

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Achievement Training Ltd**

**15 July 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

## Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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## **Achievement Training Ltd**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Achievement Training Limited (ATL) is a private training organisation. It was established in July 1996 and is based on two sites in the centre of Plymouth. The contract with Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for young people has been in effect since April 2001 and that for the Employer Training Pilot (ETP) from November 2004. ATL is also contracted to provide training at Plymouth College of Further Education (the college) and to the Tamar Valley Consortium (TVC), offering training to 14 to 16 year olds. The company comprises two directors, a management team and approximately 60 staff.

2. Seventy-four apprentices are on programme, 48 of whom are in health, social care and public services. The remaining 26 apprentices are on information technology (IT), business administration, customer service or beauty therapy training programmes. Three hundred and twenty-four adult learners are on the ETP programme, 247 of whom are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care, one is in early years care and 76 are taking assessor and mentor awards.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** ATL's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity. ATL's arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. In health, social care and public services and business administration, management and professional, the provision is good.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Staff are well involved in the process. The completed self-assessment report follows the Common Inspection Framework and includes evaluative comments on most aspects of ATL's provision, including the learners' success rates. Most of the evaluative strengths in the report were also identified by inspectors, although there are several strengths that are only descriptive. Several weaknesses were given less significance than by inspectors, and some do not have sufficient reference to their effect on the learners.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** ATL has been effective in carrying out actions to promote improvements and the quality of provision has improved. Recent strategies to improve retention and achievement rates are now having a positive effect on performance.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR ACHIEVEMENT TRAINING LTD:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- identify and remove barriers to timely achievement for assessors and mentors
- improve the quality monitoring system

- improve paperwork and record-keeping

## GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		3

Business administration, management & professional			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Teacher/trainer awards</i>		2	
Other government-funded provision	76	2	

Health, social care & public services			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Care</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	29	3	
Employer training pilot	247	2	
<i>Early years</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	19	2	
Employer training pilot	1	None	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Health, social care and public services, and teacher trainer awards within business administration, management and professional were examined and graded. Training programmes in IT, business administration, customer service and beauty therapy were not graded at inspection as there were too few learners. However, evidence was examined from these areas and used to support judgements in the key findings section of the report.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	23
Number of learners interviewed	105
Number of staff interviewed	33
Number of employers interviewed	21
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	27
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	7
Number of visits	35

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

7. **The development of learners' skills is good across all programmes.** Learners increase their confidence and capability significantly. In basic skills courses, learners make good progress towards achievement of their personal goals, develop self-esteem and increase their literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners are enthusiastic about the positive impact the programmes are having on their skills.

8. **Achievement rates are good for ETP learners in care** who are taking national tests at level 1 and 2. The programme started in September 2004 and currently 64 per cent of learners have passed national tests. In assessor and mentor awards, the programme is in its first year but there is already potential for good achievement. Some learners are achieving the NVQ at level 2 in less than six months. In early years apprenticeships, the retention and achievement rates are satisfactory.

9. **In early years, the introduction of the technical certificate was slow** and this has adversely affected the progress of a few learners who started in 2003-04. In care, the achievement rate for advanced apprentices is low at just over 40 per cent. In the mentor and assessor award, there is slow progress for some learners.

## The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	2	1	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	6	2	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>

10. **Teaching and learning are good.** Preparation and resources are good, and the good teaching is recognised by employers and learners.

11. **Assessment practice is good,** with regular observations in the workplace. Assessment planning is good and involves the learner and the employer. All assessments are well recorded, and good verbal and written feedback is given to the learner. Evidence is fully cross-referenced to the appropriate NVQ units. Portfolios are well organised with a good range of evidence and assessment methods being used.

12. **The assessor and mentor programmes are particularly well matched to employers' and learners' aims.** ATL identified a need for these types of courses, and put together an innovative bid for funding. Employers and learners are very positive about how the programme is meeting their needs.

13. **All learners are well supported by ATL's and workplace staff.** The wide range of support is responsive to individual circumstances and the needs of learners. Employers are fully engaged in the learners' training and assessment, and many provide additional support and learning opportunities in the workplace. ATL's staff deal with problems as they arise and this ensures a swift resolution. ATL's staff are very friendly and supportive and their interest motivates learners. The assessors and tutors, while being friendly, can also be firm in their guidance when appropriate.

14. **Comprehensive initial assessment and diagnostic testing is in place for all learners.** Staff are also able to take advantage of assessment to identify their own training needs. Arrangements are thorough for ETP learners, and the results are used to prepare the individual learning plans and to identify the level of support for learners.

15. **The expertise of staff and good resources are used effectively** to provide literacy, numeracy and language support. The service is currently being developed. There is good progress in making literacy, numeracy and language an integral part of the vocational areas. Staff provide effective support for the development of this work across provision.

