gaps in performance. For example, ATT has had success in improving the outcomes of working class white British males but cannot identify the improvement actions taken.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- ATT has 83 learners on study programmes in health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy, construction, and supporting teaching and learning in schools. Hair and beauty therapy is subcontracted to a local training provider and is based in the Dukeries academy.
- Managers have not yet implemented all aspects of the study programme. Not enough enrichment activity takes place to provide learners with additional learning and development opportunities to support their vocational studies. The data collected on learners who progress into apprenticeships, further education or employment is not robust and requires improvement.
- Teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good across all the subject areas. As a result, too many learners do not make sufficient progress to achieve their course aims. Too many learning sessions lack stimulus, and are not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able.
- The use of initial assessment to set individual learning targets requires improvement. Targets are often generic and not personalised and do not stretch and challenge learners sufficiently.
- Assessment practice requires improvement. Detailed feedback is not provided systematically by all tutors and consequently learners are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. The assessment of submitted work and checks on learner progress are not undertaken consistently. For example, when assignments are submitted early they are not returned swiftly to allow learners to improve their work and to support their progress.

- Too few learners achieve their English and mathematics qualifications and are not encouraged to improve their GCSE grades.
- Work placements provide learners with good practical work experience. Learners develop a good work ethic and are positive about their placements. This contributes well to their employability skills development. Independent advice and guidance available to learners is good and helps them decide whether they wish to progress further when they complete their course.
- Learners develop good industry-related technical skills including bricklaying, joinery, carpentry, plastering and plumbing. Child development learners understand the complex needs of babies and young children; this is demonstrated well through good-quality assignments.
- Tutors use their skills well to develop a sound understanding of equality and diversity. For example, hairdressing learners demonstrate a good understanding of how to accommodate individual needs when dealing with clients. Construction learners are very aware of how poor behaviour and lack of respect in the workplace can impact employment opportunities.
- The promotion of Prevent duty is in its early stages of development as is the introduction of British values. Consequently, learners do not have a good grasp of the characteristics of extremism and how to report concerns. Learners do feel safe and adopt safe working practices.

Adult learning programmes

require improvement

- Adult learners account for the large majority of those on learning programmes. Courses are part time across a wide range of subject areas. Approximately 341 adult learners study English and mathematics and vocational training in health and social care, child development, supporting teaching and learning in schools, and hair and beauty. The vast majority study English and mathematics. A minority are referred from Job Centre Plus to undertake employability programmes.
- The majority of adult learners are on English and mathematics courses, developing their skills to progress into further education or improve their employment options. Too many of these sessions lack pace, do not stretch and challenge the most able and attendance is low. In the weaker sessions, teachers do not plan sufficiently interesting activities to stimulate learning. As a consequence, the number of learners achieving qualifications in English and mathematics is low.
- A significant minority of learners do not benefit from appropriate individualised learning and as a consequence their progress is slow. For these learners, initial assessment is not used to set individualised targets, and targets are vague and do not support them to improve their skills quickly. Tutors do not always set high expectations. As a consequence, written feedback on assessed work does not always stretch and challenge learners and make clear how they can improve.
- Resources for enhancing learning are not always available or used by all learners. For example, the online virtual learning environment is used well by learners on the supporting teaching and learning in schools programme but not by other learners. Similarly, the electronic portfolio system is used by some learners because their tutors choose to use the system.
- Learners on vocational courses are provided with a wide range of activities that develop and extend their skills, knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity well. For example, nail technology learners develop nail art techniques and explore how different cultures decorate nails in line with religious traditions or local customs.
- The vast majority of learners feel well-supported in learning sessions; they feel safe and grow in confidence. During information and communications technology sessions they learn how to use the internet safely and understand how to protect themselves from online fraud.
- Leaders and managers work well with Job Centre Plus and local employers to design and deliver relevant courses that support learners to gain employment. They plan learning that develops skills and attributes needed by local industry and employers well. They use a variety of guest speakers from business and industry to enthuse learners and provide them with an increased awareness of work and how to prepare for interviews.

Apprenticeships

require improvement

- ATT has 150 apprentices divided equally between intermediate and advanced levels. Apprenticeships are in health and social care, early years and childcare, hair and beauty, customer service, teaching and learning assistants, team leading and business administration. Some apprentices are in subcontracted provision provided by a local training company based in Mansfield. The large majority are over 24 years of age.
- Too few apprentices successfully complete their programme and too few complete within agreed timescales. Current apprentices make at least the progress expected of them and are helped by closer integration and better monitoring of English and mathematics throughout the programme. The vast majority of apprentices progress to sustained employment.
- Employer involvement in the apprenticeship programme is inconsistent. Most support apprentices well in the workplace and ensure they undertake meaningful work to achieve their learning aims. However, too few employers are involved in reviews and they are not aware of the progress that apprentices make or need to make. As a result, employers are not always able to support apprentices to complete their qualifications within agreed timescales.
- The use of data by managers and assessors to provide accurate information about apprentices' progress requires improvement. Consequently, too many apprentices are not sufficiently aware of their progress.
- Workplace assessments are frequent, well planned and undertaken by knowledgeable and experienced assessors. Apprentices enjoy their learning and are well prepared for assessments and reviews. Targets set for learners are often not detailed and do not identify the knowledge and skills development they need to make.
- Assessors promote the importance of verbal English skills development well, consequently apprentices use professional terminology accurately when communicating with colleagues in the workplace. The promotion of written English and mathematics skills is not so effective. Opportunities to develop these skills in the workplace are often missed and written work is not always checked for spelling and grammatical accuracy.
- Assessors help apprentices to understand the theoretical basis of what underpins their practical work well; this helps them to develop more confidence and relate their knowledge and skills to industry standards. For example, early years apprentices are able to apply their understanding of childhood development during their work with young children. Hairdressing apprentices apply their knowledge of other cultures and social groups to provide effective customer care for their clients in salons.
- Apprentices feel safe in the workplace. Assessors make appropriate checks of apprentices' understanding of safeguarding, equality and diversity during assessments and reviews. They have begun to discuss the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and have access to a range of useful resources to promote modern British values. It is too soon to judge the impact of these initiatives on apprentices' knowledge and understanding.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	986
Principal/CEO	Simon Martin
Website address	www.academytransformationtrust.co.uk/further-education

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)	30	219	35	113	18	9	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	12	63	5	70	0	0		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic Training Solutions (Mansfield) Ltd ■ Qualvoc Ltd 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Robert Hamp, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maureen Deary, assistant lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Shabana Mahmood	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Sanders	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the deputy director, 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. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students 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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