16. **Communication and team working is good within the organisation,** especially in the early years and care provision. Meetings are regular and well recorded, and the culture is open and supportive, with a positive attitude to improvement through the support of colleagues.

17. **Learners' records are inadequate and are often incomplete across all**



**programmes.** Learners' progress is reviewed frequently, but this is not always well recorded at the time. When learners change employers, this is not always updated on the individual learning plan. Records do not allow managers to monitor staff and learner activity effectively.

**18. Monitoring of learners' progress is poor in care programmes.** Evidence of individual learner achievement is held in the assessor files, but there is no monitoring to identify progression. There is no complete record of how all learners are progressing towards completion of their awards across the apprenticeship programmes. Progression towards achievement of individual units or the NVQ is not recorded in either the learners' portfolios or their files.

## **Leadership and management**

**19. Leadership and management are good.** Over the past few years, the company has grown significantly, and the changes have been well managed. The company has kept its open and consultative management style. Directors support their managers well, and the managers support their teams well. ATL acted swiftly to introduce the ETP and designed a flexible and responsive programme to meet employer and employee needs. Strategic planning involves all staff.

**20. Good partnership working was identified in the previous inspection, and it has continued to develop.** ATL has an excellent and mutually respectful working relationship with key local organisations and these partnerships are very effective in providing wider opportunities for learners. There are well-developed plans to introduce new vocational opportunities into the area.

**21. Staff development and appraisal were good at the previous inspection, and have continued to be so.** Well-directed staff development is provided in many ways. Support for new staff is particularly good. Some staff have progressed through the company from learner to tutor.

**22. Support for literacy, numeracy and language is good.** ATL has developed a comprehensive strategy and well-focused action plan to raise the profile of literacy, numeracy and language support and its role in improving the quality of provision. The strategy is inclusive and provides opportunities for learners and staff. The company recognises the importance of development and qualifications for staff across the company, and has been running the specialist literacy qualification for learning support. ATL is also responding well to raising the employers' awareness of the skills for life strategy, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language.

**23. The business administration and IT apprenticeship programmes are effectively managed.** Achievement and retention rates are satisfactory for apprentices. Training sessions are good and are well resourced. Standards of work in learners' portfolios are good, showing a wide range of evidence. There is good contact between assessors and learners, and an effective and helpful working relationship with employers. Employers respect the professionalism of ATL's approach. ATL offers a good choice for learners, with avenues for progression within ATL or, with appropriate advice, elsewhere. Assessment practices and

internal verification are good. There is a good level of staff expertise.

**24. Equality of opportunity arrangements are well managed and effective.** Good policies and procedures are in place. A small executive group oversees and drives the equality and diversity agenda. The culture of equality of opportunity within the organisation is strong. Staff training is thorough and effective. Effective training is also given to apprentices during their programme and ETP learners are encouraged to attend. ATL provides a wide range of support services to learners across all its programmes for equality and diversity as well as for pastoral and learning. Suitable resources are made available to support learners with specific learning needs. Complaints and appeals procedures are clear and well written, and where complaints have been made, these have been dealt with quickly and efficiently. Equality of opportunity is covered during progress reviews, but it is not recorded sufficiently.

**25. Quality improvement activities are well established and effective.** Managers, tutors and assessors respond well when weaknesses are identified, taking prompt action to make improvements. Following the previous inspection, ATL took decisive and successful action to deal with the weaknesses. ATL appointed a quality assurance manager to drive through many improvements.

**26. Monitoring of record-keeping is insufficiently rigorous.** A recent system for monitoring the quality of documents has not been effective in detecting omissions.

**27. Staff are well involved in the annual self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report closely follows the Common Inspection Framework. Several weaknesses in the report were given less significance than that given by inspectors, and some did not have sufficient reference to the effect on the learners.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good leadership and management of the company
- very effective partnership working
- good staff development and appraisal
- well-managed arrangements for equality of opportunity
- effective quality improvement

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of record-keeping

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### ***Teacher/trainer awards***

***Grade 2***

### ***Strengths***

- good development of workplace skills

- very good match of programmes to employers' and learners' aims
- very good support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- slow progress for some learners
- inadequate learner records

**Health, social care & public services**

***Care***

***Grade 2***

*Strengths*

- good progress towards NVQ achievement for ETP learners
- good skills development
- good teaching and learning
- good assessment practice
- good support for learners
- good team working

*Weaknesses*

- low achievement rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- inadequate learner records
- poor monitoring of learners' progress

***Early years***

***Grade 2***

*Strengths*

- good skills development
- good teaching and learning
- good assessment practice
- well-supported learners
- very effective communication and team working

*Weaknesses*

- slow introduction of technical certificate
- incomplete learner records

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ACHIEVEMENT TRAINING LTD:**

- the support and resources
- friendly and professional atmosphere
- they create a good learning environment - relaxed, but you know you've got to get on
- 'I like being able to use my experience to gain a qualification'
- 'they work at a pace that suits me'
- very professional and responsive staff - always on the end of the telephone

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK ACHIEVEMENT TRAINING LTD COULD IMPROVE:**

- more access to computers
- quicker turn-round of my portfolio during internal verification
- 'more help with time management so that I can finish my NVQ'

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- good leadership and management of the company
- very effective partnership working
- good staff development and appraisal
- well-managed arrangements for equality of opportunity
- effective quality improvement

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of record-keeping

28. Leadership and management are good. The company has recruited many more staff, established more partnerships and changed many of its operational practices. These changes have been well managed to ensure continuing economic viability and minimal impact on the learners. Despite its growth, the company has kept its open and consultative management style. ATL has improved its recruitment process. Recruitment procedures are now more formal, with standard questions for all applicants for a particular post and including a formal probation period. These changes have been successful in reducing turnover. Directors support their managers well, and the managers support their teams well. ATL acted swiftly to introduce the ETP in care when the local LSC introduced this new programme. They drew on their good relationships with employers to promote its value, and designed a flexible and responsive programme to meet employer and employee needs. The company has introduced developments such as coaching and mentoring with support from the government's standards unit. It regularly monitors job vacancies in the local press and contacts employers to raise awareness and promote the benefits of apprenticeships. Strategic planning involves all staff. Departmental teams identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Development plans include targets and key performance indicators, although the latest strategic plan does not reflect the company's significant work with employers or some actions shown in the current development plan.

29. Good partnership working was identified at the previous inspection, and it has continued to develop. ATL has an excellent and mutually respectful working relationship with the TVC, with the college and with the training providers' network. These partnerships are very effective in providing alternative opportunities for learners, particularly those with additional learning needs, additional social needs or disabilities. ATL has worked well with the local LSC's advice and guidance board to represent work-based learning, and a director has chaired the training provider network. The relationship with the TVC is particularly valued by the schools, which benefit from regular, informative and evaluative feedback on the progress of their learners while working at ATL. There are well-developed plans to introduce new vocational opportunities in to some of the TVC schools, in response to identified needs.

30. Staff development and appraisal were good at the previous inspection, and have continued to be so. Staff now have a three-monthly development review as well as the

well-established annual appraisal interview. The reviews are a good opportunity to identify training needs and match them with appropriate support. Well-directed staff development is provided in many ways such as coaching and mentoring, peer observations, in-house short courses including those through learndirect, and courses leading to teaching certificates, assessor awards or specialist vocational qualifications. Support for new staff is particularly good, and makes extensive use of job-shadowing and mentoring. Some staff have progressed through the company from learner, to administration assistant, to assessor and finally to tutor.

31. The support for literacy, numeracy and language is good. The company has developed a comprehensive strategy and well-focused action plan designed to raise the profile of literacy, numeracy and language support and its role in improving the quality of provision. The strategy is inclusive and provides opportunities for learners and staff. The company recognises the importance of staff development and national qualifications for staff across the company and has been running the specialist literacy qualification for learning support. ATL is also responding well to raising the employers' awareness of the skills for life strategy and a useful checklist has been developed for employers. The department dealing with this strategy has been re-structured to more closely support the integration of literacy, numeracy and language into vocational areas. The development of learning support in this department includes skills development and support for social and personal needs. It recognises the barriers learners may face in completing programmes and supports the inclusive ethos of the company.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

32. Equality of opportunity arrangements are well managed and effective. Good policies and procedures have been developed over several years and these are reviewed annually. ATL subscribes to a recognised information database to ensure currency. Staff understand the policies and procedure. Formal processes are well established for the management of equality of opportunity. A small executive group oversees and drives the equality and diversity agenda. The culture of equality of opportunity within the organisation is strong and the provider plans and manages the development and reinforcement of equality of opportunity well. The equality and diversity group also monitors the minutes of meetings to ensure relevant action takes place and relevant concerns are dealt with. The group ensures quality of training for learners and staff. Staff training is thorough and effective. A high proportion of staff have equality of opportunity qualifications, some have mentoring awards and others are qualified to teach equality of opportunity courses. Effective training on equality of opportunity is given to apprentices during their programme and ETP learners are encouraged to attend. ATL holds a significant data resource on equality of opportunity.

33. ATL provides a wide range of services to learners across all its programmes to support equality and diversity, as well as pastoral and learning issues. For example, a learning support post has recently been established to support staff and learners. The skills for life strategy makes a significant contribution to the promotion of equality of opportunity within the company. The development of a comprehensive initial and diagnostic assessment for all learners, which is also available for staff, supports the provision of learning, closely matched to individual needs. Staff have also started to make contact with employers to discuss the contribution that literacy, numeracy and language makes to employees' success. There is a good focus on making literacy, numeracy and language an integral part of the vocational areas. A very useful support document has been produced which provides practical information and strategies for vocational staff. It includes strategies for

supporting dyspraxic learners, learners with Aspergers syndrome, information about how to respond to different learning styles and assistive technology information. A range of software has been purchased and other suitable resources are made available to support these learners, for example, different coloured papers and audio equipment for learners with visual impairment. Learners have good access to laptop computers.

34. ATL sets targets for participation of under-represented groups across its programmes. ETP targets will be set at the end of the first operational year. Participation rates for minority ethnic groups are 1.72 per cent, compared with a local rate of 1.4 per cent. There are a significant number of learners with additional learning or support needs across all the programmes. Equality of opportunity data is discussed regularly at managers' meetings and monthly departmental meetings. The data is well analysed and action has been taken after analysis. Marketing has been aimed at improving the number of women taking IT courses and the amount of men in care and this has increased the numbers in training. Literature and marketing materials are well produced with appropriate text and non-stereotypical images.

35. Complaints and appeals procedures are clear and well written. They are distributed at induction and are understood by learners. Where complaints have been made, they have been dealt with quickly and efficiently and are well recorded. The disciplinary procedure has recently been reviewed and improved. Inappropriate behaviour, although unusual, is dealt with promptly and effectively. Employers' premises are adequately checked for health and safety, and equality of opportunity. Employers who do not have an equality of opportunity policy are given ATL's as an exemplar. Equality of opportunity is discussed during progress reviews, however it is insufficiently recorded.

36. ATL has good contacts with a range of external organisations, many of which are used to provide links into the local community to market its services. These include religious and cultural organisations and support groups. The provider also has links to other organisations, such as a local dyslexia agency, to give additional support to learners. Success is celebrated through annual presentation awards which are held in conjunction with partner organisations.

37. Access to the training rooms is restricted. There is a small lift and suitable toilet facilities. Emergency exits are inadequate for wheelchair users, however arrangements are in place to cover evacuation. These limitations are recognised and work is in progress to meet the reasonable recommendations of a recent access audit. Advice and guidance on progression routes are given to early leavers. Good collaboration with a local training provider network gives learners the opportunity of transferring to a range of different programmes within the area.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 3**

38. Quality improvement activities are well established and effective. Managers, tutors and assessors respond well when weaknesses are identified, taking prompt action to make improvements. At the previous inspection, the company was identified as an adequate provider with more strengths than weaknesses. However, learners had a poor understanding of their NVQ requirements. There was insufficient focus on work-based learning in strategic plans, promotional material had too many stereotypical images, and quality assurance arrangements were incomplete. Following the inspection, ATL took decisive action to deal with these weaknesses, and there have been many improvements.



ATL appointed a new quality assurance manager to oversee the improvements. ATL has strengthened the link between the well-established observations of teaching and assessment activities and staff development. Through the strong links with the college they have established a collaborative approach to quality improvement and self-assessment. As part of this work, the college audits files and other documents in ATL and involves ATL in its own self-assessment. A chief internal verifier from the college works well with internal verifiers at ATL to support assessors and run standardisation activities. The college has also extended their system of peer observations to ATL. Staff who need advice or guidance in particular aspects of their work are encouraged to observe colleagues in the college to share ideas. This has helped to improve the experience of learners and also the effectiveness of the management information system. ATL has improved the way in which it collects feedback from learners and employers, by re-designing questionnaires and re-introducing telephone surveys. Feedback is analysed in more detail, common themes are discussed in the monthly management meetings and actions are planned to make improvements. Managers have regular, well-designed statistical reports on recruitment, retention and achievement which they discuss at their monthly meetings. Retention and achievement rates are improving, and learners have a better understanding of their programmes following changes to the induction process.

39. Monitoring of record-keeping is insufficiently rigorous. At the time of the previous inspection, ATL had introduced a number of systems for monitoring the files and other documents, using a sampling approach. In May 2005, the company revised their approach and introduced a single system which is intended to be used in franchised programmes from the college, directly funded provision for the LSC and programmes run in partnership with the TVC. It has already proved useful in highlighting differences between programmes, and introducing opportunities to share good practice. However, it has not been effective in identifying important omissions in learners' records or in investigating the extent of such omissions across a programme. For some learners, records of progress are held in different locations by different tutors. The quality compliance audit has not recognised the impact of this on learners' understanding of their progress. A few learners have changed employers. Although assessors are well aware of these changes, learners' records have not been updated.

40. Staff are involved in the annual self-assessment process. They work in teams to identify their strengths and weaknesses, drawing on the previous self-assessment report, observations of teaching or assessing, learners' and employers' feedback and outcome data. The completed self-assessment report closely follows the Common Inspection Framework and includes evaluative comments on most aspects of ATL's provision, including the learners' success rates. Several of the weaknesses were given less significance in the report than that identified by inspectors, and some had insufficient reference to their effect on the learners.



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Teacher/trainer awards</i>		<b>2</b>
Other government-funded provision	76	2

41. Business administration apprentices were not reported on and graded during the inspection. However, ATL has secured LSC and European Social Fund backing for a two-year assessor and mentor programme, and this was inspected and graded. The programme, which started in November 2004, allows people to gain certification as assessors, and give supervisors and managers the opportunity to take a certificate in mentoring in the workplace. Learners are mainly recruited from the care sector, where there is a perceived lack of assessors, and insufficient opportunity for supervisor development. However, around 15 per cent of the learners are from other areas of employment, such as business administration. Learners start the courses in groups of up to 20 and have two introductory training sessions at the ATL offices. Assessors then visit the learners, usually monthly, in their workplace to support them in their learning, to provide assessment and to review their progress. Learners can also visit the ATL offices on one day a week to seek advice from assessors, or to take time to prepare their portfolios. Most of those on the course are mature people with a background in learning. Support for those who need help with literacy or numeracy is available through the ATL learning support staff, or the visiting assessors.

#### *Teacher/trainer awards*

Grade 2

#### *Strengths*

- good development of workplace skills
- very good match of programmes to employers' and learners' aims
- very good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress for some learners
- inadequate learner records

### Achievement and standards

42. The programme is still in its first year and it is too early to make substantive judgements on achievement. However, only 10 learners of the 99 starts have withdrawn from the programme. Eight of the mentors and five assessors have completed their programmes and another 12 are very close to completion. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is generally good. There is an effective emphasis on personal reflection in the mentors' programme, with some interesting observations on the mentor's role. Assessors use an appropriate range of evidence in their work with learners. Use of accreditation of prior learning is good.

43. The development of workplace skills is good, particularly in the mentors' programme. Several learners have increased their self-confidence in their supervisor and mentor roles and many are now able to deal with under-performing staff. Even experienced supervisors have reconsidered many of the routine things they were doing, such as motivating or guiding staff, and approaching them in a more constructive way. Nearly all assessors acknowledge that the course has improved their understanding of assessment practices. Some learners acknowledge that they have gained new ideas on assessment from examining the professional approach of the ATL staff. There is a very significant degree of enthusiasm among learners for the positive impact the courses are having on their skills.

44. Some learners are progressing slowly. Of the 76 still in learning, 35 learners are past their completion dates. This is beginning to have an effect on learners' expectations and resource planning. However, the dates chosen at the beginning of the programme are unrealistic. New learners are being assigned longer, more realistic periods for completion, and targets will be formally reviewed as a planned part of the project's first-phase evaluation. Some are finding the course requirements difficult to fit in with demanding jobs and other pressures. Most of the slow learners are on the assessors' course. Internal verification checks have recognised some of the slow progress.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Other government funded																
Other government-funded provision	2004-05															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	99															
Retained*	64															
Successfully completed	13															
Still in training	76															

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

### The quality of provision

45. The assessor and mentor programmes are particularly well matched to employer and learners' aims. ATL identified a need for these types of courses, and put together an innovative bid for funding, and established the appropriate resources. They have made good links with employers who have had previous dealings with ATL, specifically in the care sector, but have also been flexible in accommodating learners from other environments. While the course has been advertised widely, ATL has been careful to give good initial advice and guidance, and recruit only those learners whose experience and aims match the programme requirements. Employers and learners are very positive about how the programme is meeting their needs. For instance, the assessor programme allows some establishments to support other learners on care programmes more effectively, using in-house assessors during late or weekend shifts. One care establishment which caters for people with dementia, has been able to reduce the number of outside assessors, which was an unsettling aspect for their residents. Many care establishments are using the new mentoring skills of their staff in positions of increased responsibility. The courses are encouraging learners to progress. One mentor is now moving on to the assessor awards and then expects to take up a training co-ordinator role in her establishment. Another

learner who was invalided out of active care work, is taking the assessor award to allow her to apply for training posts and use her experience in a new role.

46. Learners have very good support. ATL's staff have established very good working relationships with their learners and employers. Learners are visited, or telephoned regularly. Staff are regarded as very friendly and supportive and their interest motivates learners to continue with their work. Some learners have had close support from assessors to deal with under-confidence or literacy problems, and this has helped them progress. Learners and employers are particularly impressed with the way that contact with ATL is managed promptly and efficiently. Learners are making increasing use of the drop-in facility at the ATL offices, and are always made to feel welcome. The assessors and tutors, while being friendly, can also be firm in their guidance when appropriate. Most of the learners are mature and experienced and believe that, with assessor advice, they know what they should be doing to move on in their work. The formal reviews and assessment planning is a simple process and reflects the learners' maturity. However, some learners, particularly those making slow progress, do not have specific, detailed and time-bound targets to help them arrange their next steps.

47. The internal verification systems are well planned and enforced. Assessment is satisfactory. The off-the-job training sessions at the start of the courses, provide learners with a reasonable understanding of the programme requirements. There is a satisfactory introduction to the role of the mentor. A lesson on the basics of assessment, using a video, is regarded by learners as a particularly effective session. Some learners attend other ATL training courses, such as health and safety and first aid, as enhancements to their programme. Employers and learners regard these courses as helpful and valuable training events.

48. There are satisfactory arrangements for the identification of, and support for, those with literacy, numeracy and language needs. Optional tests are available during induction. A few learners ask to take them, and if the results indicate that help is needed, this is given by ATL's own learning support staff. Some learners, who may have problems, do not take the tests immediately. Assessors encourage them to take an assessment, or use their own evaluation of a learners' work to identify a need. Sometimes support is given directly by the assessor, or learning support staff are involved.

49. Learners' records are inadequate. They do not allow managers to monitor staff and learner activity effectively. Monitoring sheets that should provide a useful summary of learner and assessor activities, do not always accurately reflect the level of activity that is taking place. Managers do not routinely examine these sheets to query actual or apparent inactivity. Details of all contact between assessors and learners, such as reviews, telephone calls, meetings, planned assessments and results of tests, are recorded on a multi-purpose assessment-planning form. A few of these records are detailed and are helpful to the learner and to other staff, but many are not detailed, and it is difficult for staff, managers and learners to understand agreed actions. Often there is only one copy of the form, and this is kept by the learners in their portfolios. Individual learning plans are satisfactory, although some of the planned completion dates are confusing. Details of literacy and numeracy support are appropriately kept, but there is insufficient general comment in learners' records about the support they are receiving. The ATL quality procedures include file checks, but they are not comprehensive enough, particularly for new programmes and new assessors.

## **Leadership and management**

50. Communication between managers and staff is good. Day-to-day management of staff is carried out in an effective and supportive manner. ATL takes a flexible approach to staff working patterns, where possible, including such things as travel, the desire to work at home, or to have working hours and weeks that fit in with school times.

51. Staff are encouraged, through formal meetings and informal discussions, to propose and take initiatives to improve training. There is an impressively positive attitude to making major changes to programmes. There is a good system of observation of staff activities, such as teaching and assessment sessions with constructive and helpful critiques.

52. Resources are adequate for the current workload. Training materials are up to date and professional, although there is a tendency to use common administrative materials that are not always appropriate for the more experienced learner. Staff have good training backgrounds, and most have relevant experience. There is a very good system for continuing professional development for staff. Needs are accurately identified through regular discussions, and appropriate training is provided.

53. Equality of opportunity is appropriately reinforced to staff through induction training and subsequent courses. The assessor, and more particularly the mentor's course, looks closely at the proper treatment of individuals. Learners understand the complaints system, and would be able to use it if necessary.

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Care</b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	29	3
Employer training pilot	247	2
<b>Early years</b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	19	2
Employer training pilot	1	None

54. ATL offers apprenticeship programmes in early years and care, comprising an NVQ, technical certificate, key skills and an employment rights and responsibility certificate. Learners spend one day a week in training with the provider and four days a week with their employers. Early years learners are in nurseries, pre-schools, schools and are involved in pre-school and after-school clubs. Care learners are in homes for the elderly and other specialist care establishments. Training on the NVQ, technical certificate and employment rights and responsibilities certificate are provided by a tutor who also carries out reviews. Key skills training and assessment is provided by other members of staff. Assessment and internal verification are carried out by other members of the team. There are 19 learners on the early years care and education apprenticeship and one learner on an early years childcare level 2 NVQ ETP programme. In care, there are nine advanced apprentices and 20 apprentices. There are 247 learners on the ETP programme taking the level 2 NVQ in care. These learners have all started their programme since January 2005.

**Care****Grade 2***Strengths*

- good progress towards NVQ achievement for ETP learners
- good skills development
- good teaching and learning
- good assessment practice
- good support for learners
- good team working

*Weaknesses*

- low achievement rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- inadequate learner records
- poor monitoring of learners' progress

**Achievement and standards**

55. Learners who are on the ETP programme in care are making good progress towards their qualification. The programme started in September 2004 and the first learners enrolled in January 2005. Of the first intake of 331 learners, 132 have completed the units required for the NVQ at level 2. Thirty-two learners have received their certificates and 100

are waiting for the certification process to be completed. Some learners are completing the NVQ at level 2 in less than six months.

56. Learners develop good skills. They can relate theory to practice in the workplace and quickly become valuable members of the teams. They develop a good understanding of the client's individual needs and how to meet them. Through the programme, learners develop greater confidence, capability and self-esteem. These increased skill levels are recognised by the employers.

57. Achievement rates for ETP learners who take national tests at levels 1 and 2 are good. Of the learners who have received additional learning support, 64 per cent have achieved national tests. Of these, 39 learners have achieved literacy at level 1, four have achieved literacy at level 2, 40 have achieved numeracy at level 1 and one learner has achieved numeracy at level 2. There are still 48 learners receiving additional support.

58. Achievement for advanced apprentices is low. The company has identified this and has developed appropriate measures to deal with it. At the start of the programme, key skills and technical certificate units are delivered in classroom sessions to support the collection of evidence for the NVQ. Those who are at risk of leaving early are now effectively identified and monitored during workplace visits.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		12		11		10	100	1	100						
Retained*	0		2		5		6	60	1	100						
Successfully completed	0		2		2		4	40	1	100						
Still in learning	3		3		3		0	0	0	0						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	15		18		18	100	41	100	7	100						
Retained*	0		14		7	39	29	71	1	14						
Successfully completed	0		9		5	28	15	37	1	14						
Still in learning	15		5		0	0	0	0	0	0						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	2004-05															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	311															
Retained*	32															
Successfully completed	32															
Still in learning	247															

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## The quality of provision

59. Teaching and learning are good. There are detailed session plans and schemes of work incorporating a range of teaching methods. A wide range of good learning resources are available to ATL's staff and learners. Relevant and appropriate handouts are used and these help the learners to gather appropriate evidence for their portfolios. The teaching and learning plans help learners to achieve their goals.

60. Assessment practice is good, with regular observations in the workplace. Assessment planning is good and involves the learner and the employer. Observations are appropriate and assessors respect the privacy of clients during this period. All observations are well recorded and good verbal and written feedback is given to the learner. All observation evidence is fully cross-referenced to the appropriate NVQ units. Portfolios are well organised and include a good range of evidence and assessment methods.



61. Learners are well supported by ATL's and workplace staff. The expertise of staff and good resources are used effectively to provide literacy, numeracy and language support. The wide range of support is responsive to individual circumstances and needs of learners. Learners are in appropriate supportive workplaces and are well motivated towards their workplaces and achieving their qualification. Employers are fully engaged in the learners' training and assessment and many provide additional support and learning opportunities in the workplace. ATL's staff deal with problems as they arise with the learners and, where appropriate the employer, and this ensures swift resolution of problems. Employers feel ATL provides a very good and professional service and some use it as a preferred provider.

62. Staff create an effective learning environment which builds motivation and confidence, and develops literacy, numeracy and/or language skills which are based on employment needs. Systems are in place for comprehensive initial assessment and diagnostic testing are used effectively to plan individual learning. Specific, measurable targets are negotiated with the learner, and long- and short-term goals are identified in individual learning plans. However, reviews do not yet take sufficient account of the outcomes of learning support. Initial assessment is not currently used to plan the initial placement on ETP. Staff are also able to take advantage of the assessment process to identify their own training needs.

63. Learners' records are not always fully completed. When learners' circumstances change, this is not always recorded in the files. For example, several learners have recently changed employers, but this was not amended on the individual learning plan or the learners' file. Occasionally, important decisions and events are not fully recorded. For example, one learner had not completed basic skills tests as planned. This was not recorded and additional support needs were not being met.

64. The monitoring of learners' progress is poor. Documentary evidence of achievement is held in the assessors' files, but there is no monitoring to identify progression. Reviews do not detail achievement to date or set clear targets for progression, although this is carried out during assessment planning with the assessors. Learners know they are making progress but are unable to identify which units they have achieved. There is no complete record of how all learners are progressing towards their qualifications across the apprenticeship programmes. There is no overview of the ETP learners' progression towards achievement of individual units or the NVQ, either in their portfolios or in their files.

### **Leadership and management**

65. Communication and team working between the staff at ATL is good. There is an open and supportive culture within the team. Staff meetings are held regularly where staff are able to discuss concerns and gain support from their colleagues. These are well recorded. Informal communication and support within the care teams is also good. Observation of key activities gives the opportunity for good practice to be shared and this is seen as a positive event by staff. There is regular and supportive appraisal and supervision for staff and good access to professional development activities which include opportunities for job shadowing. Resources are adequate and are deployed effectively. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through team meetings and training events. Internal verification is robust. Internal verification findings are recorded and feedback is given to the assessors and learners.



**Early years****Grade 2***Strengths*

- good skills development
- good teaching and learning
- good assessment practice
- well-supported learners
- very effective communication and team working

*Weaknesses*

- slow introduction of technical certificate
- incomplete learner records

**Achievement and standards**

66. Learners develop good skills in the childcare settings and this allows learners to become valuable members of the workplace teams. Many employers take their responsibilities for supporting learners seriously and provide thorough inductions. Learners are able to relate the theory to the practice in the workplace and quickly develop a greater understanding of children's needs and how to meet them. The programmes are well planned and well organised. Although numbers on programme are small, retention and achievement rates have been satisfactory over the past four years. Seven of the 15 leavers completed the full framework and 19 of the 26 learners who have started in the past three years are still in learning.

67. The introduction of the technical certificate was slow. Apprentices who started in 2003-04 have made slow progress with the technical certificate. To date, none of the learners have completed the technical certificate since it was introduced. One learner from 2002-03 is still on the programme having completed the NVQ and key skills at level 1. This learner is receiving good support to achieve level 2 key skills to complete her programme. In September 2004, this changed and ATL now has an experienced tutor who is delivering an effective programme. Many learners who started 2004-05 are making good progress.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	14		8		4		3	100								
Retained*	0		2		4		1	33								
Successfully completed	0		0		3		0	0								
Still in learning	14		4		1		0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## **The quality of provision**

68. Teaching and learning are good. Session plans and schemes of work are detailed and incorporate a range of teaching methods. There are good learning resources available to ATL's staff and learners. A good programme of relevant short courses is offered, such as paediatric first aid, which enables learners to achieve certificates at the start of their programme. Relevant and appropriate handouts are used and these help learners gather appropriate evidence for their portfolios and are useful reference materials. The teaching and learning plans help learners to achieve their goals.

69. Assessment practice is good, with regular observations in the workplace. Assessment planning which involves the learner and the employer is particularly good. Observations are appropriate and are arranged to fit in with the learner and employer needs in the childcare setting. All observations are fully recorded and verbal and written feedback is given to the learner. All observation evidence is fully cross-referenced to the appropriate NVQ units.

70. Portfolios are presented well with a good standard of work and a wide range of evidence. Regular observation of assessors by internal verifiers is developmental, and practice has improved. ATL's staff are given opportunities to work with a lead verifier from a local college.

71. Learners are in appropriate supportive workplaces and are well motivated and committed to their workplaces and achievement of their training programmes. The learners are well supported by ATL and workplace staff and feel they have the appropriate advice and guidance to enable them to achieve their individual learning goals. This wide range of support is responsive to learners' circumstances and needs. The learning social and personal support is valued by learners. Staff create an effective learning environment which builds motivation and confidence and develops literacy, numeracy and language skills which are based on employment needs. Sessions are well planned and vocationally relevant. Initial assessment and diagnostic testing is used effectively to plan individual learning. Specific, measurable targets are negotiated with the learner and relevant goals are identified in individual learning plans.

72. Childcare staff at ATL demonstrate very effective communication and team working. There is an open and supportive culture within the team, with regular staff meetings. Informal communication and support within the team are also good. Observation of key activities allows good practice to be shared. Appraisal and supervision for staff is regular and supportive. Staff have good access to professional development activities which include opportunities for work shadowing and for certificated training courses.

73. Induction is satisfactory and all learners receive an induction certificate. There are separate workshops for training in equality and health and safety, and learners receive an ATL certificate for attending. Initial assessment is satisfactory for most learners and the results are used to prepare the individual learning plan and to gain specialist support from an appropriately qualified staff member.

74. Learners' records are incomplete. Learners' progress is reviewed frequently and the process involves the tutor, learner and their manager/supervisor. It involves relevant discussion and forward planning, but this is not always well recorded. Progress is not

recorded at reviews, neither are there specific targets. When learners change employers this is not always updated on the individual learning plan. Documentary evidence of individual progress is held in the assessors' files and achievement records are kept for all components of the apprenticeship framework, but these are not collated effectively. There is no central record of how learners are progressing towards completion of their qualifications.

### **Leadership and management**

75. Staff are managed effectively and have good opportunities for professional and personal development. Communication within the team and across the organisation is good. Resources are adequate and are deployed effectively. Staff are well qualified and suitably experienced. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through team meetings and training events. Staff are involved in the development of the programme. Internal verification is robust. Internal verification findings are recorded and feedback is given to the assessors and learners.